



**Peters**

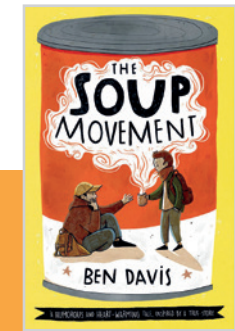
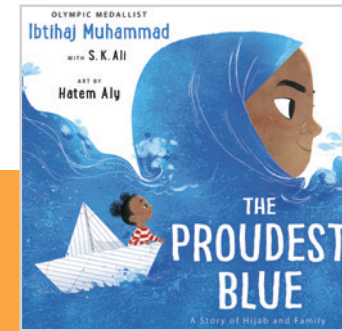
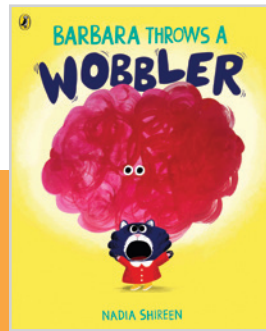
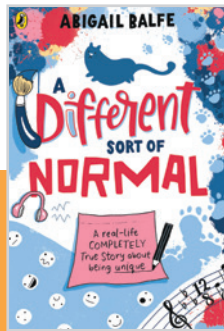
Official book supplier



# EmpathyLab



Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.



## 2022 Read For Empathy Guide

Books to build empathy - for children aged 4-11

#ReadForEmpathy

Why empathy?

Picture books,  
early readers,  
poetry, non-fiction

Novels, graphic  
novels

Top tips



# EmpathyLab

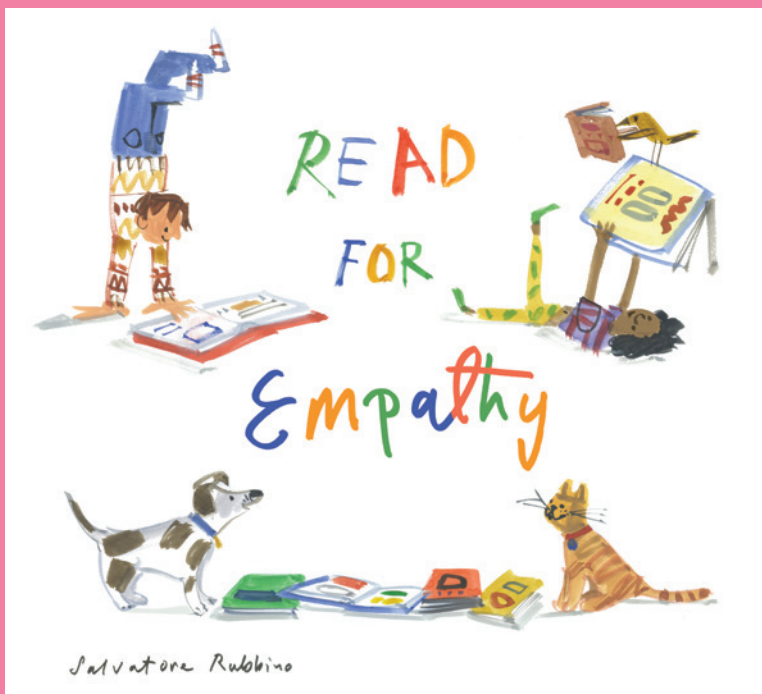
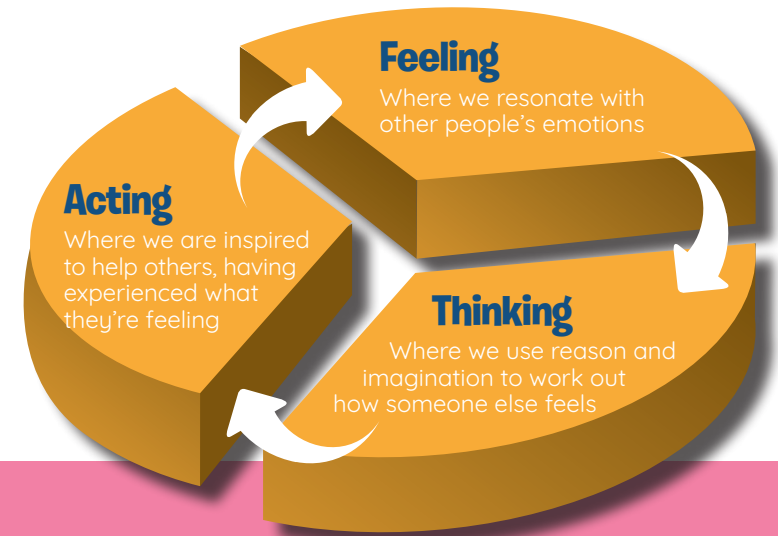
**Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.**

Empathy is our ability to understand and share someone else's feelings. It builds stronger, kinder communities. It's a crucial life skill that children need in order to learn, thrive and contribute.

We're not born with a fixed quantity of empathy – it's a skill we can all learn. Excitingly, research shows that books are a powerful tool to develop it. When children identify with book characters, they learn to see things from others' points of view. As they read, they are building their empathy skills.

## How does empathy work?

Empathy is made up of three main elements.



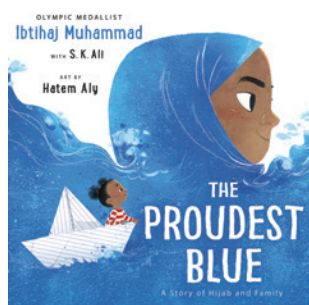
## The 2022 Read for Empathy collection

An expert panel has chosen thirty-five wonderful books for children aged 4–11. Each one does a specific empathy-building job, like helping children develop new perspectives or recognise and name emotions. They offer powerful insights into different ways of life and how it might feel to be a refugee, or disabled, or homeless. Please use them to inspire children to turn feelings of empathy into action – in their homes, schools and communities.

This Guide is brought to you by EmpathyLab, in partnership with book supplier Peters. We also have a Guide with books for 12–16 year-olds and a separate Guide with books available in Welsh. You can use these all year round, and they will be especially useful in the run-up to Empathy Day on 9 June 2022. Please join in! Register for updates at [empathylab.uk](https://empathylab.uk) and follow [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK).

# Picture books

Thirteen superb picture books, perfect for empathy-building reading and discussion with children aged 4-11. We believe no child is ever too old for a great picture book.



## The Proudest Blue Ibtihaj Muhammad, S.K. Ali & Hatem Aly

The story of two sisters joining a new school. Asiya, the older, is wearing a glorious blue first day hijab. A powerful, affirmative book, touching on the bullying hijab wearers may face and reminding them to be strong and proud of who they are.

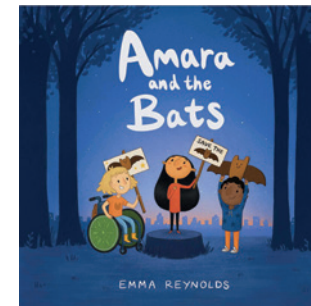
Andersen Press



## A Shelter for Sadness Anne Booth & David Litchfield

A young boy builds a shelter for his sadness, where it can be as it wishes. Gently and subtly encourages children to recognise and be with their sadness before moving towards healing. A beautiful book.

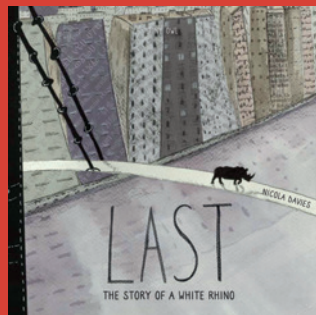
Templar Publishing



## Amara and the Bats Emma Reynolds

Bat-loving Amara is distraught that there are no bats in her local park. She campaigns to bring wildlife back to her community. Empathy for the environment and social action combine in this lovely story with a brilliant heroine.

Atheneum



## Last: The story of a white rhino Nicola Davies

A Northern White Rhino is captured and incarcerated. Like so many of the world's beautiful animals he is close to extinction. A terribly painful but important picture book - surely it must inspire action to save our wonderful world.

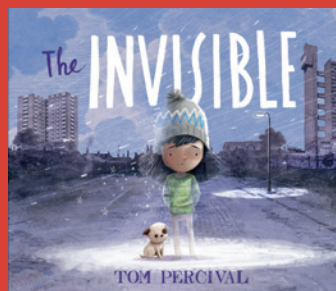
Tiny Owl Publishing



## My Beautiful Voice Joseph Coelho & Allison Colpoys

The story of empathetic teacher Miss Flotsam and the narrator, a totally silent little boy. Gently Miss Flotsam builds his confidence to realise his voice is beautiful. The infectious joy of this moment will captivate every reader.

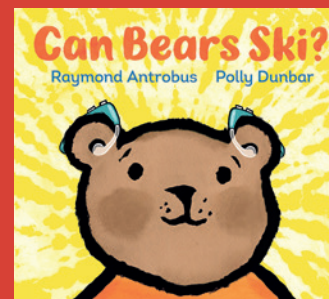
Frances Lincoln Children's Books



## The Invisible Tom Percival

Isabel's family are poor and like so many people in the city, she feels alone and invisible. A stark reminder that those who struggle, and are often ignored by their communities, still make a difference to others. A beautiful book that can inspire children to put empathy into action

Simon & Schuster Children's Books

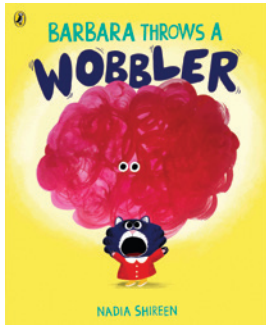


## Can Bears Ski? Raymond Antrobus & Polly Dunbar

Little Bear can't hear Dad Bear coming to wake him in the morning, or his teacher reading to the class. He seeks solace in the quiet spaces, especially the library. A deeply personal, playful text, introducing us to the world of audiologists and the effects of deafness.

Walker Books

# Picture books



## Barbara Throws a Wobbler Nadia Shireen

Barbara is furious, ready to explode. She doesn't really understand her feelings until she meets her 'wobbler' and realises she can take charge of it. A reassuring way, for younger children, of explaining the range of emotions involved in feeling angry.

Jonathan Cape

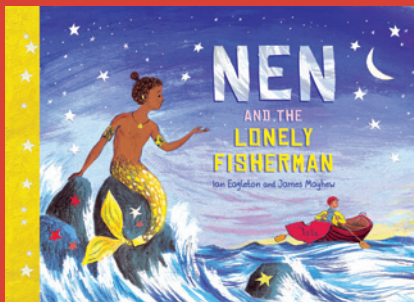


## Eyes that Kiss in the Corners Joanna Ho & Dung Ho

A young girl notices that her eyes are different to those of her peers. A lyrical picture book celebrating diversity and Asian heritage through the eyes of three generations of women.

HarperCollins

READ STORIES  
BUILD EMPATHY  
MAKE A BETTER WORLD



## Nen and the Lonely Fisherman Ian Eagleton & James Mayhew

The magical, lyrical love story of merman Nen and lonely fisherman Ernest. Also a warning about the threat to our oceans. Can we learn from Nen and Ernest to live in harmony with our environment?

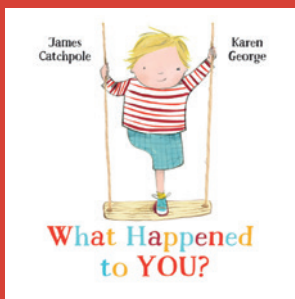
Owlet Press



## Luna Loves Art Joseph Coelho & Fiona Lumbers

Finn is overwhelmed by big emotions when faced with a new art-gallery experience. His classmate Luna instinctively knows how to calm him and build his confidence. A gorgeous, beautifully illustrated story of empathy and friendship.

Andersen Press



## What Happened to You? James Catchpole & Karen George

Jo just wants to play sharks and pirates but the other children keep asking, exasperatingly, why he only has one leg. Funny, real story about disability, which emphasises what children have in common, rather than their differences.

Faber & Faber



## Tisha and the Blossom Wendy Meddour & Daniel Egnéus

Poor Tisha is rushed through her day, but quietly she reminds the adults around her to slow down and enjoy their world. A beautiful book about self-empathy and the importance of being mindful.

Oxford University Press

# Early readers



## The Dog that Saved the World (Cup) Phil Earle

Illustrator Elisa Paganelli

Humans are odd sometimes observes dog Pickles as Elsie and her newly unemployed dad try to cope with having to leave their home, and a threat to a key football match. Engaging story which helps children with perspective-taking, a key part of empathy.

Barrington Stoke



## Swallow's Kiss Sita Brahmachari

Illustrator Jane Ray

An uplifting, beautifully illustrated story about Blessing, who is trying to return a lost bag of paper birds and along the way encounters kindness and the power of community. Written in free-verse, this poetic text draws movingly on the author's and illustrator's work with a refugee centre.

Pop Up Projects

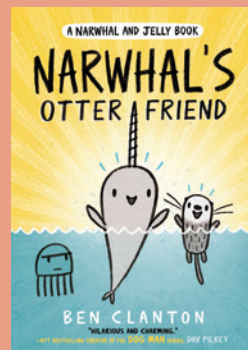


## Sona Sharma, Very Best Big Sister Chitra Soundar

Illustrator Jen Khatun

Sona's family are expecting a new baby, and her feelings are all mixed up. It helps to talk to best friend, her toy Elephant. As Sona takes part in the naming ceremony, choosing one of her new sister's names, things start to fall into place. A warm, gentle book with insights into life in India, and sibling experiences.

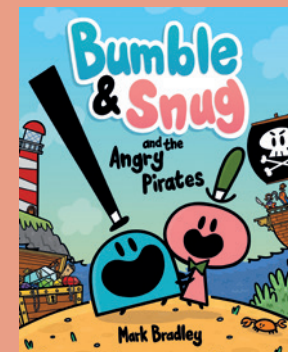
Walker Books



## Narwhal's Otter Friend Ben Clanton

Joyful and hilarious, this hybrid graphic novel features the antics and friendships of sea creatures, from otters to jellyfish, narwhals to crabs. Curiosity is an important aspect of empathy, and the friends learn lots about each other on a rollicking adventure (as do young readers).

Farshore



## Bumble & Snug and the Angry Pirates Mark Bradley

Best friends Bumble and Snug are on a rip-roaring adventure, and learning about emotions as they go - 'Maybe when we're angry it's hiding a different feeling, like frustration or fear?' Part comic-strip, part picture book, this will entertain young children whilst provoking useful discussions about feelings.

Hodder Children's Books

# Poetry and Non-Fiction

## Poetry

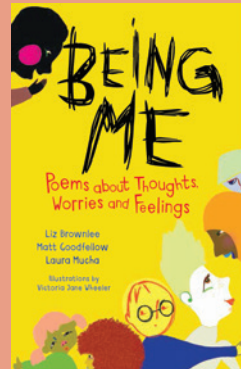


### Stars with Flaming Tails Valerie Bloom

Illustrator Ken Wilson-Max

A wonderfully vibrant collection of poetry which is funny, moving and from the heart. Memorable poems with a powerful empathy focus include 'I Opened the Door', 'The Soldier' and 'Roll Call'.

Otter-Barry Books



### Being Me: Poems about thoughts, worries and feelings Liz Brownlee, Matt Goodfellow, Laura Mucha

Illustrator Victoria Jane Wheeler

Beautiful, heartfelt poems from three very different poets. They offer a platform for reflection and for sharing feelings about life's glories and tribulations. Poems include 'Dad's New Girlfriend', 'First Day' and 'What To Do with Worries'.

Otter-Barry Books

Keep an  
eye on  
[empathylab.uk](http://empathylab.uk)  
for extra  
resources

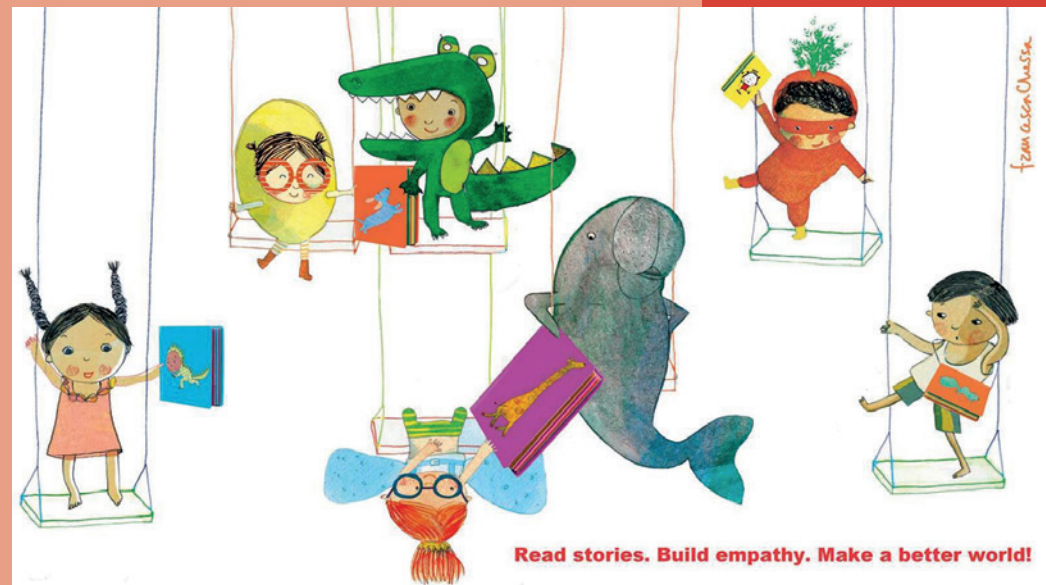
## Non-fiction



### A Different Sort of Normal Abigail Balfe

Abigail tells her real-life story about growing up feeling different. A wonderful book for understanding the experience of a person who is autistic - funny, touching, informative and with great illustrations. A valuable resource for every one of us.

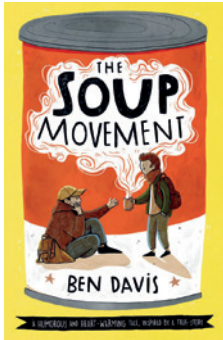
Puffin



Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world!

# Novels

Superb stories to help children immerse themselves in other people's lives. Perfect for 7–11 year olds. This symbol\* denotes books that are a demanding read, suitable for emotionally mature readers. They may have themes and language that need flagging. Please read them, in order to decide which children they are appropriate for.



## **The Soup Movement\*** **Ben Davis**

Complex emotions and issues are sensitively explored in this very engaging story of Jordan, who has a strong sense of social justice and a desire to improve the lives of homeless people.

**Oxford University Press**



## **Front Desk** **Kelly Yang**

Mia's hard-pressed immigrant family are running a motel for the greedy owner – Mia is on the front desk. Their sense of community leads to them hiding other immigrants in empty rooms. A great read, bringing new perspectives on discrimination and injustice, with a gutsy, loveable heroine.

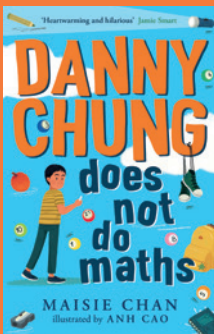
**Knights Of**



## **The Shark Caller** **Zillah Bethell**

This wonderful, wild story is set in Papua New Guinea, and explores the friendship between Blue Wing and newcomer Maple, who is grieving for her mother. Superbly drawn characters and an extraordinary ending.

**Usborne Publishing**



## **Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths** **Maisie Chan**

**Illustrator Anh Cao**

Danny's granny comes to live with his family, who run a Chinese takeaway. He's horrified to discover she's in his room, in bunk beds. Lovely, funny novel, strong on the mixed emotions of growing up, trying to be in with a mean in-crowd, and gradually working out what really matters in life.

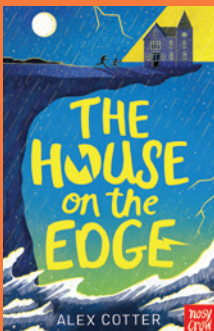
**Bonnier Books**



## **Mohinder's War\*** **Bali Rai**

Mohinder, a Sikh RAF pilot, crashes in occupied France. Rescued by Joelle and her family, he becomes her fiercest protector when Nazis murder her parents. Through powerfully drawn characters, we gain new perspectives on how humans experience war, and how they survive.

**Bloomsbury**



## **The House on the Edge** **Alex Cotter**

Everything in Faith's life is crumbling, including her family home perched on the edge of a disappearing cliff. A pacy adventure story, also great for exploring emotions – for instance Faith's last burst of anger at her dad, lost at sea. Hopeful, too, and heart-warming.

**Nosy Crow**



## **A Street Dog Named Pup** **Gill Lewis**

We follow abandoned Pup as he tries to survive without his boy in a horribly tough world. A powerful, often raw story about the empathetic bond between humans and animals, and a reunion that draws tears.

**David Fickling Books**

# Novels and graphic novels

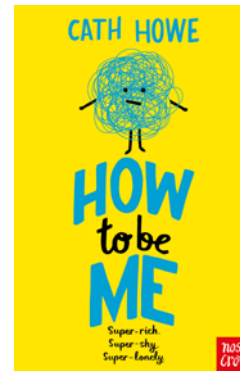
Keep an eye on [empathylab.uk](http://empathylab.uk) for extra resources



## The Girl Who Stole an Elephant Nizrana Farook

Chaya is a beguiling character – a girl driven by her desire to improve the lives of those around her, even when it puts her in deadly danger. A heart-stopping adventure story with brilliant female role models.

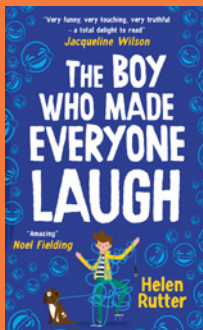
**Nosy Crow**



## How to be Me Cath Howe

Thoughtful book full of well-drawn, mixed-up humans! Lucas is rich, lonely, misunderstood and grieving for his mum. He and his dad just can't seem to get on. The last thing he wants to do is the drama club he's booked into, but it proves to be what he needs to find his place, and friends.

**Nosy Crow**



## The Boy Who Made Everyone Laugh Helen Rutter

Billy has a crippling stammer and is trying every which way to get rid of it. A funny, warm-hearted novel in which we see him finally do a stand-up comedy act, and learn how to be, and accept, himself.

**Scholastic**



## The Great (Food) Bank Heist Onjali Q Raúf

**Illustrator Elisa Paganelli**

Nelson and his friends set out to stop thieves who are stealing from their local food bank. There are not enough books on the widespread problem of food poverty, and this takes a powerful look at the problem from a child's perspective.

**Barrington Stoke**



## The Last Bear Hannah Gold

**Illustrator Levi Pinfold**

April accompanies her father to Bear Island in the Arctic. With global warming having driven out the island's polar bears, it's extraordinary when April meets one, and they form a magical bond. An inspiring heroine, prepared to take action based on empathy.

**Harper Collins Children's Books**



## Mayhem Mission Burhana Islam

**Illustrator Farah Khandaker**

Yusuf is desperately trying to avoid being the 'man of the family' when his sister gets married. So he sets out to derail the wedding. Rumbustious, hilarious, but with real insights into Yusuf's underlying vulnerability, and life in a Muslim family.

**Knights Of**

## Graphic novel



## Allergic Megan Wagner Lloyd & Michelle Mee Nutter

Join Maggie as she explores whether it is possible to outsmart your allergies. With themes of family, friendship and finding a place to belong, this fun, reassuring text explores how it can feel as we learn to cope with change.

**Scholastic US**



# Top tips

**Help recognise feelings** Use lots of different emotion words when discussing stories. Use our author-led emotion recognition exercises – Joseph Coelho’s Empathy Charades <https://bit.ly/2JPPEnm> and a body language Empathy Mirror exercise with Adisa & A.M.Dassu <https://bit.ly/3I14T6f>

**Talk about characters** Instead of discussing the plot, focus on the characters and their feelings. Which was most interesting? What are they afraid of? What might they do next?

**Don't forget the pictures** Illustrations are especially good for ‘reading’ other people – can you tell from the picture how the character feels?

**Share diverse books** Introduce children to stories set in other countries and with characters of different races, religions and experiences. Inspire them to imagine life for people in different situations from their own.

**Listen 100%** Listening is a crucial part of empathy. Listen carefully as children explore what they’ve learnt about other people. Use our fun Listening Switch exercise and Listening Vouchers: <https://bit.ly/3754Jdz>

**Put empathy into action** Has a book helped children see the world differently? Do they feel inspired to do something to help others or to combat hatred? Can you act on this as a community, or a family?

## EMPATHY DAY 9 JUNE 2022 - empathy is our human superpower

- Take the brand new **Superpower Challenge** – nine activities to boost your empathy
- Look out for the free **Family Activity Pack** – fun empathy-building activities to do together
- Join us for **Empathy Day Live!** – a superb free online festival, led by authors and illustrators



## How to join in the Superpower Challenge

In the run-up to Empathy Day see [empathylab.uk](http://empathylab.uk) for tips and templates to help children, families and classes complete these activities. We'd love to see children's responses – do share on social media using **@EmpathyLabUK #EmpathySuperpowerChallenge**

READ	CONNECT	ACT
<b>Speak Empathy to Power</b> Recommend stories to the decision makers in your life! They need empathy superpowers to help make the best choices.	<b>Human Discoveries</b> Take turns to share something no-one else knows about you – a thought, a dream, a special possession... Have a conversation to discover more.	<b>Unsung Empathy Superheroes</b> Celebrate people making a difference through empathy. Display their achievements on an Empathy Wall of Fame.
<b>Superpower X-Ray Glasses</b> Design your own empathy glasses to help you see the world through someone else's eyes.	<b>Listening-Switch Power Bank</b> Practise your listening superpower – how many listening skills can you switch on?	<b>Empathy Resolutions</b> Make a resolution to change things for the better, then share to inspire others.
<b>#EmpathyPowerPose</b> Empathy readers assemble! Strike a pose with your favourite empathy reads – and share safely on social media.	<b>Empathy Walks</b> Notice and reflect as you take a walk in your local community. How might you put empathy into action to help those around you?	<b>Give an empathy comic strip gift</b> Create a comic strip story about empathy as a human superpower. Give it as a gift or share with someone in your community or school.

## PASS IT ON - inspire someone else to develop their Empathy Superpower

Share your Empathy Day activities & celebrations with us: **@EmpathyLabUK #EmpathyDay**

# EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

## Empathy is a beacon of hope. Join our 2022 programme

EmpathyLab offers training and Empathy Day toolkits for families, schools, libraries and early years providers.

Find out more at [empathylab.uk](https://empathylab.uk). Training enquiries to [emily@empathylab.uk](mailto:emily@empathylab.uk).

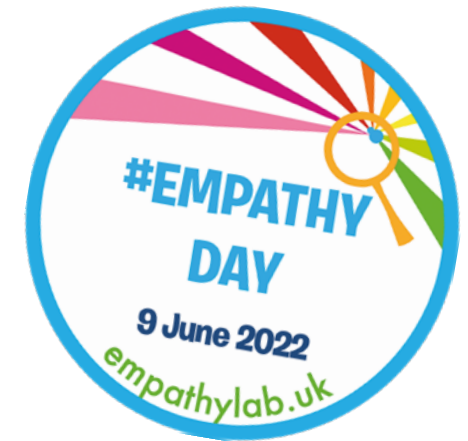
## How to order the books in this Guide

To buy the Read For Empathy book collection, please contact your local independent bookshop or Peters, and explore how you can develop empathy through the power of books.

- Independent booksellers: find your local shop here [booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch](https://booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch)
- Peters: [peters.co.uk](https://peters.co.uk). If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact Peters on **0121 666 6646** or email [empathy@peters.co.uk](mailto:empathy@peters.co.uk)
- You can also borrow the books from your local library

## Thank you to everyone who has helped with this Guide

- Selection Panel: Fozia Aksar, Jon Biddle, Richard Charlesworth, Kevin Cobane, Teresa Cremin, Scott Evans, Subnum Hariff-Khan, Paul Harris, Miranda McKearney, Sarah Mears, Sarah Smith, Sonia Thompson, Dawn Woods
- Our partners at Peters and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
- Publicity: FMCM, Fritha Lindqvist
- Leaflet editing: Talya Baker
- Read For Empathy illustrators: Salvatore Rubbino; Emily Gravett; Francesca Chessa; Rebecca Cobb



Read for Empathy



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