



# Ten of the Best Picture Books to Reassure and Boost Young Children at the Beginning of the Year

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Ten of the Best

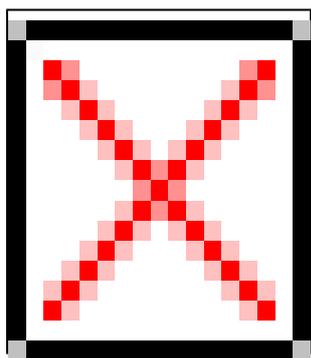
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**Ten of the Best:** picture books to reassure, selected by **Carey Fluker Hunt**

Books aren't medicine, but in these days of separation, bewilderment and loss, they can feel like it. Whether you're looking for a tonic to fortify or a balm to heal, the right books can work wonders. **Carey Fluker Hunt** has selected ten of the best.

One of the best ways to boost children's wellbeing is to share books they choose for themselves and really love. But if you'd like to extend their experience, here are ten picturebooks with special powers for you to explore. They are enticing, accessible and great fun to share - reading for pleasure? books in every sense - but all of them do much more than simply entertain.

## Toys in Space



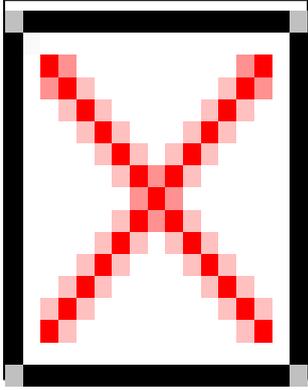
Mini Grey, Red Fox, 978-1849415613, £7.99 pbk

Seven toys have been abandoned on the grass. Night falls, and for the first time they see the starry sky in all its terrifying glory. A tale might keep their spirits up, but Wonderdoll's story is about a drooling alien who kidnaps toys, which doesn't really help...

Bursting with inventive details and great fun to read, this story-within-a-story brings the creative process centre-stage and shows how powerful imagination can be.

When children's lives are physically confined and exploring new places isn't possible, books can help them to escape. And if they hone their storytelling skills, like Wonderdoll, they'll have endless worlds at their command.

## Mr Brown?s Bad Day

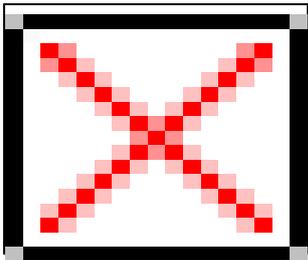


Lou Peacock and Alison Friend, Nosy Crow, 978-1788003988, £6.99 pbk

Mr Brown is a Very Important Businessman who carries a Very Important Briefcase. When the latter is inadvertently stolen by a baby elephant, a high-energy chase through town ensues. By the time Mr Brown ? now in his shirtsleeves ? goes upstairs to bed, we can?t wait to discover exactly what he has inside that case?

Suffused with summer sunshine, endearingly silly and bursting with kindness and good cheer, this is a book to lift the spirits on days when everything seems grey. Mr Brown?s devotion to the business of a snuggly bedtime will send little ones to sleep with warm hearts - and adults, too, will feel the glow.

## Little Wolf?s First Howling

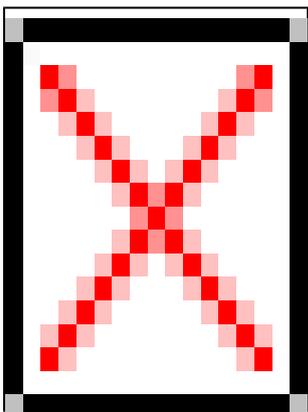


Laura McGee Kvasnosky and Kate Harvey McGee, Walker Books, 978-1406376708, £11.99 hbk

Little Wolf is out with Dad for his very first Howl, and he?s anxious to show good howling form. But however hard Little Wolf tries, his voice sounds?different. How can he join the pack when he makes that kind of noise?

This dramatically-illustrated picturebook is immensely engaging and tackles some important themes. Big Wolf has high expectations, but loving insight enables him to recognize and value Little Wolf?s individuality. This is an empowering message for families to share: one that leads to emotional wellbeing and growth. And there?s nothing quite like toe-tapping rhythms or a good long howl to deliver a boost!

## On a Magical Do-Nothing Day

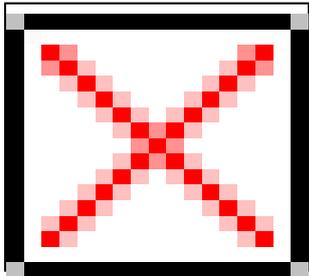


Beatrice Alemagna, Thames and Hudson, 978-0500651797, £6.99 pbk

The boy in this book would rather play onscreen than go outside. His cautious misery when faced with mud and rain may strike a chord: this is a child who hasn't discovered the secrets of the Great Outdoors. But as the storm reaches its peak, things change - and when the boy gets home, he's almost bursting with the wonders that he's seen.

This is a story of slow happenings and subtle shifts, but Alemagna's artwork raises it to epic status. Observing the natural magic in this book is a joy, and will inspire mood-boosting explorations of your own.

### [On Sudden Hill](#) [3]

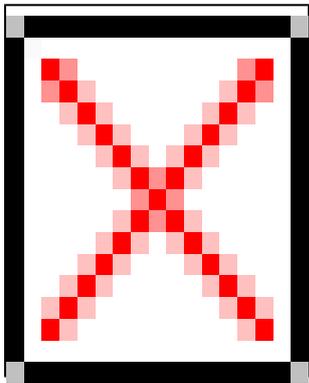


Linda Sarah and Benji Davies, Simon and Schuster, 978-1471119293, £6.99 pbk

Birt and Etho spend all their time playing together on Sudden Hill. When a new boy arrives, Birt feels left out. How Shu and Etho respond to Birt's withdrawal shows imaginative play at its most powerful, and in making a feature of the 'nuts and bolts' of friendship, this wise and warm-hearted picturebook is doing something even more important.

Books can't replace social interactions, but they can help us understand how other people think and feel. Characters like Birt and Shu and Etho are real enough to matter, and that's the key.

### **Clean Up!**



Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola, Puffin, 978-0241345894, £6.99 pbk

On a family holiday in Jamaica, Rocket discovers piles of plastic littering the beach. She's upset, but responds by mobilising a 'clean-up crew' and the plastic is recycled into useful things. As her Grampy observes, one day Rocket is going to change the world!

Worrying can make us all feel powerless, and there's a lot going on at the moment to cause anxiety. Watching Rocket take action is a real mood-booster: we can all be agents for change, and even the toughest of tasks begins with the first step.

### [Little Bear's Treasures](#) [4]

Stella Dreis, Greystone Kids, 978-1771646536, £7.99

Little Bear is a finder of treasures, a collector of objects and experiences. What could be better than a shiny button, a handy clothespin or a piece of fluff? Sadly, the other animals are unmoved by what they see as junk ? until Little Bird turns up. Together, Bear and Bird create something that neither could have discovered independently, and it?s worth the wait.

This gentle story has much to say about joy in small things, and being true to who we are. It may not happen now, but if we keep our enthusiasm alight, and nurture our inner selves, we?ll have something special to bring to a friendship, when it comes.

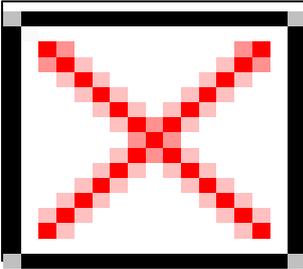
**Looking After Daddy**

Eve Coy, Andersen Press, 978-1783447107, £6.99 pbk

William is always getting himself into scrapes. The supermarket makes him very tired, and he really does create a lot of work?. how lucky he is to have a little girl to look after him!

Told from a child?s perspective and starring her daddy, William, this gently humorous and deeply reassuring book encourages recognition of the care provided by a loving adult. There?s more than a dash of subversive pleasure, too: many children have an acute sense of their own lack of power, so inhabiting a story where the tables are turned and I?m in charge can be satisfyingly cathartic!

**Baby Bird**

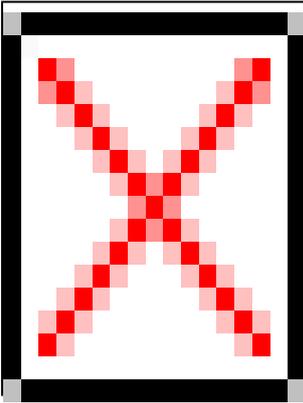


Andrew Gibbs and Zosienka, Frances Lincoln First Editions, 978-1786035929, £6.99 pbk

One of Baby?s wings is bigger than the other. He?s desperate to fly, so the irrepressibly cheerful Cooter tries to help by putting him through a rigorous training programme. But as Baby discovers, sometimes you really can?t have what you want - and sometimes what you?ve got right now is better, anyway.

This lively and beautifully-illustrated story delivers a profound message with kindness, humour and insight. We want children to feel they can do anything, and it can be tough accepting limitations. Discovering the silver lining is empowering, though, as Baby demonstrates.

**Mister Magnolia**



Quentin Blake, Red Fox, 978-1862308077, £6.99 pbk

Mister Magnolia has only one boot. It doesn't matter how many rooty-tooting trumpets, hooting owls or other rhyming delights present themselves, a pair of boots eludes him ? until a marvellous parcel arrives. Could it possibly be? another boot?

The expressive eccentricity of Blake's illustrations and the sheer joy of a text that bowls along at such a pace and in such style has made Mr Magnolia a favourite for many years. When you find a book like this - one that children beg to hear again and again ? you'll know you've found something worth treasuring and keeping close.

**Carey Fluker Hunt** is a writer, teacher and founder of **Cast of Thousands**, where she blogs about illustrated books for children and shares creative learning activities inspired by those books.

Find her at [castofthousands.co.uk](http://castofthousands.co.uk) [5] and on instagram @\_castofthousands\_

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