

YEAR 2 READING BOOK LIST (DfE-ALIGNED)

Organised by topic for easy planning and curriculum mapping

1. Adventure & Journey Stories

Great for simple narrative structure, problem-solution, and character journeys.

- The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark - Jill Tomlinson (DfE Reading Spine)
- The Hodgeheg - Dick King-Smith (DfE Reading Spine)
- The Enchanted Wood - Enid Blyton (DfE Reading Spine)
- The Magic Finger - Roald Dahl
- The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me - Roald Dahl
- The Bear and the Piano - David Litchfield
- The Way Home for Wolf - Rachel Bright
- The Storm Whale in Winter - Benji Davies

2. Fantasy & Magical Realism

Perfect for imaginative openings, setting description, and character creation.

- The Enchanted Wood - Enid Blyton (DfE Reading Spine)
- The Magic Finger - Roald Dahl
- The Tear Thief - Carol Ann Duffy
- The Dragon Machine - Helen Ward
- The Bear and the Piano - David Litchfield
- The Night Gardener - The Fan Brothers

- The Storm Whale - Benji Davies

3. Mystery, Suspense & Problem-Solving

Ideal for teaching simple tension, clues, and build-up.

- The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark - Jill Tomlinson
- The Hodgeheg - Dick King-Smith
- The Detective Dog - Julia Donaldson
- The Dark - Lemony Snicket
- The Way Home for Wolf - Rachel Bright
- The Storm Whale in Winter - Benji Davies

4. Character-Driven / Emotional Stories

Great for show-not-tell, empathy, and internal thoughts.

- The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark - Jill Tomlinson
- The Tear Thief - Carol Ann Duffy
- The Invisible - Tom Percival
- The Storm Whale - Benji Davies
- The Bear and the Piano - David Litchfield
- Ruby's Worry - Tom Percival
- The Lion Inside - Rachel Bright

5. Animal Stories

Excellent for characterisation, setting, and simple narrative arcs.

- The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark - Jill Tomlinson
- The Hodgeheg - Dick King-Smith

- The Tiger Who Came to Tea - Judith Kerr (DfE Reading Spine)
- The Storm Whale - Benji Davies
- The Way Home for Wolf - Rachel Bright
- The Lion Inside - Rachel Bright
- The Dragon Machine - Helen Ward

6. Humour & Light-Hearted Narratives

Useful for dialogue, character voice, and engagement.

- The Magic Finger - Roald Dahl
- The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me - Roald Dahl
- The Detective Dog - Julia Donaldson
- The Nothing to See Here Hotel - Steven Butler (extracts suitable)
- The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark - Jill Tomlinson

7. Traditional Tales & Folk Stories

Perfect for structure, patterned language, and retelling.

- The Jolly Postman - Janet & Allan Ahlberg (DfE Reading Spine)
- Aesop's Fables - various versions (DfE Reading Spine)
- The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig - Eugene Trivizas
- The True Story of the Three Little Pigs - Jon Scieszka
- The Stinky Cheese Man - Jon Scieszka
- The Paper Bag Princess - Robert Munsch

8. Short Stories & Anthologies

Ideal for modelling specific narrative techniques.

- The Puffin Book of Utterly Brilliant Poetry (DfE recommended poets)
- The Book of Hopes - Ed. Katherine Rundell
- Aesop's Fables - various versions
- The Lost Happy Endings - Carol Ann Duffy (extracts)

9. Visual & Multimodal Texts

Excellent for inference, atmosphere, and descriptive writing.

- The Journey - Francesca Sanna
- The Promise - Nicola Davies
- The Bear and the Piano - David Litchfield
- The Night Gardener - The Fan Brothers
- The Arrival - Shaun Tan (extracts suitable)

★ Top 10 Most Versatile Year 2 Texts

If you want the strongest all-rounders for narrative writing:

1. The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark - Jill Tomlinson
2. The Hodgeheg - Dick King-Smith
3. The Enchanted Wood - Enid Blyton
4. The Magic Finger - Roald Dahl
5. The Storm Whale - Benji Davies
6. The Bear and the Piano - David Litchfield
7. The Tear Thief - Carol Ann Duffy
8. The Dragon Machine - Helen Ward
9. The Invisible - Tom Percival
10. The Lion Inside - Rachel Bright

These support:

- simple narrative structure
- character feelings
- setting description
- problem-solution
- dialogue
- early tension