

Text rationales for Year 5

Text	Rationale
The Man Who Walked Between the Towers	This tale of daring, written in lyrical prose by Mordecai Gerstein is based on the true exploits of daredevil Philippe Petit. Children will be enthralled by the poetic language used to portray this magical feat, as well as by the detailed illustrations – including two foldout spreads of the New York skyline. The book was the winner of the 2004 Caldecott Medal and the Boston Globe-Horn Award for Picture Books. Links can be made to the history and DT curriculums and used as a starting point to discuss themes of justice, recognition and following your dreams.
Robot Girl	This is a futuristic thriller written by Malorie Blackman, one of the UK's most popular children's authors and the UK poet laureate from 2013 to 2015. Children will develop skills of inference and deduction as they follow the story through many twists and turns. The text is also printed on dyslexic friendly paper, making it more accessible to those who may struggle with independent reading. Links can be made to the science and PSHE curriculums and discussions will open up around the ethics of A.I. – highly topical at present!
Hidden Figures	This important text by Margot Lee Shetterly is the previously untold story of four African-American women, all with exceptional maths skills, who helped America win the Space Race. This book is important for black representation and themes of empowerment and feminism are strongly woven throughout. Other curriculum links can also be made to history, DT, geography and science.
The Tempest	This is a playscript version of one of Shakespeare's most classic stories, including some original language and meter which will inspire children to go on and read further of the bard's plays on their own. A vibrant and enchanting story with strong themes of betrayal and desire, this will provide a good starting point for children to share their thoughts on power and the right ways to use it.
The Odyssey	The Odyssey is one of the greatest stories ever told! This version, told by award-winning children's author Gillian Cross brings to life the heroic voyage of Odysseus and his many trials as he returns home the Trojan War. Following the epic sequence of events, children will develop the stamina to track a complex story through its many highs, lows and stories-within-a-story. In combination with Neil Packer's vivid illustrations, this book will introduce children to the perils and drama of the sea-gods, sirens and monsters of classic Greek mythology. There are obvious links to the history curriculum and children may wish to venture onwards to Homer's Iliad, also told by this wonderful author.
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief	This book provides an opportunity to teach classic Greek mythology through a modern story which will grip children with its sense of adventure, relatable characters and fast-paced plot. With obvious links to the history curriculum, children will learn about Greek gods, mythical creatures and myths as well as explore themes of identity, perseverance and bravery.
The Lost Thing	This book is an important commentary on what it means to belong and what happens if we see things differently. Shaun Tan is a significant author-illustrator famous for his books which explore social, political and historical subjects. Dealing with a quest for belonging, this text shares similar themes with some of his other titles which children may be familiar with, including Eric, and will set them up for studying The Arrival in Year 6. There is also an Academy Award-winning short film (narrated by Tim Minchin) to accompany the book which will support children's learning and lead to discussion about belonging, identity and acceptance.
The Island	This gritty text is a social commentary on issues such as 'closed'-communities, racism, refugees and 'othering'. Told through powerfully stark imagery, the story provides an important opportunity for children to discuss difficult social themes and to think critically in order to understand the experiences of others.
The Lizzie and Belle Mysteries	This significant book by J.T. Williams was shortlisted for the Waterstones 2023 Children's Book Prize. A gripping historical mystery set in the heart of Georgian London's theatreland, the story is inspired by real Black British figures and brings to life a crucial period in Britain's past. Featuring two strong female protagonists, the book centres the lives of London's Black communities. The story provides a backdrop for children to understand the history of transatlantic slavery and its subsequent legacies, with a focus on Black resistance and positive representation. Themes of empowerment, friendship and feminism are woven throughout.

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Freedom Bird	This important book by Jerdine Nolen tells the inspiring story of an enslaved brother and sister who dream their way to freedom. In the tradition of African American folktales, the motif of flying and recurrent theme of freedom are explored. Told in prose reminiscent of oral storytelling, the book provides a context for children to explore the history of transatlantic slavery and humanises the suffering and bravery of people who had no other choice. Providing links to the history and PSHE curriculums, themes of courage, hopes and dreams are also woven throughout.
Rumaysa: A Fairy Tale	This is the debut novel from the author Radiya Hadiza which puts a fresh twist on the classic fairytales: Rapunzel, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty, retelling these fantastical, traditional tales within an authentic Islamic world. Rumaysa is an empowering role model and each of the stories in this text deals with a range of themes such as grief, friendship and kindness. Rumaysa was the Waterstones Children's Book of the Month and now has a sequel Rumaysa, Ever After.
The Whale	The Whale is a wordless picture book which captures the drama of an epic adventure story through haunting graphite illustrations in black and white. Children will be enthralled by the mystery of the Great Spotted Whale and the book will act as a stimulus for lively discussion and debate around the reliability of eyewitness accounts and the feasibility of the characters' stories. Peppered throughout, the newspaper articles add a layer of detail which children can draw upon as evidence. Relying solely on images to convey the magical tale, children will develop their skills of inference and deduction and links can be made to other enchanting tales of hoaxes and mystical creatures.
Beowulf	This is a key text in Anglo-Saxon literature, which delves into the historical period with detail and provides children with a rich background knowledge of the time. Re-told by significant children's author Michael Morpurgo, this is the oldest surviving epic in British literature and includes examples of old-English language which will inspire children's own writing. The book also provides a companion to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.
The Lost Happy Endings	This lyrical picture book by one-time poet laureate Carol-Ann Duffy is rich with literary language and, although a modern-day fairy tale, is sophisticated enough for children in UKS2. The use of literary language is stunning and accessible for children due to the clear story-arc and the fact that this is a picture book where much of the story is expressed through illustration.
Kaspar, Prince of Cats	This novel by one of the UK's most significant children's authors combines an enchanting cast of characters with compelling prose to tell a classic tale rich in literary language. Set against the real historical backdrop of Edwardian London, the story serves as a jumping off point for children to explore the history of the Titanic and London's Savoy hotel. Providing a gentle exploration of the class system, themes of kindness, friendship and challenging expectations are also woven throughout and will act as thought-provoking starting points for discussion.
Children of the Benin Kingdom	This novel perfectly complements historical learning on the Kingdom of Benin. Bringing this historical context to life, the novel provides the context to explore and discuss the influence of this ancient kingdom. Featuring a strong female protagonist, the book opens up the chance to discuss identity, heritage and belonging. Children will also explore the meanings and pronunciations of significant names and items from West Africa, supported by the 'Fact vs Fiction' section at the back of the book.
Alte Zachen	This unique graphic novel is a multigenerational tale of division, identity and the impacts of history on the present. References to Jewish culture and language are woven throughout as the story explores the relationship between grandmother and grandson and the complex differences in outlook that exist between the two. Benjamin Phillips' atmospheric illustrations and clever use of colour provide wordless moments of profound storytelling that children can interpret on their own. There is also a glossary of Yiddish terms to support language development.
Anne Frank	Although a picture book, this story deals with complex historical topics such as the Holocaust and the treatment of Jewish people during World War Two. Children may be familiar with the character of Anne Frank and this book will allow further exploration of her experiences prior to war, including relationships with her family and friends and their subsequent treatment as war progressed. Detailed illustrations by Angela Barrett express much of the story and will allow for the development of inference.

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High Rise Mystery	This novel is the first in a mystery series by Sharna Jackson which won the Best Book for Younger Readers award at the 2020 Waterstones Book Prize. As an advocate for diverse representation in children's literature, the author's cast of racially diverse characters and contemporary writing style will engage children with the murder-mystery genre and encourage them to read further books in the series.
The Strange Case of Origami Yoda	The presentation of this novella (including speech bubbles, hand-written notes, doodles and child-friendly language) will engage reluctant readers and appeal to those with a preference for first-person diary style narratives. Links can be made with the PSHE curriculum as friendships and relationships are explored and there is also the chance to consider the same events from different perspectives, increasing children's appreciation for the experiences of others. The book is part of a series so children can choose to continue their journey beyond their studies of this text.
Curiosity	This eye-catching picture book will teach children about a significant moment in the history of space exploration and provides obvious links to the science and DT curriculums. Told from the perspective of the beloved little spacecraft, the fact-filled and richly illustrated text will help children understand the power of imagination and what it means to be curious. Diagrams, timelines and technical vocabulary are woven throughout, expanding children's ability to engage with the non-fiction genre.
Firebird	This lyrical tale, retold by award-winning children's author Saviour Pirotta, was the inspiration for Stravinsky's famous ballet of the same name. Rich in literary language, and supported by hand-painted illustrations by Catherine Hyde, children will be captivated by the magical world of Russian folklore. The story follows a clear and repetitive structure, which children can use to inspire their own story writing and links can be made to themes of freedom, destiny and challenging expectations and desires.