



# Buffalo Bert: the Cowboy Grandad | Detective Dan | Treasure at the Boot-fair

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News to Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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These three excellent titles in the 'White Wolves' guided readers series each offer a solid read for Year 3 pupils, with stories grounded in familiar experience. The series Consultant is Sue Ellis of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education and the stories are a definite cut above the average offering.

In the first title Dan is always getting into trouble with his teacher, Miss Harper, for untidiness. No matter how careful he is, his lunch-box always ends up on the floor, instead of on the proper shelf. Then Minnie, the school cat, takes to following him and he is in even bigger trouble for 'encouraging' her when she comes right into the classroom. When his favourite sardine sandwiches start to disappear regularly, Dan has had enough and he decides to turn detective with his best friend, Billy... Initially, this leads them into even bigger trouble, but soon Dan puts two and two together and order is restored to his world.

This simple story is beautifully crafted, so that young readers can enjoy solving the mystery just ahead of Dan and relish both their own cleverness and the fun of the tale. Dan's school anxieties and his friendship with helpful Billy are convincingly drawn and provide plenty of material for children to identify with, while a carefully graded vocabulary provides just the right amount of support for the less confident reader.

Sunny in **Buffalo Bert** has an embarrassing problem. His Grandad does not wear slippers, smoke a pipe or snooze in a chair like other Grandads -- no, he is a fully paid-up, old-style Western Cowboy, complete with the hat, boots and spurs. This was fine when Sunny was little, but now he's older and has just started a brand-new school. He wants to invite his friends round, but how can he, with Grandad liable to greet them with 'Howdy!' or a cowboy song? When Grandad realises Sunny is trying to keep him out of the way by encouraging him to take up a new hobby, he sadly agrees to stay in the garden. Sunny's friends are unimpressed by the lack of a DVD or a computer in the house, but they are thrilled

when they accidentally discover Grandad's garden campfire. Soon they are eating sausages and beans outside with him and listening to his campfire stories.

Children will readily empathise with Sunny's embarrassment and his need to belong, while absorbing an unobtrusive lesson in human tolerance. Grandad's corny Country'n 'Western songs, humorous lists and library posters all add spice to the text and a variety of reading challenges with their different fonts.

In **Treasure at the Boot-fair**, Cal has a new Saturday job, helping Mr Jessop on his stall, but it's raining and Mr Jessop, with his wobbly left eye and missing teeth, is clearly 'weird as a widget'. His wares look like so much junk to Cal, but Mr Jessop is determined to teach Cal the art of selling bric-a-brac ('Antiques, son -- except not so posh. '), together with a lesson in fair trading. He leaves Cal to man the stall by himself with a copy of his 'Bric-a-Brac Handbook'. Soon Cal is put to the test when he buys a genuine Rolex watch from a young girl for 10, only to realise after she's left that it's a very valuable early model. Cal rushes after her to let her know and the girl retrieves her watch, but forgets to return the 10... Powling brings his customary humour to this lively tale with a fresh contemporary setting that children will relate to. It is a little implausible that Cal who is 'too young to be paid' would work for free in a job his mother has found for him, but this caveat aside, **Treasure at the Boot-fair** has just the right amount of cleverly managed tension and suspense in a small frame to sustain interest. The vocabulary is gently challenging, while Mr Jessop is an eccentrically believable character in the best fictional tradition.

Running Order:

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