

## Quick Information Guides for Parents and Teachers

### **SNAPSHOT No 15**

### **Representation in novels for highly able learners**

## Representation

Representation is really important in literature, especially for people who may feel marginalised or out of place. These books all have important characters who are highly able in one way or another.

The books are divided into two groups – child-focused books which deal with topics which are broadly suitable for most children, and books whose topics are probably more suitable for most teens or adults. There is a diverse range of language and thinking across both categories.

Think about your child/pupil's unique preferences when recommending a book from the list.

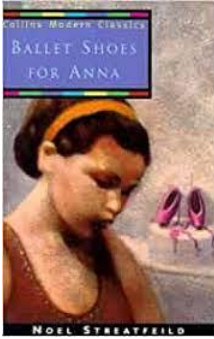
*Child-focused – themes and content suitable for most children Wide range of language and thinking.*



*Apple Bough* by Noel Streatfeild – highly able young musician and the tensions his musical ambitions cause in his family.

*A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnette – highly able young learner sent to boarding school where she is often bored. When her father dies, she has to cope with emotional abuse and exploitation. Some children may feel uncomfortable with old fashioned attitudes to race and class.





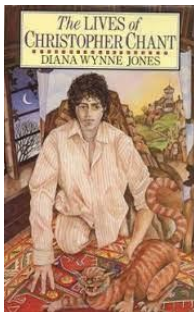
*Ballet Shoes for Anna* by Noel Streatfeild – highly able young dancer and her brothers have to cope with the death of their parents and a move from their home in Greece to Britain

*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle – young mathematician and her highly gifted brother have to cope with space travel and an ancient evil to rescue their father



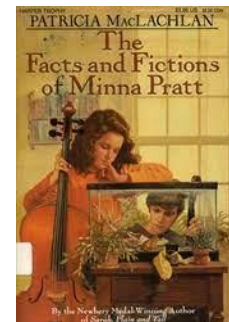
*Matilda* by Roald Dahl – neglected child finds meaning in helping her teacher cope with an abusive family

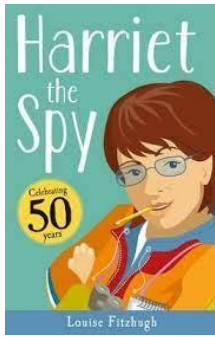
*A Wizard of Earthsea* – emotionally intense account of a talented young wizard whose pride leads him to do harm to others. An early fantasy novel with a non-white central character. Possibly quite scary for some.



*The Lives of Christopher Chant* by Diana Wynne Jones – boy discovers that he is a very talented magician, and must then learn to negotiate relationships with less able adults.

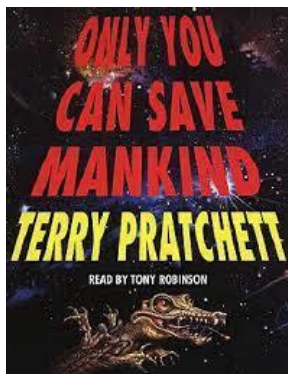
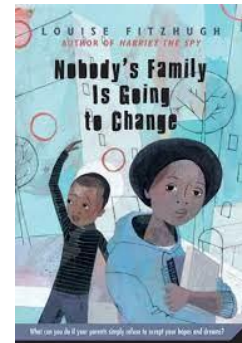
*The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt* by Patricia MacLachlan – young cellist copes with challenge in her music and in her family life.





*Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh – girl spies on friends and neighbours to produce newspaper and has to cope with the impact of her journalism on her relationships.

*Nobody's Family is Going to Change* by Louise Fitzhugh – highly able academically talented Black girl struggles with family expectations around gender, as does her younger brother who is a talented dancer



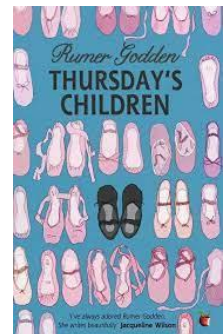
*Only You Can Save Mankind* by Terry Pratchett – boy saves computer aliens while coping with family disruption. Working with a highly able female friend, he begins to recognise his own social and emotional talents.

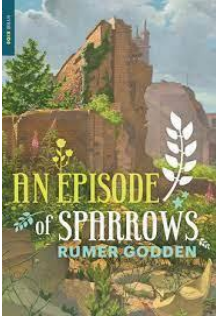
*Skellig* by David Almond – boy whose pregnant mum is in hospital has to cope with a strange man in the shed of his new house. Home-schooled highly able friend helps him.



*Goggle Eyes* by Anne Fine – gifted storyteller copes with mum's new boyfriend. Contains material on nuclear disarmament.

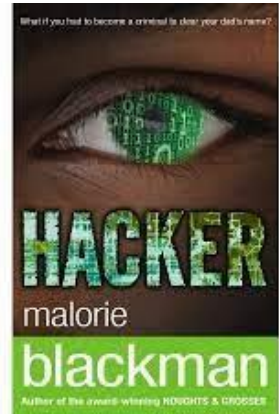
*Thursday's Children* by Rumer Godden – young boy copes with his family's disapproval of his talent for dancing and his mother's preference for his sister.



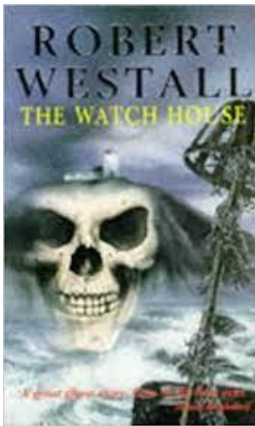


*An Episode of Sparrows* by Rumer Godden – driven young gardener annoys neighbours and discovers a hidden garden in post-WW2 London

*Hacker* by Malorie Blackman – gifted young computer programmer investigates a bank theft which the police are blaming on her own father. Programming content is now quite old fashioned, which may be interesting for young programmers who are interested in the history of the field.



*Includes some teen/adult themes or content. Wide range of language and thinking.*



*The Watch House* by Robert Westall – young girl is sent to live with her mum’s nanny in the North of England due to family disruption. Not much adult material – but very scary. Includes ghosts and a very highly able friend.

*The Lie Tree* by Frances Hardinge – dark fantasy story set in Victorian England. A girl who wants to study natural science and investigate the death of her scientist father discovers a tree which feeds on lies.



*The Broken Bridge* by Philip Pullman – young Black artist learns to cope with her art and her relationship with her absent mother



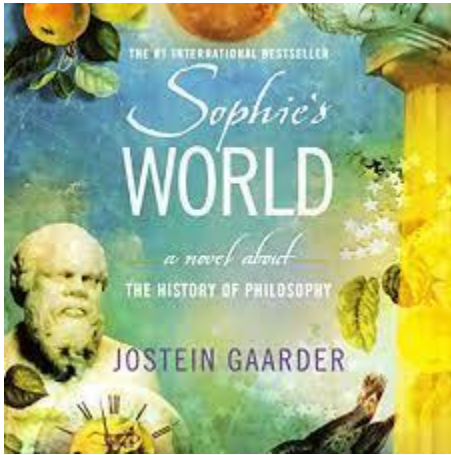
*The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot – very light book about a girl in a G+T class who discovers she is a princess. Has to negotiate relationships with her very highly able best friend.



*The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas – academically talented young Black girl who studies at a mostly white private school witnesses the death of her friend at the hands of the police and has to negotiate being politically active and fitting in with her two different communities.

'Wunderkind' by Carson McCullers – short story describing a gifted young pianist who is no longer performing well. It is fictional, but describes the author's own experience of losing the ability to play piano to a high standard due to a hidden illness. It was written when she was just 19.





*Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder – novel about teenager who is learning the history of philosophy from a mysterious correspondent. Aimed at teens - could be suitable for some younger readers, although some content could be distressing.

If you have your own recommendations, please get in touch! Email us about books that have mattered to you at [catherine.reid@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.reid@glasgow.ac.uk)