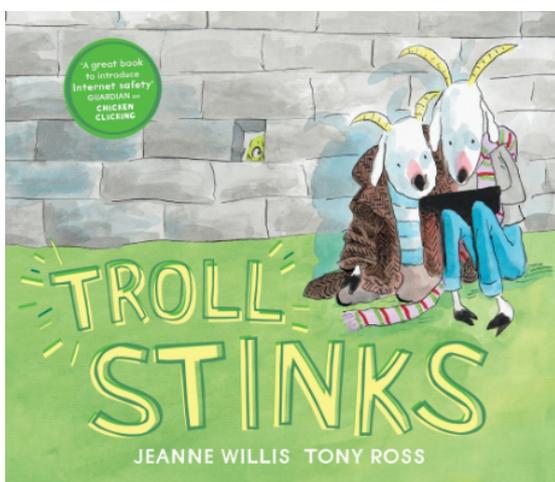


Recommended Reads

Willis, Jeanne & Tony Ross (2016). *Troll Stinks*.

London: Andersen Press.

Recommended by Penni Cotton



Troll Stinks is fun... but with a sting in the tail! Created by the amazing picturebook team Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross, their latest invention amuses, engages and informs young readers of the dangers of playing around with internet devices and cyber bullying. Helped by rhythm, rhyme, stunning visuals and intertextual references to *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, we follow two little

billy goats as they find a mobile phone and get up to all sorts of mischief; causing harm for which they have to repent later. Without giving away too much of the story, it is the troll who will unexpectedly surprise!

The interaction between picture and text in *Troll Stinks* makes it an excellent visual narrative to share with young language learners. Identification with characters is immediate and the narration's direct style allows for both prediction and understanding of each verse, for example: 'There was a little billy goat/who found a mobile phone/just like the one the farmer lost/and kept it for his own'. The mischievousness of the illustrations, particularly when the protagonist hides the phone from his parents, is one with which all children will identify; thus facilitating textual comprehension.

Troll Stinks is likely to be very popular with primary school pupils in the early stages of learning English; although older children may enjoy it at a higher level due to its hidden warnings, unmistakable wit and visual references to the British culture. As well as encouraging the exploration English sounds, structure and meaning, *Troll Stinks* also

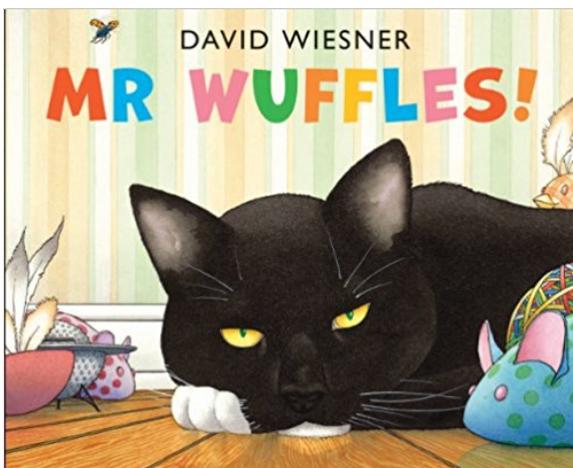
provides examples of everyday language and easy to learn phrases that will enhance linguistic awareness. A large number of downloadable activities, using picturebooks such as *Troll Stinks* to facilitate language learning, can be found in the teachers' resources section of www.epbcii.eu.

Dr Penni Cotton is Senior Research Fellow at NCRCL (Roehampton University, UK), with responsibility for European research projects. She is Director of the *European Picture Book Collection* and the *European School Education Training* course. Her first book, *Picture Books sans Frontières*, explains much of the rationale behind her work. She was Literary Adviser to the second EU-funded European children's literature project, which developed material for second language learning, and is currently Adviser to a number of International children's literature projects. Penni's recent publications can be found at: <http://www.ncrcl.ac.uk/epbc/EN/httpwww.ncrcl.ac.uk/epbcENbib.asp>

Wiesner, David (2013). *Mr Wuffles!*

London: Andersen Press.

Recommended by Julie McAdam



Wiesner has carefully crafted this wordless picturebook to tell a story that makes multiple meanings. The visuals tell the story of a cat, Mr Wuffles and his encounter with an extraordinary toy, which happens to be inhabited by aliens. In playing with the toy, he breaks the spaceship, forcing the aliens to leave and seek help amongst the local inhabitants of the house: ladybugs and ants.

The aliens speak using signs and symbols and the local insects speak using a series of scratch marks, but through the use of wall art and the exchange of cultural artefacts they develop a daring plan to fix the spacecraft and escape the clutches of the cat.

Wiesner explains his artistic thinking through his website, revealing intricate details, such as the creation of the alien language, the use of small models to get the folds of the clothes just right and filming his own cat Cricket to get the cat movements to look realistic. This attention to detail pays off, since much can be inferred by the reader from these small details. Thus, for many this becomes a story about overcoming communication barriers, working with others to solve problems and engaging in collective action to overcome oppression as symbolised by Mr Wuffles.

While having their attention drawn to the existence of different languages and the importance of non-verbal forms of communication, children can have a lot of fun decoding the aliens' language. In a recent project I watched a teacher use this book with a class of multilingual five-year-olds, who were learning English as an additional language. They teamed up with the older children in their school and carried out a survey of the languages spoken. They went on to argue for multilingual signage in their school, a task that was accomplished with the aid of their parents. Reading/Viewing this book led the children to celebrate linguistic diversity and welcome their parents into the school space.

<http://www.hmhbooks.com/wiesner/mr-wuffles.html>

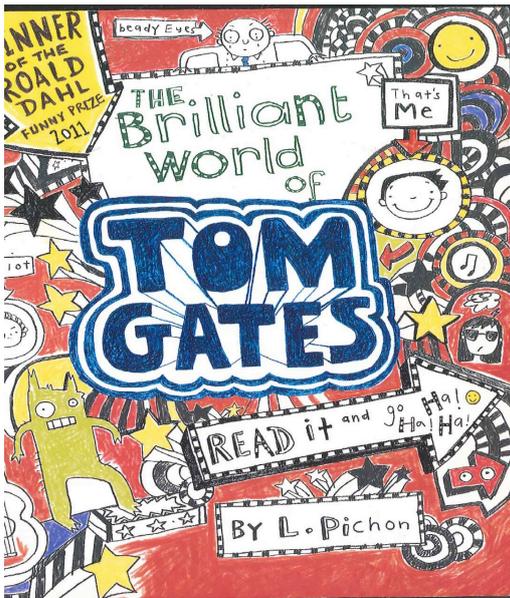
Julie McAdam is a Lecturer in Children's Literature and Literacies at the University of Glasgow. She is interested in the ways in which children's literature can be thought of as a mirror, window and door to the world (Sims Bishop 1997). She has published on using picturebooks to engage learners in intercultural literacy and is interested in supporting teachers to use multimodal, multilingual and multicultural literature in their classrooms.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/staff/juliemcadam>

Pichon, Liz (2011). *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates*.

London: Scholastic.

Recommended by Piri Leeck



The Brilliant World of Tom Gates (2011) is the Roald Dahl Funny Prize award-winning graphic novel by Liz Pichon, and similar in style to *Babymouse* and *Wimpy Kid*. The book tells the story of a young boy called Tom who has to face ludicrous situations trying to manage his everyday struggles in school and at home. The 239 pages of the novel cover the highlights of Tom's first term in grade five. It is the story of a boy who struggles to impress his crush, avoid homework and follow his dreams – to start a famous band. He faces the typical problems

many children his age are familiar with: embarrassing parents, annoying classmates, teachers and siblings, too much school when other things are more important – in Tom's case drawing and singing in his own band.

The graphic novel is well suited for lower grades in secondary school, as it relates to the realities of students of that age group, even if the events recounted in the book are highly caricatured. Though the book is written for native speakers of Tom's age, and the language of the book is thus more difficult than books typically read in ELT classrooms in lower grades, the style of the novel helps to bridge the potential gap between age appropriateness and language appropriateness. Most of the pages of this graphic novel consist of more text than pictures, but when these occur they are either complete comic-like illustrations, or drawings of single elements right next to/ above/ below the words they refer to (beady eyes, moustache, vanilla wafers, etc.) and thus support understanding. The text uses different fonts and font sizes for different emotions and speakers, follows different directions (e.g. 'Here's Snakey!' is written like a wriggling snake), includes

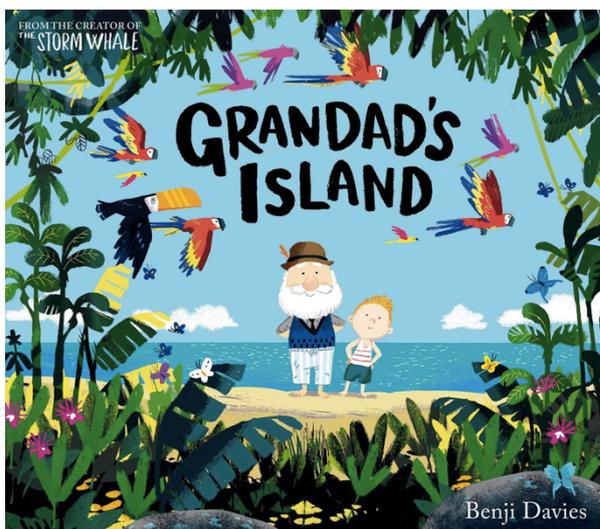
imitations of different text types (chat, letters, notes, magazine covers, etc.) and there are seldom more than fifteen lines on one page. Since the text is much shorter than a monomodal novel and has many visual items supporting understanding, *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates* is certainly motivating to read even for students who otherwise do not like reading or have difficulties with longer texts. If the whole book seems too much to use at school, single episodes like the camping trip disaster (pp.16-27) can be used as well.

Piri Leeck (PhD) has taught English courses at a mixed-age group elementary school and several universities and is currently a staff member of the Münster University TEFL team. Her research interests include a wide variety of fields, such as portfolio work, learner autonomy and storytelling, as well as how to teach grammar to very young learners.

Davies, Benji (2015). *Grandad's Island*.

London: Simon and Schuster.

Recommended by Tatia Gruenbaum



Grandad's Island is the story of a little boy called Syd, whose Grandad lives in a house at the bottom of the garden. Syd and his grandfather are very close and one day he finds his Grandad in the attic, waiting for him to embark on a journey by ship. They travel the oceans and finally arrive on a tropical island. They set out to discover the colourful and charming island and Grandad decides it is the perfect place

to stay. He hugs Syd and assures him that he will not be lonely. And so all by himself, Syd mounts the ship and bravely sails through storms before reaching his home safely. The

next day, he returns to his Grandad's house. It is unchanged, except that Grandad is not there. Instead, there is an envelope waiting for Syd with a picture of his Grandad inside.

The illustrations in this book are so detailed and vibrant that they entice children to look closely, discuss what they can see and simply imagine. Many pages can be selected in order to focus on themed vocabulary, for example, or past tenses or reported speech. Children can work on expanding the given dialogues but also on creating new ones by adding characters that Syd and his Grandad meet on the island. This picturebook offers a number of cross-curricular links to subjects such as geography, biology and art. The sensitivity between Syd and his Grandad and how it develops throughout the story can be linked especially well to music. Finally, *Grandad's Island* can open up class discussions about memories, emotions but also about loss. As it is not clearly stated, children can speculate what happened to Grandad, and while some will have experienced the loss of a grandparent, others might not, and so many different ideas will be shared.

When I selected this book for a workshop with student teachers, my own father had recently passed away. And so I hoped that student teachers would become aware of how *Grandad's Island* could support not only my children but also other children whose grandparents had passed away or who were no longer living nearby.

Tatia Gruenbaum is a Lecturer at the Avans University of Applied Sciences in Breda (NL) and a PhD Student at University College London Institute of Education. Her research is centred on the use of picturebooks as a tool in primary teacher education in the Netherlands. Tatia Gruenbaum is also the founder of a successful not-for-profit English children's book project called *The Little English Library*. This Dutch primary school project was a finalist at the School Library Association Inspiration Awards 2015 and the British Council ELTons 2016 awards.