



Reading for Pleasure ? Boys

Article Author:

[Alison Smith](#) [1]

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Alison Smith recommends titles that boys enjoy reading.

In an article on boys and reading in **BfK 106**, **John Mole**, Head of English at St Albans School, a boys' secondary, was quoted as 'highly sceptical' about the notion that boys read less than girls: 'It is simply a question of what they are reading - which is probably very different from girls but they are just as enthusiastic about it.' Mole finds that fantasy titles and series fiction that can be collected such as Goosebumps and Point Horror have great appeal to boy readers.

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What do other teachers and librarians find popular with the boys in their school?

Alison Smith of the Information Resource Centre at Priory School in Southsea has a special interest in the books that boys enjoy reading. **BfK** invited her to share the titles and series which she has found to be particularly successful with her boy students (including reluctant and poor readers) in years 7, 8 and 9.

Titles are grouped by genre and type of material and include non-fiction and 'faction' material. Books which an average reader would find very easy to read but with a high interest content are listed at the beginning of each section.

HUMOUR

This humour section includes books of the 'primary school reader' type which I find many boys have not read before. Some boys enjoy these family based humorous stories very much.

Ms Wiz Spells Trouble by Terence Blacker (Macmillan, 0 330 34763 2, £2.99 pbk)

One of 11 entertaining titles about a teacher who is a 'paranormal operative'.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl (Puffin, 0 14 037154 0, £4.99 pbk)

And all the other Dahl titles.

Pongwiffy by Kaye Umansky (Puffin, 0 14 034221 4, £3.99 pbk)

The first of four titles about the smelly witch and her hamster familiar.

Dead Average! by Moya Simons (Orchard, 1 86039 060 9, £3.99 pbk)

See also **Dead Worried!** and **Dead Meat!** These books have chapters which are complete stories in their own right so they can be used to encourage a boy to read just one chapter a day.

Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great by Judy Blume (Macmillan, 0 330 26051 0, £3.50 pbk)

See also **Superfudge** and **Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing**. Families ? we all suffer them!

Weirdo's War by Michael Coleman (Orchard, 1 86039 231 8, £4.99 pbk)

Outdoor adventure holiday for the bully and the bullied.

Earth to Matthew by Paula Danziger (Heinemann, 0 434 93410 0, £8.99 hbk)

See also *Everyone Else's Parents Said Yes!* Hilarious family life.

Two Weeks with the Queen by Morris Gleitzman (Macmillan, 0 330 31376 2, £3.99 pbk)

Aussie boy wants the Queen to intervene to help his seriously ill brother. See also Gleitzman's *Worry Warts and Belly Flop*.

Hiding Out by Elizabeth Laird (Mammoth, 0 7497 1664 9, £3.99 pbk)

English boy left behind in France with only himself to depend on.

Johnny and the Dead by Terry Pratchett (Corgi, 0 552 13926 2, £3.99 pbk)

Ghosts come to town to save their cemetery.

Cliffhanger by Jacqueline Wilson (Yearling, 0 440 86338 4, £2.99 pbk)

Wilson's books are very popular with boys but nearly all have a girl as the main character. Once they have read **Cliffhanger**, most boys will be pleased to read other Wilson titles despite the heroines.

GRAPHIC NOVELS, CARTOONS AND STORIES ILLUSTRATED ON EVERY PAGE

This section includes strip cartoon stories and stories with a high proportion of illustration to text.

Rudley Cabot in the Quest for the Golden Carrot by Keith Brumpton (Orion, 1 85881 122 8, £3.99 pbk)

See also *Rudley Cabot in the Carrots of Doom*. Cartoon books featuring a space rabbit.

Old Tom at the Beach by Leigh Hobbs (Puffin, 0 14 037705 0, £3.50 pbk)

See also **Old Tom** and **Old Tom Goes to Mars**. Cartoon monster becomes a pet ? fun for adults too.

Kung Fu Boy by Takeshi Maekawa (Bloomsbury, 0 7475 2017 8, £3.99 pbk)

The first of six titles in the ?Ironfist Chinmi? series. Many boys enjoy Japanese cartoon fighting books and this is an introduction full of action-packed adventures.

The Iliad and the Odyssey by Marcia Williams (Walker, 0 7445 5430 6, £5.99 pbk)

See also **The Adventures of Robin Hood** and **Sinbad the Sailor**. Williams' picture books with cartoon strips are enjoyable and quick to read and the stories are not childish.

Rats! by Pat Hutchins (Red Fox, 0 09 993190 7, £2.99 pbk)

How to persuade your parents to let you have the pet you want.

The Colour of Magic by Terry Pratchett (Corgi, 0 552 12475 3, £5.99 pbk)

A graphic novel. See also **Mort** (a Discworld Big Comic). Very popular with fantasy fans.

War Game by Michael Foreman (Puffin, 0 14 037139 7, £3.50 pbk)

This is an excellent book for WWI history fans. See also **War Boy** and **After the War was Over**, Foreman's illustrated autobiography about growing up in WW2 and becoming an illustrator.

ADVENTURE GAME BOOKS

Boys who like computer games or fantasy can often be tempted by these titles, especially if they are closely related to the latest computer game hero.

Terrormazia by Anna Nilsen and Dom Mansell (Walker, 0 7445 4708 3, £4.99 pbk)

Not many words to read in this multi-dimensional adventure game but very enjoyable.

Sword Quest by Andy Dixon, ill. Simone Boni (Usborne, 0 7460 2707 9, £4.99 pbk)

One of Usborne's series of Gamebooks packed with mysteries to solve and clues to follow. These titles are very attractive to readers.

Sonic Adventure Gamebook 1 by James Wallis (Fantail, 0 14 037629 1, £4.50 pbk)

The first of six titles based on Sega computer characters. Not illustrated and there are long stretches of text but fans of Sonic will not be put off.

The Adventures of Goldhawk 1: Darkmoon's Curse by Ian Livingstone (Puffin, 0 14 036939 2, £3.99 pbk)

A very well illustrated and attractive series of four titles which does not involve a lot of continuous reading.

Shadowmaster by Ian Livingstone (Puffin, 0 14 032481 X, £4.50 pbk)

The first title of 'The Zagor Chronicles', a more advanced fighting fantasy series for the well motivated reader.

NON FICTION AND FACTION

For many boys, the desire to know about things is a great motivator in learning and continuing to read.

How to Look After Your Rabbit by Colin and Jacqui Hawkins (Walker, 0 7445 4380 0, £4.50 pbk)

See also **How to Look After Your Hamster**, **How to Look After Your Cat** and **How to Look After Your Dog**. This picture book series appeals to everyone and has very handy hints on pet-keeping. It also has funny cartoons and is short enough for the most reluctant reader.

Amazing Adventure Stories by Tony Bradman (Corgi, 0 552 52768 8, £3.99 pbk)

See also Bradman's **Help!, I'm a Hamster!** (Bloomsbury, 0 7475 2272 3, £3.99 pbk). Child becomes pet.

Mummies by Nathaniel Harris (Watts, 0 7496 1612 1, £8.99 hbk)

From the 'A Very Peculiar History' series which contains bizarre and amusing slants on history. See also **Keeping Clean** by Daisy Kerr about loos from the past - fascinating to everyone.

Fly Traps! Plants that Bite Back by Martin Jenkins, ill. David Parkins (Walker, 0 7445 5286 9, £4.99 pbk)

A beautiful and fascinating book about carnivorous plants from the 'Read and Wonder' series.

Children Just Like Me by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley (Dorling Kindersley, 0 7513 5327 2, £9.99 hbk)

This book is for fans of travel and geography. It briefly interviews and photographs children all around the world and is immensely attractive.

Mysteries of Lost Civilisations by Anne Millard (Watts, 0 7496 2486 8, £9.99 hbk)

There are five other titles in the 'Mysteries of' series, all subjects which appeal to all boys.

Pirates by Stewart Ross (Puffin, 0 14 038523 1, £4.99 pbk)

See also **Spies and Traitors** and **Bandits and Outlaws** in the same 'Fact or Fiction?' series. Excellent pictures and 'sound bite' format to attract the reader in.

The Terrible Tudors by Terry Deary (Scholastic, 0 590 55290 2, £3.50 pbk)

One of several titles in the best-selling 'Horrible Histories?' series which combine facts with fun.

Blood, Bones and Body Bits by Nick Arnold (Scholastic, 0 590 55807 2, £3.50 pbk)

See also **Chemical Chaos**, **Nasty Nature** and **Ugly Bugs**. Science books for fun with a cartoon format and illustrations to keep the reader interested.

Commando Survival Manual by Hugh McManners (Dorling Kindersley, 0 7513 0083 7, £16.99 hbk)

Beautifully illustrated book with tips for action and survival.

SPORT BOOKS

Some of the books in this section are written for primary school readers but will tempt boys in Years 7, 8 and 9 who enjoy sport and prefer a quick read.

The Dadhunters by Josephine Feeney (Collins, 0 00 675178 4, £3.99 pbk)

Two friends try to find a new husband for a divorce mum 'must like football.

Good Sports! A Bag of Sports Stories by Tony Bradman (Corgi, 0 552 54296 2, £3.99 pbk)

The Big Kick by Rob Childs (Young Corgi, 0 552 52663 0, £2.99 pbk)

See also **The Big Freeze** and other titles in 'The Big?' series.

Football Stories by Michael Coleman (Orchard, 1 85213 949 8, £3.99 pbk)

The Fastest Bowler in the World by Michael Hardcastle (Faber, 0 571 17356 X, £4.99 pbk)

United on Vacation by Linda Hoy (Walker, 0 7445 3697 9, £3.99 pbk)

Napper Goes for Goal by Martin Waddell (Puffin, 0 14 031318 4, £3.50 pbk)

Four other Napper titles available.

True Sport Stories by Tim Lardner (Point Non Fiction, 0 590 55792 0, £2.99 pbk)

POETRY

The language play and diversity of poetry gives it lots of appeal for boys.

?Ere We Go chosen by David Orme (Macmillan, 0 330 32986 3, £2.99 pbk)

Football poems. See also **You?ll Never Walk Alone**.

Over the Moon: Championship Football Poems written by footballers (Red Fox, 0 09 968051 3, £2.99 pbk)

Laughter is an Egg by John Agard (Puffin, 0 14 034072 6, £3.50 pbk)

Deft poems full of humour. See also **Get Back, Pimple!**

You Wait Till I?m Older Than You by Michael Rosen (Puffin, 0 14 038014 0 £4.99 pbk)

Rosen is well known for his funny poems. See also **Quick, Let?s Get Out of Here** and **Wouldn?t You Like to Know**.

FANTASY, SCIENCE FICTION AND COMPUTERS

Fantasy and science fiction titles such as X-Files spin-offs have great appeal as they are often an extension of the fantasy games boys play on their computers.

Wyvern Winter by Toby Forward (Puffin, 0 14 036560 5, £3.99 pbk)

The first title in a four-part series that is a good introduction to fantasy for boys in Year 7 as the family background to the stories is familiar to readers keen on humorous books.

Red, White and Blue by Robert Leeson (Collins, 0 00 675144 X, £4.50 pbk)

This is quick to read because of its interesting format. It is written in coloured sections, red for the hero?s own diary, white for homework, and blue for the fantasy novel he is writing.

Diggers by Terry Pratchett (Corgi, 0 552 52586 3, £3.99 pbk)

See also **Wings** and **Truckers**. A good way to get keen on fantasy novels.

The Demon Headmaster by Gillian Cross (Puffin, 0 14 031643 4, £3.99 pbk)

See also **The Prime Minister?s Brain**, **The Revenge of the Demon Headmaster** and **The Demon Headmaster Strikes Again**. The evil plots of a fiendish headmaster are outwitted.

Krindlekrax by Philip Ridley (Red Fox, 0 09 997920 9, £2.99 pbk)

Strange family with a boy who fights dragons.

Letters from the Grave by Felicity Everett (Usborne ?Spinechillers?, 0 7460 2476 2, £2.99 pbk)

Short stories full of action, drama and suspense.

The Ghost Dog by Pete Johnson (Yearling, 0 440 86341 4, £2.99 pbk)

The Spying Game by Pat Moon (Orchard, 1 85213 852 1, £3.99 pbk)

An introduction to horror in a gentle form ? everyone who has read it has enjoyed it.

Hacker by Malorie Blackman (Corgi, 0 552 52751 3, £3.99 pbk)

Is Dad guilty of computer theft?

McMummy by Betsy Byars (Red Fox, 0 09 942561 0, £2.99 pbk)

A huge plant pod in human shape comes alive.

The Internet Detective series by Michael Coleman (Macmillan, £2.99 each pbk)

For on-line fans.

No Substitutions by Marty Engle and Jonathan Barnes (Puffin, 0 14 038096 5, £2.99 pbk)

The first title in the 'Strange Matter?' series. Junior X-Files.

The Snow-Walker's Son by Catherine Fisher (Red Fox, 0 09 925192 2, £3.50 pbk)

See also **The Empty Hand** and **The Soul Thieves**, parts 2 and 3 of the 'Snow-Walker?' sequence. Norse legends ? a gripping fantasy read.

MapHead by Lesley Howarth (Walker, 0 7445 3647 2, £3.99 pbk)

Young alien visitor to earth. A difficult read but much enjoyed by those who can tackle it. See also **MapHead 2**.

CLASSICS MADE EASIER

Although some teachers disapprove of 'easy?' classics whether retellings or abridgements, I am in favour because I think that the stories are valuable in their own right and some students will never read them in the original form. Classic books on tape are also very valuable, because students still gain vocabulary from listening to them and valuable information about how stories are constructed, to help with their own writing.

Oliver Twist retold by Chris Mould (Oxford, 0 19 272314 6, £4.99 pbk)

A picture book version which is a very easy read for fun. See also **Frankenstein** and **A Christmas Carol**.

Great Expectations retold by Clare West (Oxford, 0 19 422682 4, £2.60 pbk)

One of the 'Bookworms?' series of short (c. 1500-2500 words) retellings of the classics. Other titles include **Oliver Twist**, **Frankenstein**, **Wuthering Heights** and **Treasure Island**.

Shakespeare without the Boring Bits by Humphrey Carpenter (Viking, 0 670 85534 0, £5.99 pbk)

Retellings with a contemporary twist. See also **More Shakespeare without the Boring Bits**

The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling (Viking, 0 670 86797 7, £8.99 pbk)

One of the 'Whole Story?' series which juxtaposes unabridged classic texts with non-fiction information to interest the reader. Each spread is illustrated with photographs and drawings. Other titles include **Around the World in Eighty Days**, **Treasure Island**, **Call of the Wild**, **Tom Sawyer** and **Heidi**. Dorling Kindersley publish a similar series, 'Eyewitness Classics?', but with abridged texts.

See also titles discussed in *Classic Cuts* by Elaine Moss (*BfK 105*)

EASY READS WITH HIGH INTEREST CONTENT

This section includes retellings of fairy story from another angle, cleverly done to appeal to all ages at different levels. It also includes picture books for older readers.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by a Wolf by Jon Scieszka (Puffin, 0 14 054056 3, £4.99 pbk)

A sophisticated picture book version. See also Scieszka's **The Frog Prince Continued**.

Fungus the Bogeyman by Raymond Briggs (Puffin, 0 14 054235 3, £5.99 pbk)

A cartoon-strip picture book story that is not for the squeamish. See also **The Man** and **When the Wind Blew**.

Making Friends with Frankenstein by Colin McNaughton (Walker, 0 7445 4321 5, £6.99 pbk)

Little Wolf's Book of Badness by Ian Whybrow (Collins, 0 00 675160 1, £3.99 pbk)

See also **Little Wolf's Diary of Daring Deeds**. Illustrated with witty line drawings.

Further Information

Books for Students, the educational and library book supplier, has compiled a starter reading list, **Boyz Own**, for 'boys who are reluctant and less able readers.' The list is divided into books for 7-11-year-olds and books for 11-16-year-olds. Available free from BfS, Bird Road, Heathcote, Warwick CV34 6TB (01926 436436).

Reading the Difference, edited by Myra Barrs and Sue Pidgeon, £12.25, from CLPE, Webber Row, London SE1 8QW. An examination of the link between reading development and gender difference.

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