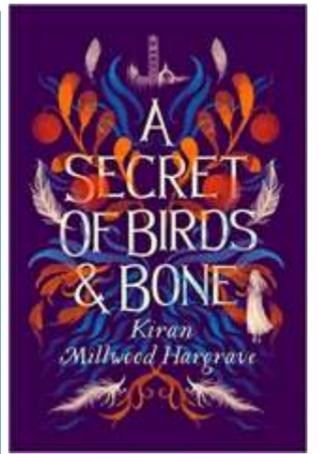




This half term's member of staff book choice is: *The Secret of birds and bone* by Kiran Millwood. Mrs. Elliott recommends this book for children ages 9 plus. In an Italian city ravaged by plague, Sofia's mother carves beautiful mementoes from the bones of loved ones. But one day, she doesn't return home. Did her work lead her into danger? Sofia and her little brother Ermin are sent to the convent orphanage but soon escape, led by an enigmatic new friend and their pet crow, Corvith.

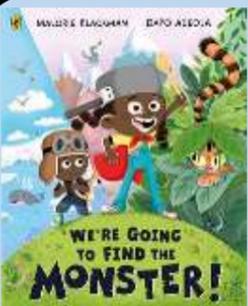
Together they cross the city underground, following clues in bones up to the towers of Siena, where - circled by magpies - the children find the terrible truth ...



Welcome to this half term's 'read all about it' entry.

In this edition, we have also included an interview with SF Said, the author of, 'Varjak Paw.' If you have an author or authors that you would like to feature in future editions of 'read all about it' or a book that children would love to read, then please let your class teacher know.

Happy Reading!



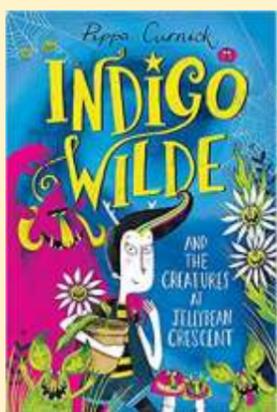
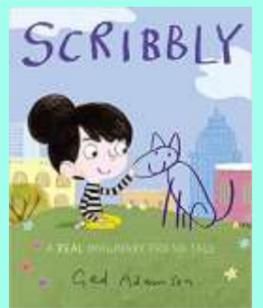
We're going to find the monster! By Malorie Blackman

Over the shimmering ocean,
up the huge, high mountain,
through the deep, dark forest . . . WE'RE GOING TO FIND THE MONSTER!

Scribbly: A Real Imaginary Friend Tale by Ged Adamson

When Maude moves to a new town, everything feels...okay. Things would feel just right if only she had a friend. So, Maude draws a blue puppy and names him Scribbly.

He plays catch, takes naps, but most importantly, Scribbly teaches Maude the importance of staying true to herself and gives her the courage to meet new friends—both human and four-legged.



Indigo Wilde and the Creatures at Jellybean Crescent: Book 1 - Indigo Wilde by Pippa Curnick

Home for Indigo and her little brother, Quigley, is 47 Jellybean Crescent, a crazy and colourful house full of magical creatures that her parents have taken in over the years. There's Fishkins, a purrmaid - half-cat, half-fish, and ALWAYS grumpy; Graham, a llama-corn with a particular taste for tinsel; Olli and Umpf - bright pink and blue yetis who can't blend in to the snow, and that's to name just a few of the creatures.

And now Indigo's parents have sent another Monster Mail delivery to Indigo and Quigley. But this time, the box is empty, and the escaped creature is running rampage around the house. The race is on to catch the creature before it's too late ...

Frostheart: Escape From Aurora by Jamie Littler

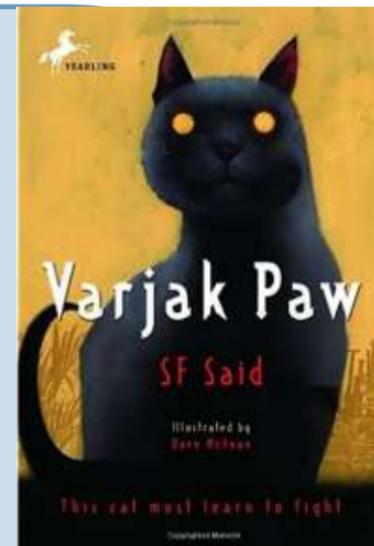
Ash and the rest of the *Frostheart's* brave crew have finally arrived at the majestic stronghold of Aurora - and Ash's mind is *blown*.

It's an extraordinary place - unlike anything he's ever seen - and he can't wait to solve the next clue that will lead him to his parents.

But it's quickly clear that even Aurora isn't safe for Song Weavers. A fanatical Pathfinder captain has turned the city against Ash and his kind - and it's not long before the *Frostheart* has to make another break for freedom.



This half term's author focus is: SF Said, author of *Varjak Paw*.



Can books change the world? If so, how?

I don't think books can change the world – but I think books can change people, and people can change the world!

I believe children's books change our lives more profoundly than any others. Because they come first, they shape us at the deepest levels, giving us ways to think about the world and our experiences of it, opening windows to other worlds, other experiences. They help us imagine the world differently, and that is how change begins. I believe the books that children read today will help them build a better world in the future. That's why I've dedicated my life to writing children's books: because I think they're the most important books of all.

When you wrote *Varjak Paw*, why did you decide to write from the point of view of a cat? What opportunities do animal stories provide?

Varjak Paw was inspired by the adventures of my own cat when he was a kitten, going out into the world for the first time. I thought this was incredibly dramatic, and had to write a story about it. I didn't set out to write an animal story. But it turns out that animal stories can give us new perspectives and powerful metaphors for human experiences. Who hasn't at some point in their lives felt very, very small – perhaps as small as a kitten – facing a very big world? That, for me, is what *Varjak Paw* is really about. Yet the deeper I went into a cat's point of view, the more interesting it became.

Did Dave McKean draw *Varjak Paw* **exactly as you'd imagined him?**

I love Dave McKean's illustrations. The characters are not exactly as I imagined them – they're better! I love the fact that books (even illustrated books) leave each and every reader free to imagine the characters in their own way. So there are as many versions of *Varjak* as there are readers. The way I imagined him is no more valid than anyone else's.

How do you dream up new ideas?

Writers are really just readers who take one more step, and write the stories they want to read themselves. That's all I do. I forget about the fact that I'm a writer, and ask myself, as a reader, what story in all the world do I most want to read? Then, whatever the answer, I write that story myself. With *Varjak Paw*, I wanted to read a story about a cat learning all the skills he would need to survive: skills for fighting, skills for hunting, and more mysterious martial arts known only to cats...

Do you experiment or make mistakes or go through several drafts when you work on a book?

I do many drafts. I want my books to be as good as I can possibly make them, and that takes a long time. There's a lot of trial and error in this process, and I get it wrong a lot before I get it right. *Varjak Paw* took 17 drafts in the end, and those drafts took about five years of my life. All writers do more than one draft. No-one can get everything right first time. You have to build your story over a number of stages. I can't pretend this is easy. But when I look back at the books I've written, I don't see anything I want to change. They really are as good as I can make them. That's a satisfying thing to feel about your work.

What are your childhood memories of exploring books and illustrations?

I was three years old when my uncle read me *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr Seuss. I still remember the thrill of it. I wanted the cat to come to my house and smash everything up! The first book I read on my own was *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (translated by Katherine Woods). This was my mother's favourite book, and we read it together so many times, every night, it felt totally natural when I realised I could read it myself. I read *Watership Down* by Richard Adams when I was eight, and it became my favourite book. I remember thinking that I wanted to write something that was even half as good one day. That's the first moment I can remember in which I imagined myself as a writer. It changed my life, as did all of these books.

Did you write stories when you were a child?

I was always making up stories as a child. As soon as I could write, I was writing them down.

You can write at any age. Remember, a writer is just a reader who takes one more step. You don't have to be a genius to be a writer, or have perfect spelling and grammar. You just have to love stories, and be willing to do whatever it takes to make yours as good as you can.

I also think writing is something that anyone of any background can do. My family is from the Muslim world; I came to Britain from the Middle East when I was two. No-one in my family had written a book, but I always believed it was possible. I got many rejections – 90 before my first book was published – but I think if I could get there in the end, then anyone can.