



# Good Reads 244

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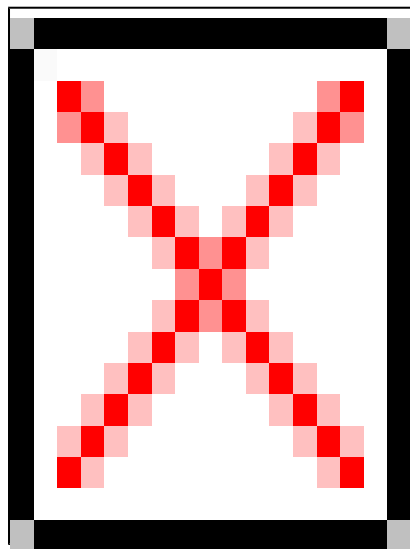
Article Category:

Good Reads

Byline:

**Good Reads** at home with the Biddles

**Good Reads**, in which pupils at a school write about the books they have been enjoying, is one of the longest running and most popular **Books for Keeps** features. During the pandemic it has been difficult to commission young reviewers, so we are very grateful to **Jon Biddle**, teacher, coordinator of the national **Patron of Reading** initiative and an [Empathy Lab](#) [2] advisor, for supplying these reviews, written by his daughters. Thank you too to Leah and Anna. Unsurprisingly, there's a strong empathy focus to the reviews.

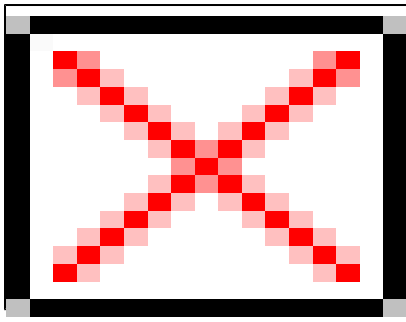


## Jelly

Jo Cotterill, Piccadilly Press, 978-1848126732, £6.99 pbk

**Jelly** is an empathetic book about a girl whose nickname is Jelly. She is a kind, thoughtful and lively person but only in secret. When she is around other people, she is unsure of herself because of her weight. Her solution is to laugh it off but as the book goes on she realises that this is not the best idea. Her mum doesn't know that she is faking her emotions because she has her own problems, finding someone who is polite and respects her. Her mum eventually finds a boyfriend who brings out the best in her, but can he help Jelly show her true self? I thought this book was good because it dealt with the issue of self-esteem and being true to yourself. Jo Cotterill always writes books about realistic characters who face challenges in their lives that children will be able to relate to and this is one of my favourites.

Leah, aged 11



## Roller Girl

Victoria Jamieson, Puffin, 978-0141378992, £7.99 pbk

This book is about a determined girl called Astrid who goes to watch a roller-skating competition with her best friend. She is inspired to start skating herself and a perfect opportunity comes up, a skating camp over the summer holidays. She is desperate to go along with her best friend and books a place without asking if her friend wants to take part. Sadly, her best friend has already decided to go to a different summer camp, along with Astrid's worst enemy. Anyone who has had friendship issues will understand and love this brilliant graphic novel. I enjoyed it so much that I read it all in one go. It would be a great story for a child in Year Four or Five to read, especially someone who feels that they are left out of things by their friends.

Anna, aged 8

## [The Distance Between Me and The Cherry Tree](#) [3]

Paola Peretti, Hot Key Books, 978-1471407550, £6.99 pbk

**The Distance Between Me and The Cherry Tree**, the first novel by Italian author Paola Peretti, is based upon her own experience of Stargardt Disease, an illness which causes people to gradually lose their eyesight and eventually leads to complete blindness. Mafalda is a 9-year-old girl who uses the ease with which she can see the cherry tree in the book's title as an indication of how rapidly her eyesight is failing. She compiles a list of things she wants to do while she still has vision, which include steering a submarine and counting the stars in the sky. As time progresses, Mafalda realises what will be truly important in her life when she finally loses her ability to see.

Mafalda is a character who immediately inspires empathy. She is naïve and vulnerable but, as her condition deteriorates, the determined and courageous side of her personality comes to the fore. Much is made of the changing dynamics in Mafalda's relationships with her family and friends and obvious comparisons can be made with **Wonder** by RJ Palacio. Despite the inevitability of the progression of Mafalda's disease, the book is full of hope, optimism and love. This is a perfect read for children in Year 6, who will be drawn into its emotional depths.

Jon, aged 48

## [The Space We're In](#) [4]

Katya Balen, illus Laura Carlin, Bloomsbury Children's Books, 978-1526601940, £10.99 hbk

**The Space We're In** is the story of a ten-year-old boy called Frank. He has a brother, Max, who is autistic and finds it very difficult to talk to his family. He also struggles with being independent. His family do all they can to support him but, because he's only five-years-old, he doesn't really understand. The family are then hit by an almighty tragedy. This book describes their problems and how they try to overcome them. **The Space We're In** is gripping to read and people will be able to relate to the emotional story this book tells and empathise with the realistic characters. I found this book unlike anything I had ever read before. I would recommend it for anyone who enjoys sad books, as well as ones that are realistic and hard-hitting. The first thing I did when I finished this wonderful book was read it again!

Leah, aged 11

## **Two Sides** [5]

Polly Ho-Yen, illus Binny Talib, Stripes Publishing, 978-1788950626, £7.99 pbk

This book is very good because it talks about friendship issues and solving problems together. It is about two girls with very different personalities. One is bubbly and talkative, and the other is quiet and shy. One of the friends forgets something that the other one lent to her. They break friends and the shy one doesn't make another friend but the confident one does. This story is very easy to read and I enjoyed it a lot. I like it how it has coloured pictures and talks about something important in a funny way. The important message is about not letting down your friends and forgiving them if they make a mistake. The illustrations are good because they help build a picture of what is happening in the story. I would give this nine out of ten and recommend it for someone in Year Two and Three.

Anna, aged 8

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