

How “Old” Are Your Students?

Breaking Down Barriers to Reading

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DISCLAIMER

I have no intention of being exhaustive on the topic, for instance I will not talk about UK Key Stages, all the existing levelled readers...

- I will only mention briefly
 - Accelerated Reader levels
 - Lexile measures

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OUTLINE

- Why choosing a book is important
- Different ways to organise books
 - Refining the classification at each step
- Reluctant readers
- Inclusive publishers
- Inclusive books
- Why 'inclusive' is more important than 'special'

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READING IS IMPORTANT

- We all understand how important reading is for the development of vocabulary, critical thinking,

But how do you 'convince' a student to read?

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HOW DO YOU 'CONVINCE' A STUDENT TO READ?

- You don't!
- You can force a student to read a definite book as part of a course, but you cannot force them to read in general...
 - "Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel" (Plutarc/Plato/Socrates)
- Teachers need to pass on the passion for reading
 - Easier said than done...

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**There is no such a thing
like a child who does not
like to read.**

**They simply have not found
the right book yet.**

(J.K. Rowling)

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HOW DO YOU 'CONVINCE' A STUDENT TO READ?

- Inspire a love of books
- You entice students into reading by putting books that appeal to them in front of their eyes
 - You need to intrigue them
 - Books need to be a pleasure to read
 - Not everybody will like the same book
 - There is no point in giving a princess fairy tale book to a girl who only likes space and dinosaurs
- We 'classify' books to make it easier to choose them

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A BIT ABOUT ME

- I have always loved reading
 - I ‘convinced’ my teacher at kindergarten to teach me how to read when I was four
- I did my high school studies in languages...
- ...and I got a PhD in mathematics!
- I worked in the scientific field for **10** years in the UK and at CERN
- I switched to books in **2014** “Treasure Trove English Books”
- I put my love of logic and organizing things into practice!

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HOW TO ORGANISE BOOKS

- Classical and 'natural' way is to do it by age/subject
 - "Books for a 3 year old"
 - "Books for a teenager"
 - "Books on animals/nature/space/history/magic"

This coarse-grained organization does not take into account the child's reading abilities, and most often hides an underlying intrinsic assumption on the age associated to the topic, what I call the boundary cases (ever seen a baby interested in general relativity?)

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ENTER THE READING AGE

- We start to refine the way to choose a book by age and 'reading age'
 - "Books for a 4 year old who reads like a 5 year old"
 - "Books for a teenager who reads like a 12 year old"

We start to take into account the child's reading abilities, but it is still too coarse

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ENTER THE LEVELS

We fine grain the concept of 'Reading Age'

- 10 year old child with a reading age of 8
- 10 year old child with a reading age of 6

Each Year is 'split' into several levels

- 10 year old child at level 11
- 10 year old child at level 15

Problem: levels are different depending on the publisher

- OUP level 1 \neq DK level 1
- Usborne (First reading 1->4, Young Reading 1->4)

The Usborne Reading

Programme Framework

	Content	Number of pages	Number of words	Words per page	Sentence length
First Reading Level One	Short single narrative followed by reading and comprehension puzzles	32	up to 150	up to 10 (1–3 lines)	on average 2–8 words
First Reading Level Two	Single narrative plus character sheets and/or maps, and puzzles	32	up to 250	up to 20 (2–4 lines)	on average 6–10 words
First Reading Level Three	Single narrative with repeated elements, plus character sheets and/or maps, no puzzles	48	up to 450	up to 30 (2–5 lines)	on average 8–12 words
First Reading Level Four	Single narrative	48	up to 750	up to 40 (3–6 lines)	on average 8–15 words
Young Reading Series One	Several linked stories or one longer narrative in chapters. Direct and indirect speech, intertextual references	48	1,000–1,500	up to 50 (up to 10 lines)	up to 15 words, varied length but generally short
Young Reading Series Two	Single narrative in chapters. Introduce irony and subplot, allow opportunity for inference and deduction	64	2,000–2,500	up to 70 (up to 15 lines)	up to 20 words, more varied length
Young Reading Series Three	Single narrative in chapters. Assume some relevant background knowledge	64	3,000–5,000	up to 120 (up to 20 lines or full page)	up to 30 words, varied length

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OXFORD OWL LEVELS

Year group	Age	Oxford Level	Book Band
Nursery	Up to 4 years old	1	Lilac
		1+	Pink
Reception / Primary 1	4-5 years old	1	Lilac
		1+	Pink
		2	Red
		3	Yellow
		4	Light blue
Year 1 / Primary 2	5-6 years old	5	Green
		6	Orange
		7	Turquoise
		8	Purple
Year 2 / Primary 3	6-7 years old	9	Gold
		10	White
		11	Lime
		12	Lime +
		Year 3 / Primary 4	7-8 years old
9			
10			
11	Grey		
12			
13			
Year 4 / Primary 5	8-9 years old	14	Dark blue
		15	
Year 5 / Primary 6	9-10 years old	16	Dark red
		17	
Year 6 / Primary 7	10-11 years old	18	
		19	
		20	

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UNIFYING LEVELED READERS (UK/US)

- Accelerated Reader by Renaissance Learning
 - a school-based system to promote and develop reading for pleasure, originally from the US but widely used in the UK
- Lexile Measures
 - also originally from the US, where they are widely used in schools
 - They have gained much traction in the UK,
 - The Lexile system is the most widely-used measure of readability around the world. It measures both a reader's ability and the readability of a book.
 - E.g. 500L
 - The higher the Lexile measure, the higher the student's reading level.
 - From 5L to 2000L in increments of 5L

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UNIFYING LEVELED READERS (UK)

- Book Bands
 - a levelling system developed by the UCL Institute of Education together with Reading Recovery Europe
 - by colour to help children choose the right books for their reading ability
 - mainly focused on beginner and developing readers. Originally eleven “official” bands from Pink (Band 1) to Lime (Band 11)
 - Some schools and reading schemes also use higher bands from 12 (brown) to 15 (dark red).
 - Plus Lilac (level 1 together with Pink)
 - Plus Black (17)

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Book Band Reference Sheet

Band	Colour	CfE Level	Year Group Expectation *
1A	Light Pink	Early Level	Early Years - P1
1B	Dark Pink	Early Level	
2	Red	Early Level	P1 - P2
3	Yellow	Early Level	
4	Light Blue	First Level	
5	Green	First Level	
6	Orange	First Level	
7	Turquoise	First Level	
8	Purple	First Level	P2 - P3
9	Gold	First Level	
10	White	First Level	P3 - P4
11	Lime	Second Level	P4 - P5
12	Brown	Second Level	
13	Grey	Second Level	P5 - P6
14	Dark Blue	Second Level	P6 - P7
15	Dark Red	Second Level	P5 - 6 to P6 - 7
16	Black	Second Level +	P7 - S1+

* When considering Year Group Expectations please remember the above are only a guide. With appropriate support, learners will progress at their own rate through a reading progression pathway.

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GRADED/LEVELED READERS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

- Reference levels defined by the Council of Europe
- Launched in 2001, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages marked a major turning point as it can be adapted and used for multiple contexts and applied for all languages.
- Six levels from A1 to C2
- Will this be enough?

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LADYBIRD READER

- Correspondence between CEFR levels and Cambridge Exams
- Pre A1
- A2+



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PENGUIN READER

- Correspondence between CEFR levels and the 7 levels with Headwords count
- Added
 - Pre A1
 - A1+
 - A2+
 - B1+

	CEFR level	Story word count	Headwords
S	Pre-A1	400-600	350
1	A1	1,000-1,600	550
2	A1+	3,000-5,000	700
3	A2	7,000-10,000	1,000
4	A2+	11,000-14,000	1,200
5	B1	15,000-18,000	1,600
6	B1+	18,000-22,000	2,000
7	B2	22,000-26,000	2,500

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ENTER THE INTERESTS AGE

- Additional criteria next to the reading age
- Allows to account for students which have an interest age closer to their physical age, and a very different reading age
- Each child can then be described by several 'ages' as we start to take into consideration all their interests and special needs.
- Goes from being one dimensional to 2-D
 - IA/RA

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THE INTERESTS AGE

- Did you hear about interest age as a way of classifying books before?
- It becomes interesting when one is looking for books for reluctant or struggling readers

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RELUCTANT or STRUGGLING READERS

- Students with a high interest age and a low reading age are typically called 'reluctant' or 'struggling readers'
 - They might have a specific condition (dyslexia, ADHD, ADD)
 - Or maybe not...

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RELUCTANT or STRUGGLING READERS

- Explore other genres of books, do not limit yourself to fiction novels/books
 - Non-fiction books
 - For young children
 - Audio books
 - Flap books
 - For older students
 - Graphic adaptations of well-known books
 - Manga
 - Simplified versions

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RANSOM PUBLISHING

- Reluctant readers section by interest age
- Microwave Shakespeare

- <https://www.ransom.co.uk/books/reluctant-struggling-readers.html>

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BADGER LEARNING

- Reluctant readers section by series and then by interest age
- Graphic Novels
- <https://www.badgerlearning.co.uk/>

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SPECIFIC STRUGGLING READERS: DYSLEXICS

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty which primarily affects reading and writing skills
- There are ways to facilitate ease of reading which I will discuss later
- Dyslexics do not need 'simplified' versions of known books

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BOOKS DESIGNED FOR DYSLEXIC PEOPLE

- All have cream background pages
 - Use sufficient contrast levels between background and text
 - Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.
- Dyslexia friendly font (like the one I am using)
- Larger inter-letter / character spacing
- Inter-word spacing should be at least 3.5 times the inter-letter spacing.
- Larger line spacing

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BOOKS WRITTEN FOR DYSLEXIC PEOPLE

- Use active rather than passive voice.
- Be concise; avoid using long, dense paragraphs.
- Give instructions clearly.
- Avoid double negatives.
- Break up the text with regular section headings in long documents and include a table of contents.

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BARRINGTON STOKES

- “Every child can be a reader”
- Books presented by age and then by reading age
- All Barrington Stokes’ books are specifically conceived for dyslexic readers

“Our books are hi lo (high interest, low ability), meaning the content is appropriate to the age of the reader but the text is edited to suit a lower reading age.”

<https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>

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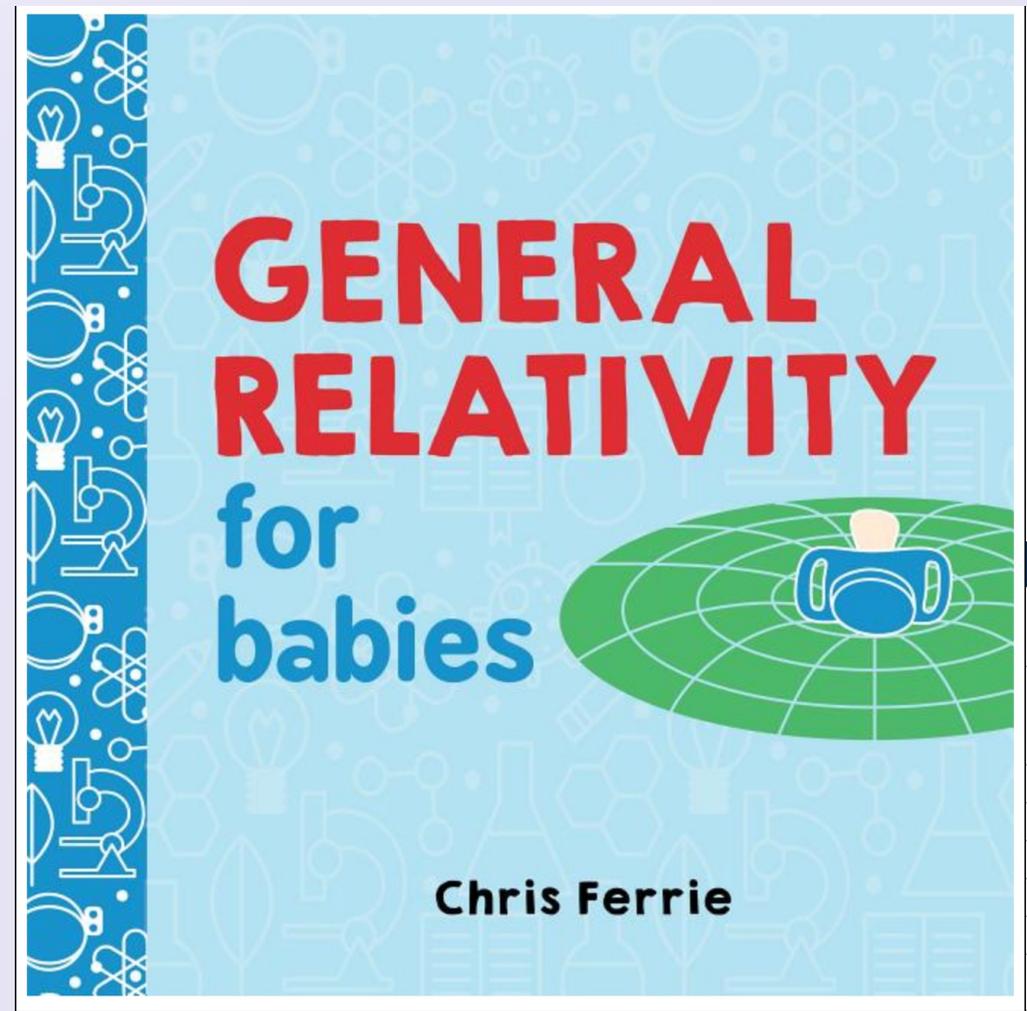
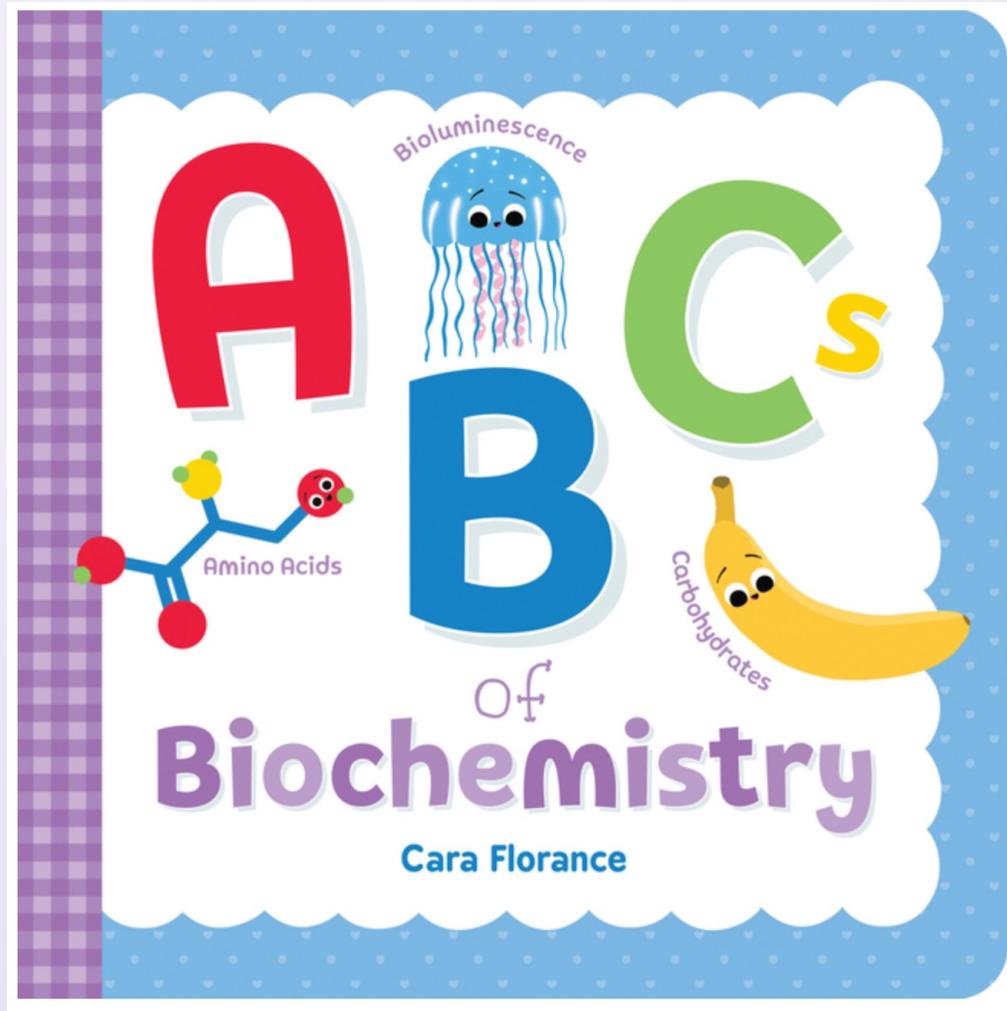
FROM RELUCTANT READERS TO INCLUSIVE BOOKS

- “Every child can be a reader”
- Books by the publishers shown up to here are leading the way for more inclusive books, for children and adults alike
- Books need to represent every reader
- We need to be more inclusive in our everyday lives, to challenge our limiting beliefs
- Inclusive Books are not just for reluctant or special educational needs students, they are for everyone
- It is always interesting and everyone can benefit from seeing the world from another point of view.

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Remember what I said at the beginning about 'boundary cases'?



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INCLUSIVE PUBLISHERS: Knights Of

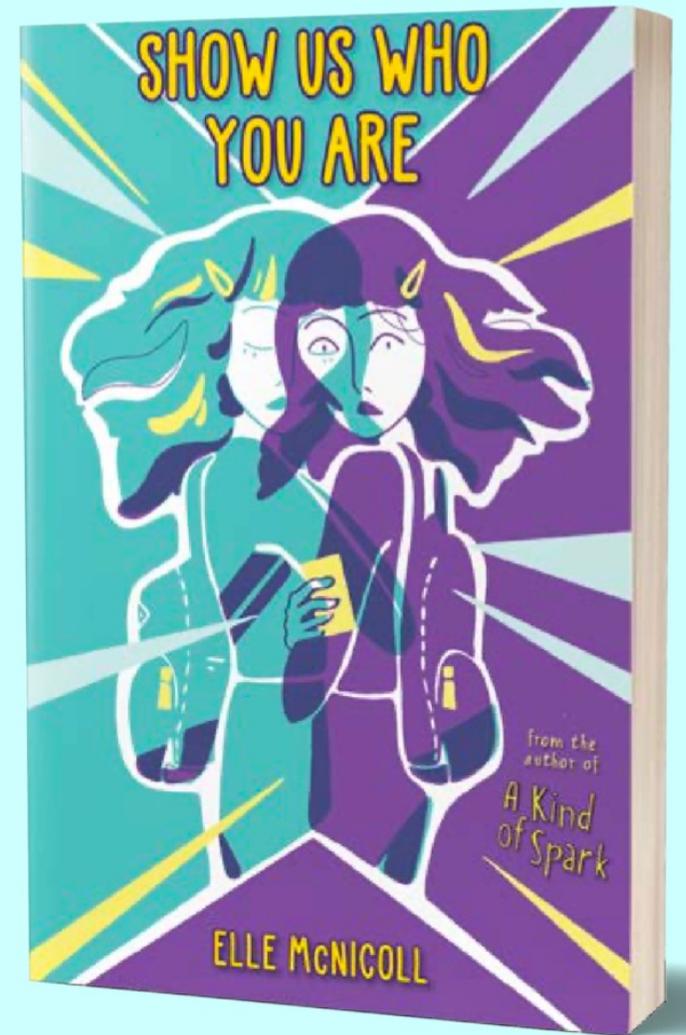
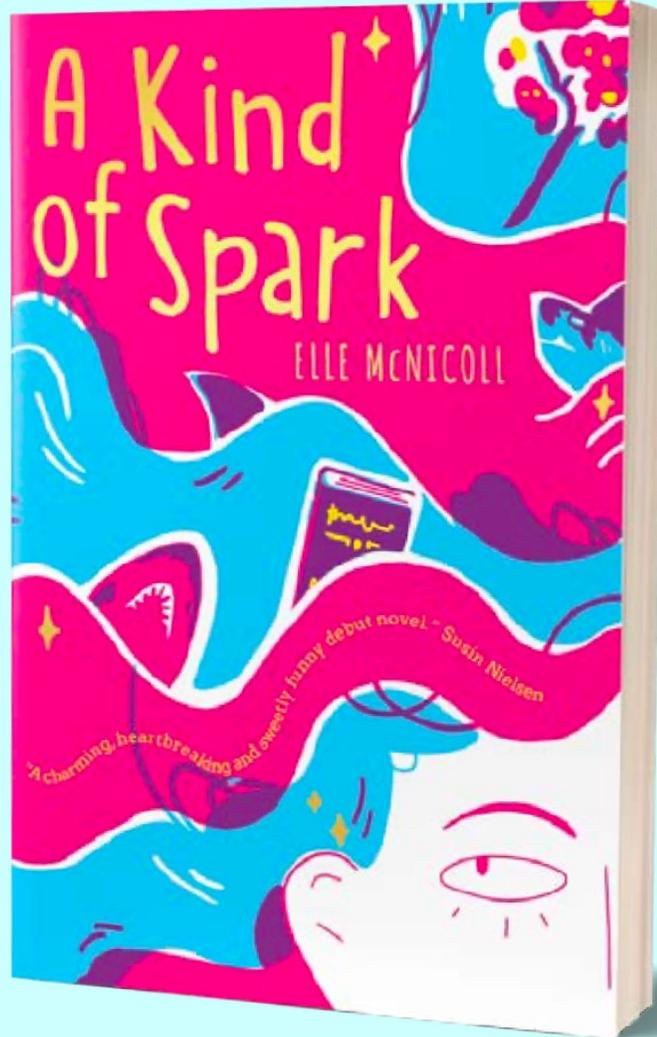
- The first (that I know of) book (well, two) written by an neurodivergent author, **Elle McNicoll**
 - A Kind of Spark
 - Show Us who You Are
- They are devoted to only publish inclusive books
- <https://www.roundtablebooks.co.uk/online-shop>

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Elle McNicoll's books

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INCLUSIVE BOOKS: Amicus

- “My life with...” series
 - Books written by neurodivergent children for children
- <https://www.amicuspublishing.us/books/amicus-illustrated/my-life-with>

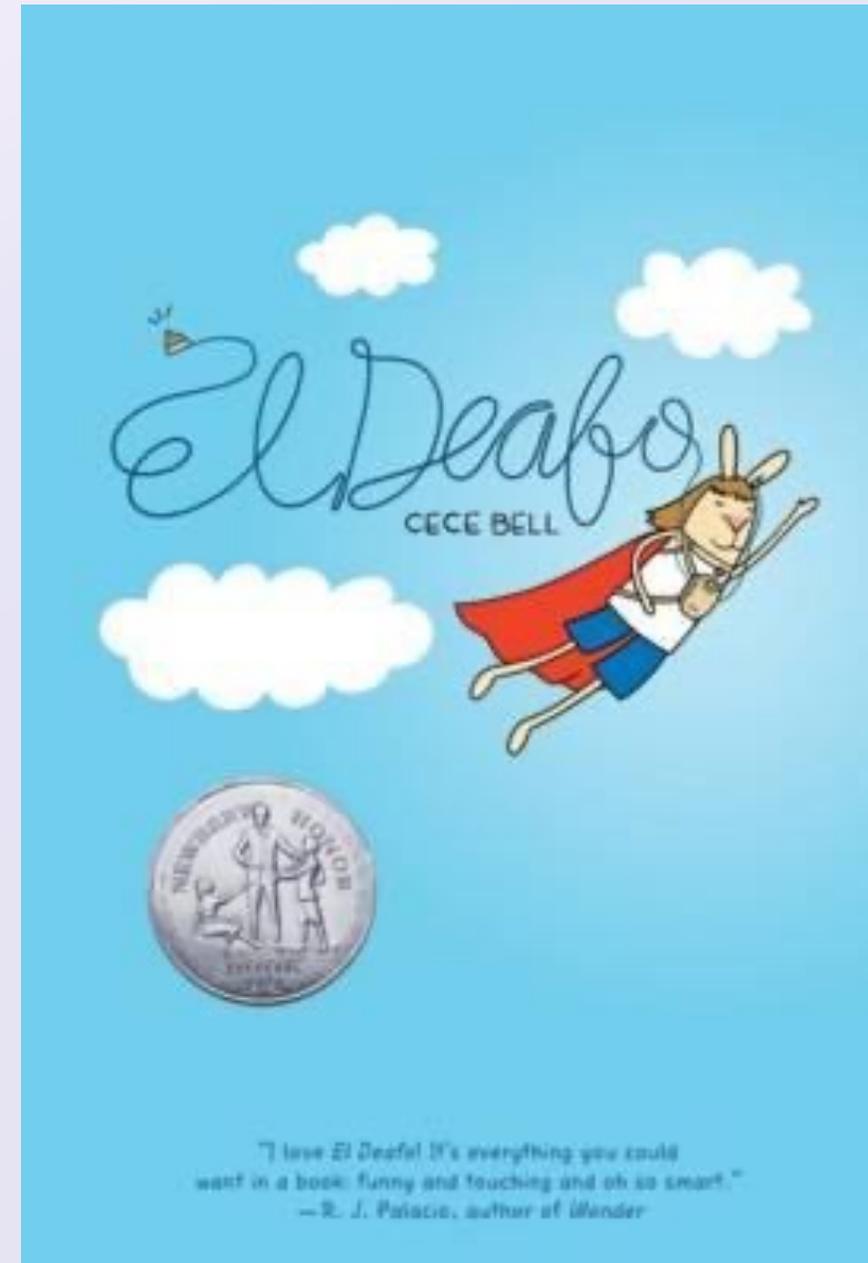
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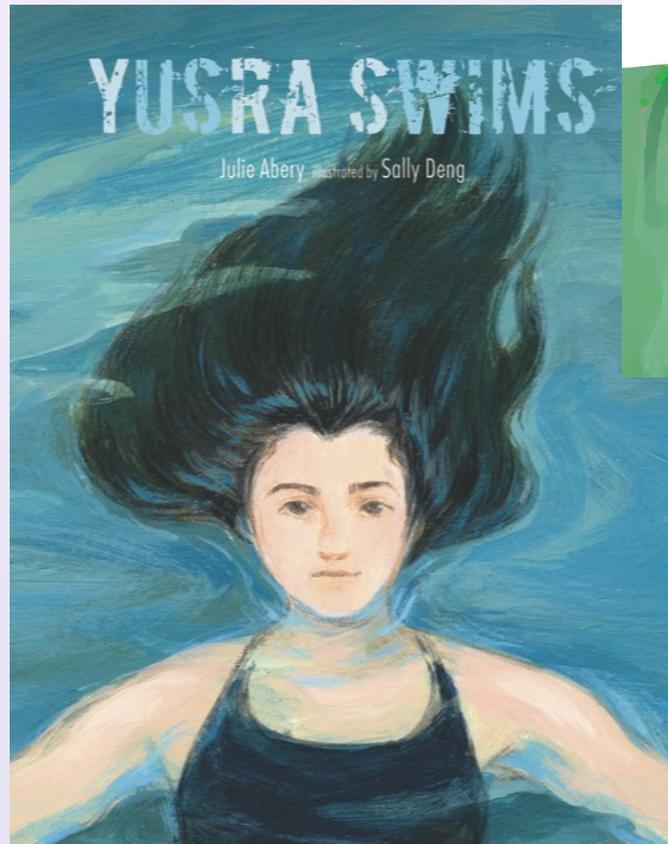
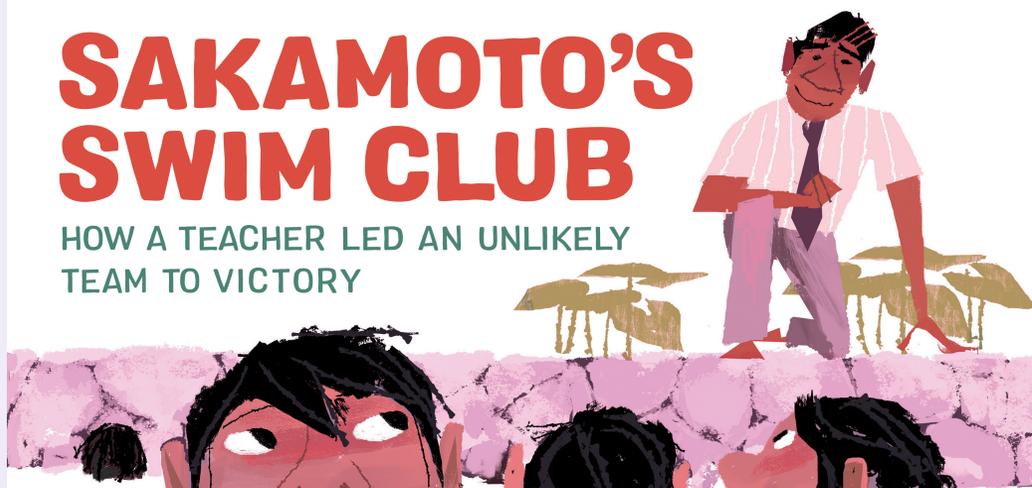
INCLUSIVE BOOKS: Abrams

- Diverse and inclusive books
 - Cece Bell's tale of her struggles as a child with a hearing aid
- <https://www.abramsbooks.com/diversebooks/>

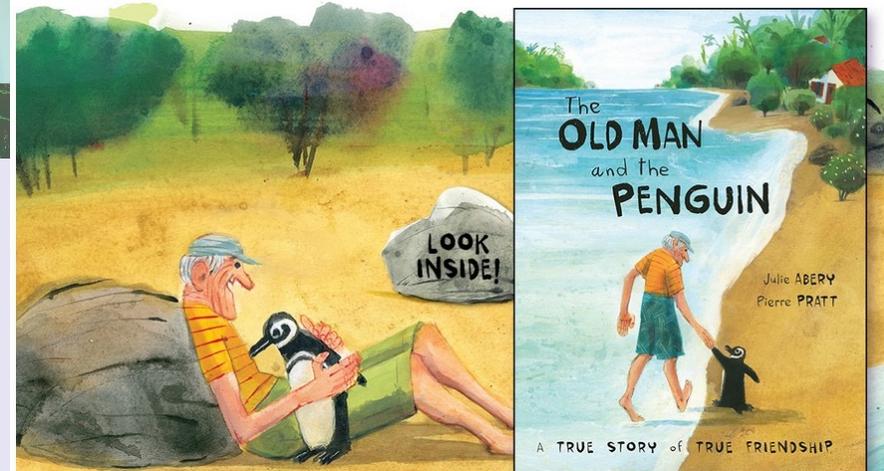
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Julie Abery's books



A heartwarming tale of the friendship between a man and the penguin he saved



"An entertaining introduction for young readers to the harmful effects of oil spills on marine wildlife."

— Kirkus Reviews

"Few readers will be able to resist this charming tale, based on true events."

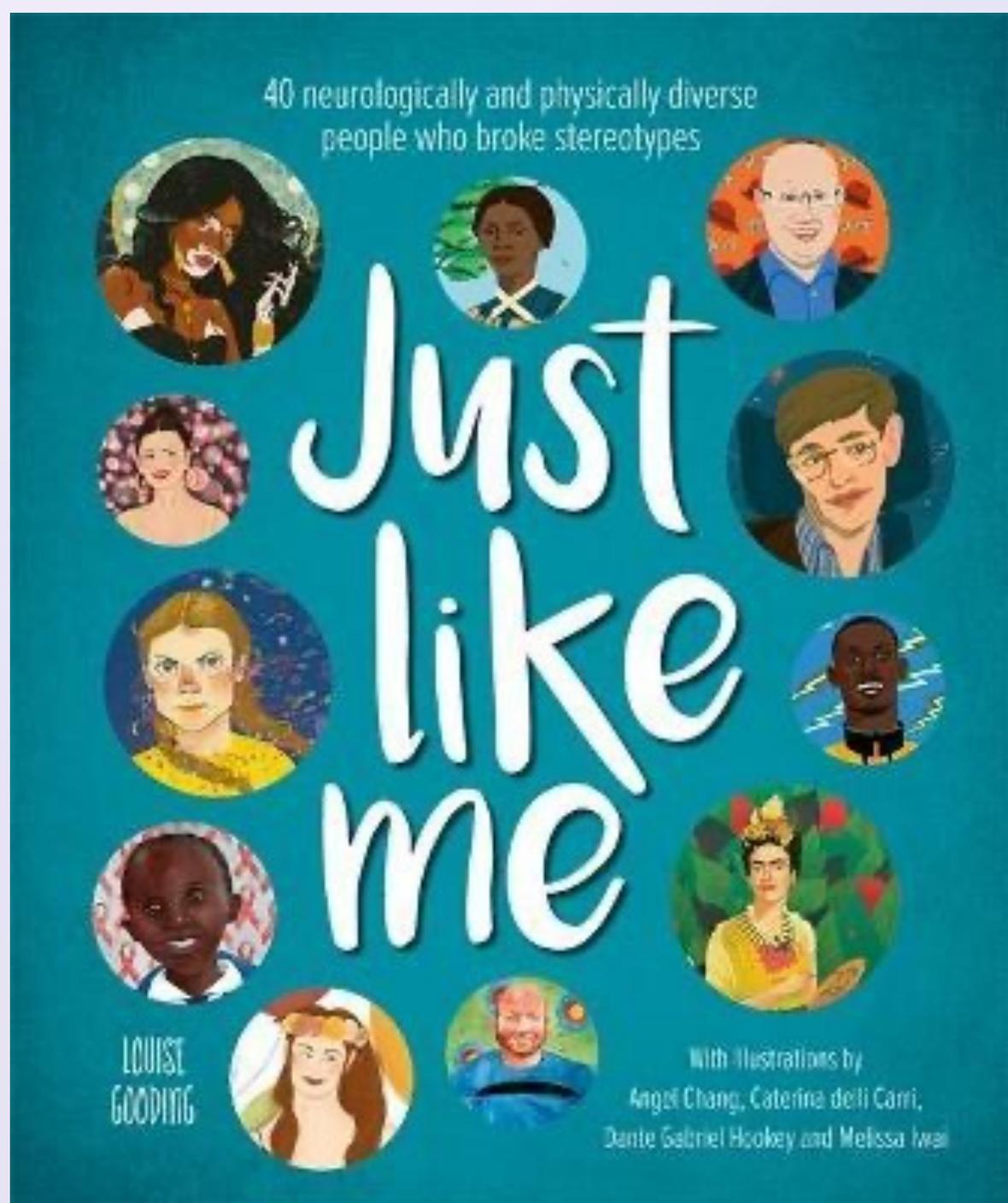
— Booklist, starred review

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Louise Gooding's book

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More Inclusive Publishers

- So far I have only talked about publishers that I know and trade, and books that I sell
- The following few slides will talk about publishers that I am aware of, that I could add to my portfolio in the future (and most of them I probably will)

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Jessica Kingsley Publishers

- Books on autism and neurodiversity
- Inclusive Teaching and Learning Resources

<https://uk.jkp.com/>

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Future Horizons

- Books dedicated exclusively to autism and Asperger's syndrome
- Books for children and teenagers
- Educational material for teachers as well

<https://www.fhautism.com/childrens-books/>

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Candlewick Press

#WeNeedDiverseBooks section

<https://www.candlewick.com/essentials.asp?browse=Title&mode=bkshlv&bkshlvid=62&page=1&bkview=p&pix=y>

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JACARANDA

- Adult books only
 - “Diverse books that centre around the voices and experiences of Black people, people of colour, women and other underrepresented voices”

<https://www.jacarandabooksartmusic.co.uk/collections/jacaranda-imprint>

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Why 'inclusive' is more important than 'special' or 'diverse'

- Inclusive makes everyone feels welcome and at the same 'level', everybody is part of the same community
- "Special Needs" creates barriers
- As actors in the educational world, our mission is to break barriers, not create them
- Does it really matters to me if the background of this presentation is cream, blue or white?
 - It may help someone else to read.
- Am I bothered by the font I am using in this presentation?
 - It improves someone else's reading ability.

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- OUTSIDE OF A DOG, A BOOK IS MAN'S BEST FRIEND.

INSIDE OF A DOG,
IT IS TOO DARK
TO READ.

Grouch Marx





References on levels

- <https://lexile.com/educators/understanding-lexile-measures/about-lexile-measures-for-reading/>
- <https://hub.lexile.com/find-a-book/search>
- <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/reading-recovery-europe>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

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References of graded readers

- <https://www.ladybirdeducation.co.uk/books/ladybird-readers/>
- <https://www.dk.com/uk/category/dk-readers/>
- <https://www.penguinreaders.co.uk/>
- <https://www.ladybirdeducation.co.uk/books/do-you-know/>
- <https://www.amicuspublishing.us/books#filter=.amicus-readers>

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On dyslexia friendly practices

- <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/employers/creating-a-dyslexia-friendly-workplace/dyslexia-friendly-style-guide>
- <https://opendyslexic.org/>

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