



From England

Anna Hibiscus

Hooray for Anna Hibiscus!

Good Luck, Anna Hibiscus!

Have Fun, Anna Hibiscus!

Written by Atinuke

Illustrated by Lauren Tobia

Kirkus Reviews, STARRED (August 1, 2010)

Linked short stories star Anna Hibiscus, who lives in a large house in a compound in “amazing Africa” with baby brothers Double and Trouble, parents and extended family. The first title in this appealing new series introduces Anna's world. The family goes on vacation, an auntie visits from America, Anna learns what it is to do hard work and she gets an invitation to visit her Canadian grandmother. Her world grows in *Hooray for Anna Hibiscus!* (978-1-935279-74-7): She starts school, sings before a large audience, tries a hair experiment and visits a very poor neighborhood. These stories celebrate the extended family and the combination of traditional ways with conveniences of the modern world; they contrast Anna's relatively privileged life with that of others in her country and reflect the Nigerian childhood of the author, a storyteller now living in Wales. Tobia's sketches, pen-and-ink with a gray wash, will help early readers visualize the family, unfamiliar customs and clothing and Anna's community. A third title has already been published in England. A welcome window into an unfamiliar world.

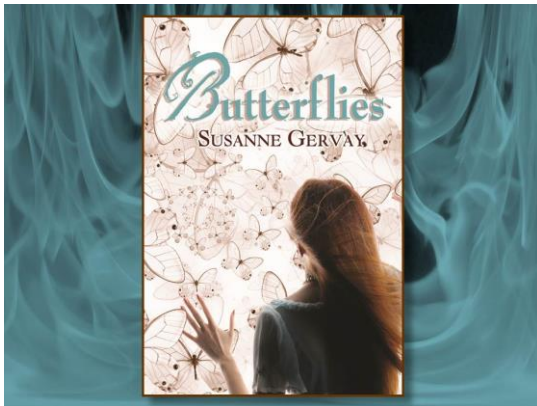
The Horn Book Magazine, STARRED (May/June 2011)

“Anna Hibiscus lives in Africa. Amazing Africa.” So begins each linked short story in this series, loosely based on the author's own childhood in Nigeria. Set in contemporary Africa, the stories put the reader smack-dab in the middle of Anna's large family, including her parents, twin brothers Double and Trouble, aunts and uncles, and many, many cousins. This is a modern family, with cell phones and laptops. In these third and fourth entries in the series, Anna's eyes are opened to life outside her big white house. In *Good Luck, Anna Hibiscus!*, harmattan winds from the Sahara cover the land with dust. Anna realizes that the children outside the gate do not have the same access to water and she, along with wise adults, comes up with a plan to help. In *Have Fun, Anna Hibiscus!*, Anna flies to snowy Canada to spend a month



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(including Christmas) with her white grandmother, whom she has never met. Everything is on a small scale in these books, allowing the reader to easily identify with the situations. Anna does not try to save Africa from drought; she just tries to alleviate the thirst of her neighbors. Like the rest of her family in Africa, Anna fears dogs, but she comes to love Granny Canada's beloved Qimmiq. Tobia's detailed illustrations add depth and energy to the stories—showing Anna in all her emotional states and giving new readers the visual support they need. Readers ready for chapter books will love Anna and her sprawling family.



From Australia

Butterflies

By Susanne Gervay

School Library Journal, STARRED (November 1, 2011)

High school is hard enough for teens who look normal, but for Katherine, who fell into a fire when she was three years old and endured 37 surgeries to repair the damage, it's even worse. She is getting ready to graduate and seeking independence, but she is self-conscious about her appearance. She is sensitive to the fact that Mum, who tells her she is beautiful, tries to give her confidence and works hard to make a living for her and her sister as their father left shortly after the accident. Katherine holds back tears when a classmate makes a rude remark, and a boy whom she dates a couple of times withdraws. Even though she is needy at times, her best friend is always supportive. Katherine is a swimmer, but when the coach recommends that she compete in the Paralympic Games, she realizes that others see her as handicapped instead of scarred, and she pushes for more surgery. Whenever readers think that Katherine is moving forward and accepting herself, she has a setback; she refers to herself the Beast. Readers will wait for the Beast to retreat for good and cheer when it finally does. This hopeful, heartfelt novel will give teens an understanding of what it means to have a reason to be self-conscious. Librarians won't be able to keep it on the shelf.

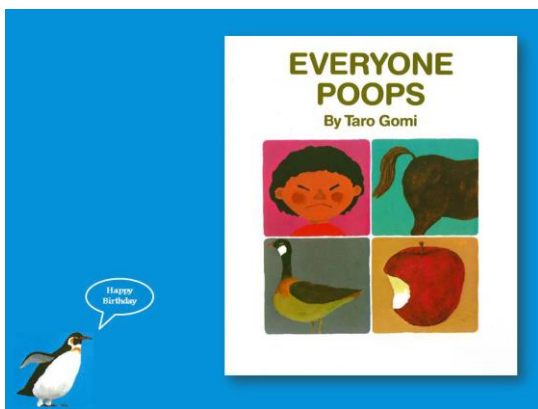


Dogs in Space

by Vix Southgate, illustrated by Iris Deppe

School Library Journal, STARRED POP (Winter 2018)

This volume chronicles the tale of two dogs, Belka and Strelka, who were sent into space by the Soviet Union. The simple, colorful illustrations complement the text and show how the dogs were trained to stay calm and how they were fitted into their canine spacesuits. Launched into space on August 19, 1960, the animals successfully orbited the earth and returned safely. The artwork depicts smiling canines. Following their space adventure, the dogs lived healthy, happy lives – Strelka even gave birth to six puppies. Once stray dogs, wandering the streets of Moscow, they became heroes around the world and paved the way for the first man to go into space. The volume concludes with a brief synopsis of other animals that traveled into space, including a French cat, and an overview of space journeys, beginning with Belka and Strelka's adventure to the International Space Station and ending with a possible upcoming trip to Mars. VERDICT A must-have for libraries and a welcome addition for all STEM collections



From Japan
Everyone Poops
By Taro Gomi

The Horn Book Guide, STARRED (1993)

There's no mincing of words here. As the straightforward text explains, 'Fish poop / And so do birds / . . . Grown-ups poop / Children poop too.' Unabashed illustrations show beasts and bugs doing it, a male figure on the toilet, and a baby with a soiled diaper. Some adults may be squeamish about the facts of life so honestly confronted, but younger children will find their curiosity satisfied, and those in the throes of toilet training will appreciate the book's directness.



From Australia

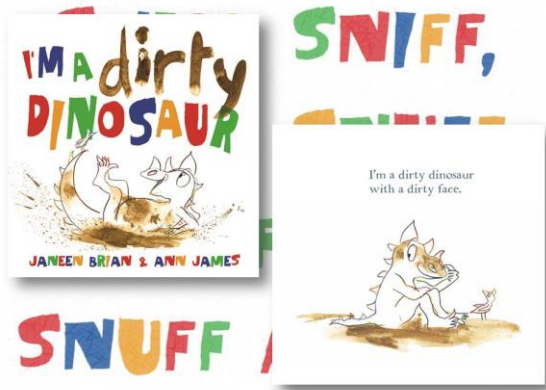
Fox

Written by Margaret Wild

Illustrated by Ron Brooks

Publishers Weekly, STARRED (Monday, October 8, 2001)

Wild (*Nighty Night*) departs from her playful characters of recent books for this haunting look at friendship and cruelty, geared to older readers. After Dog saves Magpie from a fire and nurses her burnt wing, the two forge a powerful bond. The one-eyed dog and the flightless bird travel together across a charred, leafless landscape, with Magpie feeling the wind in her feathers as she rides on Dog's back. "Fly, Dog, fly! I will be your missing eye, and you will be my wings." The mood changes quickly, however, when Fox enters his sleek, orange body curled around one side of a spread and sets Magpie on edge ("His smell seems to fill the cave a smell of rage and envy and loneliness"). The tension Wild invokes in juxtaposing their disparate emotions creates a disquieting feeling that Brooks (*Rosie and Tortoise*) mirrors in his artwork, especially in close-ups of the characters' eyes. His hand-lettered text (resembling a child's shaky penmanship) appears in oddly positioned blocks, with some flipped vertically against the page edges and gutter. The stark illustrations, in mixed media and collage, expose the characters' raw emotions with brusque hash marks in thick applications of mostly dark paint. Only when Fox cons Magpie into switching her allegiance and traveling with him do readers discover the depth of Fox's alienation. The tale ends on a tenuously hopeful note, and the images from this unsettling, provocative story will resonate long after the book has been closed.



From Australia

I'm a Dirty Dinosaur

Written by Janeen Brian

Illustrated by Ann James

Kirkus Reviews, STARRED (August 1, 2014)

This Australian import cries out for toddler participation, with parts for everyone. The little dinosaur—an outline sketch of a creature drawn with multicolored pencil—rejoices in total mudlusciousness with a vigorous chant. "I'm a dirty dinosaur / with a dirty face. // I never have a wash / I just shake about the place." The winsome background to the dinosaur's antics is painted with watercolor and smeared and splattered with actual mud. Opposite, in bold print with each letter a different color, is the refrain: "SHAKE, SHAKE, / SHAKE, SHAKE, / SHAKE ABOUT / THE PLACE!" The dinosaur goes on to mention a "dirty tum," which it taps like a drum: "TAP, TAP," etc. There is also stamping about the street with dirty feet and sliding that dirty tail "like a snail." At the end, in deep realization of its yuckiness, the dinosaur decides to go to the swamp and "GIVE MYSELF A WASH!" Birds, flowers, dragonflies and a frog or two accompany the protagonist, who walks (dances, really) on two legs and sports little stegosauruslike spine plates and a belly button. It is nearly impossible to look at without reading aloud, chanting aloud and even tapping and stamping and sliding: extreme joyousness. (Picture book. 4-7)



From England

Let's Go to the Farm!

Written by Caryl Hart

Illustrated by Lauren Tobia

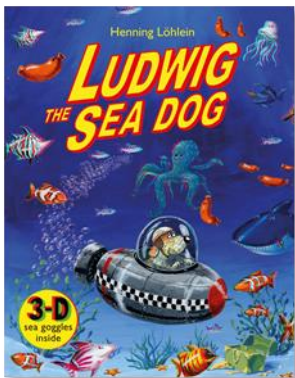
School Library Journal, STARRED (November 2017)

Bee and Billy are two children who meet at a farm. They both enjoy an exciting trip as they meet farm animals, witness an egg hatching and play with friends. The two develop an adorable friendship. *Let's Go to the Farm!* Has a catchy rhyming pattern that would make it an enjoyable read-aloud. The bold lettering can be used as a guide for phrase emphasis



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while reading. This book also features various educational components. Readers are asked to count and identify farm animals. The colors of clothing are also mentioned aiding readers in learning this concept as well. This book focuses on what farm animals do rather than solely focusing on the sounds that they make or what they look like. This important aspect helps to expand your readers' perception of what it would be like to actually visit a farm. Large, vibrant artwork is done with bright primary and secondary colors that pop against the book's white backgrounds. The texture of animal fur, hair, and hay is illustrated with curved and straight line patterns. This element gives characters a three-dimensional effect. Diverse families are seen interacting and developing friendships with one another giving the story an inclusive and inviting feel. VERDICT An engaging picture book that demonstrates how friendship adventure, fun, and learning can happen anywhere.



Ludwig the Sea Dog

by Henning Löhlein

Kirkus Reviews, STARRED (Online November 13, 2017; print edition December 1, 2017)

Though eager to help his friend Peter the Penguin, whose submarine has stalled, Ludwig is stymied by the fact that, being paper himself and having been raised in a "world of books," all he knows of real water is from pictures of ponds and fish. Following an accident with a glass of water, he's left to dry flat between the pages of a collection of fairy tales, where he meets, along with some familiar characters ("Don't eat Red Riding Hood's grandmother. It won't end well for you," he solemnly informs a wolf), a fairy queen who grants his wish to make the ocean real in a copy of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. It's off to the rescue—and to encounters, in a dazzling climactic double gatefold, with schools of swimming sausages and other nautical wonders. Even without the cardboard "sea goggles" Löhlein's illustrations are lively and at least mostly sharp. With the 3-D enhancement Ludwig and his animal friends (all of whom are portrayed as cutout figures) float convincingly among piles of closed and open volumes, dense swarms of fish and multitentacled creatures, droplets of water, and long trails of bubbles—so much so that for many viewers the actual surfaces of the pages will vanish. The white, blonde fairy queen is the only human figure in the pictures. An exhilarating dive propelled by deft and clever use of its optical trick.



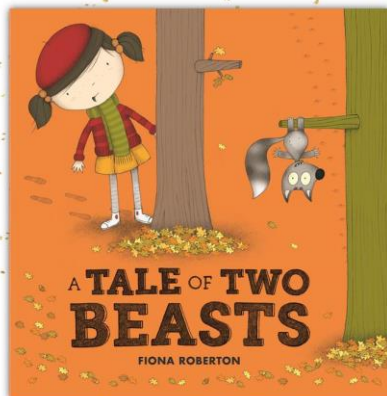
From England

Ludwig the Space Dog

By Henning Löhlein

Kirkus Reviews, STARRED (May 31, 2017)

3-D illustrations propel into orbit this imported tale of a dog with stars in his eyes. The heavens feature sausages and other doggy treats as well as stars and planets in Ludwig's dreams—and also in reality, as he discovers after a repair job on a penguinlike alien's damaged spacecraft earns him a free ride. Thanks to particularly effective placement of cutout figures and shadows to go with the separated color lines, Löhlein's collage scenes when viewed through the (supplied) red/cyan spectacles feature rockets and celestial bodies as well as feathers, wads of paper, postcards, and other items that seem to burst up from the page surfaces, while an uncommon depth of view makes the star-studded backdrops look as if they go on forever. Ludwig's voyage reaches a truly spectacular climax, with planets cut from printed maps on the outside of a double gatefold giving way to a dizzying starscape of floating moons, ETs, and UFOs, along with such less-likely items as a wedge of cheese, fruits, and a rubber ducky. "WOW!" as the canine cosmonaut aptly puts it. The pictures do need the special glasses to look their dazzling best, but the narrative is readable with or without them. The right stuff for all young would-be space explorers.



From England

A Tale of Two Beasts

By Fiona Robertson



Kirkus Reviews, STARRED (January 15, 2015)

What really happened in the woods? Robertson tells her story in two parts. Part 1: A little girl, in a jaunty red beret and matching sweater, is walking home from Grandma's house when she spots a strange little creature hanging upside down from a tree branch. (It's a furry critter with a striped tail. A raccoon? A ring-tailed lemur?) She wraps him in a green scarf, names him Fang and takes him home. Though she gives him a bath, a cute outfit like hers, a bowl of nuts and a little house made from a cardboard box, he doesn't look very happy. When she opens a window to get some cool air, her strange creature rips off his new clothes and runs to freedom in the dark woods. But late one night, he appears in her bedroom window, and they frolic in the woods. Part 2 of the book tells the scary story of an innocent little critter who's minding his own business when he's ambushed by a "terrible beast"—a little girl in a jaunty red beret and matching sweater. And readers know the rest. Robertson's premise is as sublime as it is simple, with a subtle message. Brilliantly, the illustrations vary just slightly from one version of the story to the next; it's their juxtaposition with the radically different textual perspective that generates the laughs. Totally delightful. (Picture book. 3-7)



From England

You're Amazing, Anna Hibiscus!

By Atinuke

Illustrated by Lauren Tobia

Kirkus Reviews STARRED (Online July 2, 2017, Review Issue Date July 15, 2017)

The importance of family during difficult times permeates the final book in the Anna Hibiscus series. In the gentle, frank tone readers have come to expect, gifted storyteller Atinuke balances compassion and humor while tackling a sensitive subject, the death of Anna's beloved grandfather. The first chapter sets the scene. Anna is back at home in the mixed-race family's city compound with Anna's twin little brothers, Double and Trouble, getting in all sorts of mischief—deleting pictures on Uncle Tunde's cellphone but saving the day by climbing in a window when the doors are accidentally locked. Meanwhile, Grandfather is growing more and more tired.



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Family members take turns sitting with him, but Anna refuses, hoping that if she doesn't think about "the really bad thing" it will not happen. "Then one day Grandfather did not wake up anymore." Anna is grief-stricken. In the final two chapters Anna, tenderly supported by her loving extended family, all also grieving, each in their own way, learns to listen for Grandfather's voice in her heart. The book ends with near-perfect modeling of shared grief and healing, as everyone tells their favorite grandfather story. Readers' understanding of Anna's genuine grief is amplified by Tobia's grayscale sketches. Be prepared. Readers say farewell to Anna Hibiscus as tears "drop off the corners of her smile."