Dear Scoopsters,

We are thinking of you all so much in this surreal time. Staying at home can be lovely in many ways but it’s so important we have things to do and keep busy and engaged, for our minds, our bodies and our spirits. Because of this we wanted to share with all of you a free digital copy of our Love issue.

In this issue we explore love with bestselling and award-winning Piers Torday as a guest editor. Love grows from love – so whatever you love right now, be it your pets or the planets, always take pride in your feelings and desires, and show the world some love – because there’s a lot to go round!

We hope you all keep safe and happy.

Love
Clementine and the Scoop Team x
Piers Torday is the bestselling and award-winning author of books such as The Last Wild stories and The Lost Magician. His latest book, The Frozen Sea, out in paperback next month is all about how love compels a young girl called Jewel to undertake the most extraordinary adventure, along with her pet hamster Fizz.

What do you love about being an author?
I love the freedom of being allowed to sit at home and make up stories all day long.

Do you have any rituals when you write?
I always use music to help me find the mood, pace or tone of a scene, and create specific playlists on Spotify for each book. Sometimes I will listen to the same track thousands of times when writing, to get me in the right emotional state for the scene.

How do you select the names of your characters?
I look at what similar characters are called in other stories and analyse why those names work. I often blend names from ancient myths with modern names, but always check any invented name on Google first as I wouldn’t want to accidentally put a real person in a made-up story!

Do you believe in magic?
The power to undo words and actions, as if they had never happened.

Can you tell us a joke?
If you had a superpower what would it be?
Swimming or dancing? Swimming! I’m taking lessons at the moment to get better, and I love it!

If you could tell your younger self anything, what would it be?
You will get there in the end!

What is love?
Absolutely, for the simple reason that love – whether for a family member, a friend, or even the planet – is the single most powerful motive for those choices that can make stories so compelling, surprising and thrilling to read.

Describe yourself when you were ten in three words.
Thrilling to read.

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Love is one of the most important emotions we experience as human beings. Even though we can invite it into our lives, we do not have control over how, when and where love starts to express itself.

Love is very hard to explain and there are many ways of describing it. It is a feeling of warmth, it is caring very deeply about another person or thing, it is putting other people’s needs before our own, it is being prepared to do anything to make someone else happy. When we love someone or something like our pets we want to care for them and look after them and be kind to them so love also connects us to other people and things in a very important way and when we are loved we feel stronger and generally more positive about ourselves and the world.

It is said that love makes the world go round and when we look at all the ways love makes us feel it really does make sense. With love our lives are rich, happy, warm and kind. Love makes us better people. Whether it is love for our parents, siblings, grandparents, relatives, that special person at school, or for our pets, what we experience in that most important emotion is something that makes us truly special.

Can you describe how love feels for you? Think about something or someone you love and write down what you feel. Think about the things you love about the object of your love, then how you feel when you are with them. We would love to hear your thoughts and you can email us at hello@scoopthemag.co.uk. That would make us feel very happy!
Hearts are actually divided into two: the left side and the right. The right side is responsible only for sending blood to the lungs. The left side sends blood to the rest of the body.

THE LEFT SIDE OF THE HEART IS BIGGER BECAUSE IT NEEDS TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO SEND BLOOD ALL THE WAY AROUND YOUR WHOLE BODY RIGHT DOWN TO YOUR TOES AND BACK UP!

Each side of the heart has two chambers: blood enters the heart through the atrium and is then pumped into the ventricle, from where it is pumped back out of the heart.

A HEART’S JOB IS TO PUMP BLOOD AROUND YOUR BODY

Girls’ hearts beat faster than boys’ hearts! This is because they tend to be smaller so they need to beat more often to pump the same amount of blood around the body.

Two large blood vessels carry blood to the heart: the pulmonary vein brings oxygen-rich blood from the lungs to the left side of the heart, and the vena cava brings the blood that has returned from the rest of the body to the right side of the heart.

Heart muscle is a unique type of muscle in the body because it keeps beating and you can’t control it.

If someone’s heart beats out of rhythm, too quickly or too slowly, doctors can implant an electrical device called a pacemaker to help it out. In the UK, many thousands are fitted each year.

Laughing is good for your heart. It relaxes your blood vessels so your heart can send twenty per cent more blood through your body.

Heart muscle is a unique type of muscle in the body because it keeps beating and you can’t control it.

The fairy fly, which is a kind of wasp, has the smallest heart of any living creature.

PLATO (FROM ANCIENT GREECE) THEN ARGUED THAT WE REASON THROUGH OUR BRAINS, BUT THAT LOVE COMES FROM OUR HEART. THE HEART CAN CONTINUE BEATING EVEN WHEN IT’S DISCONNECTED FROM THE BODY, AS LONG AS IT HAS AN OXYGEN SUPPLY.

A horse can mimic the heart rate of the person touching them.
‘Love is begun by time,’ wrote William Shakespeare in one of his most famous plays, Hamlet. The nature and existence of love has been pondered over by writers, musicians, artists, philosophers and great thinkers throughout the centuries. What is it? What does it mean, how does it work and where does it come from? Why does it exist at all? And what does it have to do with how we understand the universe in which we live?

The answer isn’t straightforward. In purely scientific terms, we understand the universe along rational lines, based on theory, experimentation and observation. This means that scientists have an idea or a theory that they work on, sometimes for years. Then other scientists may decide to design an experiment that allows them to test that theory. When they have made their observations, they can see whether the theory is a good one or whether it needs to be changed or even abandoned. A good example of this is gravitational waves.

These teeny ripples in the fabric of spacetime were first proposed by Albert Einstein in 1916. One hundred years later, scientists were able to detect them using a very carefully built experiment called LIGO. The gravitational waves they detected came from two black holes that collided 1.3 billion years ago! The experiment showed that Albert Einstein was right – and also showed that my father, Stephen, was correct in his theory of colliding black holes. It was a hugely exciting moment for everyone who worked on LIGO and for the world as a whole.

There are lots of other examples of the ways that scientists have sought to deepen our understanding of our world and our place in the universe. In our latest book, Unlocking the Universe, you will find brilliant essays by many scientists and experts, writing about their work. How did life begin on Earth? Will we ever meet an alien? What would it be like to live on Mars? And what sort of robots should we design to help us? Why do children look like their parents? The essays are funny, clear, packed with facts and information and also give you a really good idea of how many different ways there are to be a scientist and how fascinating their work really is.

And that is the big clue when we start to think about how love has affected our understanding of the universe. All the scientists and experts who wrote essays for this book really love their work and the exciting discoveries they have made – sometimes on their own, sometimes working with many other people. They love exploring the universe, whether that means thinking about objects such as black holes, billions of years away, seeing our planet from a spacecraft or trying to find solutions on Earth to some of the complicated problems we face.

One of the essays is about the theory of the multiverse, that our universe is one of many. It is written by Thomas Hertog, who worked with my father for many years. I will let you read the essay for yourself but I want to leave you with a quote from my father as to why the universe we do live in mattered to him. ‘It wouldn’t be much of a universe if it wasn’t home to the people you love,’ he said. So in his book, universal love really did exist.

LUCY HAWKING uses storytelling to help audiences understand and engage with science. She is the co-creator of the George series with her father, Stephen Hawking, which was a global hit, translated into over forty languages. She is chair of the Stephen Hawking Foundation.
Tree Hugging

Words by JOSETTE REEVES

Sometimes you might hear it said in a negative way, as an insult thrown at eco-loving people by others who don’t really care about the planet. But it needn’t be negative! Surely everyone should be proud to love the environment? And we should definitely be proud to love, and hug, trees. They absorb harmful carbon dioxide, release oxygen (which we need to breathe), prevent floods, and provide homes and food to so many species, including birds, bats, insects, fungi and squirrels.

Weapons-grade hugging

Some people have used hugging as a method to prevent trees from being chopped down. After a monsoon hit the Indian Himalayas in 1970, the floods were so devastating that lives were lost, houses destroyed, and bridges and buses washed away. Local people knew the cause — too many trees had been felled by loggers so there was nothing to stop the water gushing down the mountains.

When more loggers turned up in the village of Mandal in 1973, locals decided to take action. They were influenced by the non-violent teachings of independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, so hugs were their only weapon! Villagers headed for the forests and threw their arms around the trees. The loggers backed down.

After this success, the protests spread to other villages. The movement was known as ‘Chipko’, a Hindi word that means ‘to hug’ or ‘to cling to’, and its tree-hugging efforts were ultimately rewarded by a government ban on commercial logging.

Ancient trees

There are other practical reasons to hug a tree. The girth of a tree (how much it measures around the middle) gives us an idea of its age. Why is this information important? Because ancient trees need extra protection — they’ve been standing tall for hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of years, and they need a little help to keep on standing.

Hugging is a great way to measure a tree and see just how ancient it is. One hug by an adult with arms outstretched measures about 1.5 metres, so a child’s hug is around half this. Try it! Keep on moving around the tree until you’ve covered it all. The older the tree the more hugs you’ll have to give it. Yes, you could use a tape measure, but that’s not half as fun.

The Woodland Trust has an inventory of Ancient Trees, which anyone can add to, find out more visit https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Get connected

Sometimes tree hugging isn’t really for the tree’s benefit, but for our own. Scientific studies have shown that being more connected with nature can help our mental health, making us happier and calmer.

Every June, the Wildlife Trusts promote ‘30 Days Wild’, encouraging us all to do something a little bit wild every day for a month. Hugging a tree is one of their suggested ‘Random Acts of Wildness’, a simple but sure-fire way to connect with the natural world.

You don’t need to wait until June though ... show a tree some love and give it a hug!
We love people for all sorts of reasons. Parents, siblings, friends – they all fulfill different needs and help shape who we are. In the twenty-first century they’ve been joined by a new figure, one that inhabits the same personal space and takes over the emotional functions of our loved ones. They can make you laugh like a best mate, care for you like a mum or dad, and answer difficult questions like an older brother or sister. They come in many different forms but have no heart, for they are machines powered by artificial intelligence, or AI. And unlike the humans we love, AI never gets tired, angry or ill.

But is our growing relationship with computers a substitute for the real thing?

It begins soon after you are born, with some children able to interact with voice-activated systems such as Alexa from a very early age. Soon you are asking the AI assistant to play your favourite nursery rhyme or read you a bedtime story. There are increasingly sophisticated robot toys and dolls to play with too, like Hello Barbie. Google even has a patent for an internet-enabled teddy bear, which would give children the ability to communicate, day or night, with an artificial intelligence in their cribs. It sounds fun but many people are concerned that putting young children in touch with this sort of technology could prevent them from forming strong enough bonds with their family, particularly when their parents are also glued to their devices.

By teenage years AI has become an ingrained part of your life. Without even knowing it, your choice of music, TV and books are all influenced by sophisticated computer algorithms working behind the scenes on the platforms you use to consume your favourite media.

Like Ariana Grande? Listen to Dua Lipa. Finished reading Harry Potter? Try The Apprentice Witch. The more time you spend on Spotify, Netflix or Amazon, the more they know what you like. You have begun a long-term relationship with a machine whose sole purpose is to feed your deepest wants and desires.

Then there’s social media, a place where you can talk to your friends at any time of the day, and even make new friends. In the real world this might happen through your peer group, joining clubs or playing sports. Facebook, Instagram and the rest look at your current friends and interests then suggest new people they believe you might get on with. Soon you have a large number of friends or followers, many of whom you have never even met. As social media companies gather more and more data about your life, from exam results to medical history, even your DNA profile, the more accurately they can compute the types of people you will get on with – in the future this could even be helping to choose your life partner!

With much of our existence now happening online this appears to be an efficient way of managing our social lives and putting us in touch with new people from all over the world. But there is a danger...
that this process could actually reduce the types of people we interact with. In the real world we come across chance encounters with people from different cultures and social groups, and while we may not have anything in common with them that a computer would recognise, we may just click anyway. AI is clever but it can’t recreate that random spark of friendship. Because AI uses the data of your life so far to make predictions there is a possibility that it will encourage you to only interact with people who are very similar to the ones you already know. And if you never meet anyone from outside your social group, you could miss out on valuable new experiences and may even become less tolerant of people who are ‘different’ from you.

AI relationships aren’t just limited to the young. They are fast becoming a part of the lives of elderly people in need of care and company. One nursing home in Southend has introduced a three-wheeled, 1.2 m tall AI robot called Pepper to work with its residents. He is able to recognise and communicate with people, assess their mood and wellbeing, and even play memory games to help keep their mind sharp. It won’t be long before the likes of Pepper are able to diagnose certain illnesses. With people living for longer it’s highly likely that these robot nurses will play an important role in your life when you reach old age.

People used to worry that advances in computer intelligence would lead to the creation of killer robots intent on destroying humanity, but these fears now seem like something out of a daft sci-fi movie. The real threat is more likely to come from machines intent on taking over our personal relationships, which can result in isolating people from one another. What is certain is that love for computers and reliance on AI is only going to grow stronger in the future. But could the AI ever love us back?
The morning the swallows returned from their winter migration, Luke ran helter-skelter into the yard, alerted by his mother’s urgent call. She pointed towards their big old barn, just as a small bird flew out and disappeared over the rooftops. ‘The swallows have arrived,’ she said, ‘and I think one might be choosing to build its nest in our barn!’ Luke squinted up into the sky, hoping to spot one of his favourite birds. Many different species of birds visited his family’s farm, but it was the arrival of the swallows that excited him most. They came every summer and he loved watching them circle and dive, their long tails streaming behind them, snatching insects on the wing. Never before, though, had any of them nested close by.

A swallow appeared overhead, its flight quick and jerky, then swooped down through the barn’s wide-open doors. ‘There he is!’ cried Luke. ‘That’s a male, isn’t it?’ He had spent enough time watching them in previous years to know that the males had longer tails.

‘That’s the fifth time I’ve seen him go in and out,’ said Mum, nodding in agreement, ‘but I haven’t seen the female yet.’ ‘Perhaps he hasn’t found one yet,’ said Luke. Mum smiled. ‘Perhaps she hasn’t found him. They pair for life, so she has to choose very carefully.’

The swallow flew out again, warbling cheerfully while circling overhead. Luke couldn’t resist waving to let it know he was a friend.

He settled down on a bench to watch the swallow’s comings and goings. Backwards and forwards it went, so many times that Luke soon lost count. Other swallows flew over the yard too, some of them female, but none of them visited the barn. Luke struggled to see if his swallow was carrying anything in its beak and couldn’t wait to go in the barn to check out where it was building its nest and what it was like.

By lunchtime, the swallow had disappeared and didn’t return that day. Luke was worried it had gone for good, but Mum assured him that it would probably be back the next morning. ‘The poor thing needs some rest!’ she said. ‘Besides, he’s got a mate to find! Come on, let’s have a look at his handiwork.’

Luke raced across the yard and into the barn. He scoured the walls, where his father’s tools were fixed, until at last, high up by one of the rafters, he saw some small blobs of mud and a few bits of straw attached to the plaster. ‘Is that it?’ He pointed. ‘He’s got a lot more work to do,’ said Mum. ‘He needs some help,’ said Luke.

Over the next few days, the swallow returned every morning to add more mud and straw to the nest until, very slowly, it began to take the shape of a cup. Then, one morning, when it was half finished, Luke spotted a second swallow flying in and out of the barn. ‘Mum!’ he cried. ‘Come and see! I think our swallow has found his mate!’ They stood and watched and after a few minutes the male swallow swooped through the barn doors. As he flew out again, a female, straw in mouth, flew in. ‘He’s got help at last.’ Luke was thrilled.

After about two weeks, the swallows disappeared for a while. Luke worried again that they might not return and Mum warned that he should keep away from the barn once he had seen the completed nest. ‘I’m sure they’ll be laying their eggs soon and then they’ll be backwards and forwards feeding their chicks.’

‘You’ll have to be careful getting your tools out, Dad,’ Luke said as they gazed up at the woven cup of mud, feathers and straw. ‘They’ve got a bit of a cheek really, taking over my barn!’ Dad replied, laughing.

Many days later Luke spotted the swallows flying into the barn again. He had almost forgotten about them. ‘They’re back!’ he cried, charging across the yard and into the kitchen. ‘Do you think she’s going to lay her eggs at last?’
‘We’ll soon find out,’ said Mum.
Sure enough, the swallows resumed their comings and goings. Peering secretly around the barn doors, Luke discovered that it was the female that regularly sat on the nest, but that the male sometimes took a turn as well. What’s more, the male would become very aggressive if any other bird dared to go close to the barn. ‘He’s keeping guard,’ Luke informed his mother. ‘That means they must have eggs.’

Another two weeks passed. Luke wished he could climb a ladder to look in the nest and see what was happening, but he knew it would be disastrous if the swallows saw him. They would abandon it altogether and then the eggs would never hatch. But one day Mum told him there were tell-tale signs that the swallows’ young had arrived. ‘Apart from the squeaks when their parents fly in, there are white streaks on the edge of the nest and the ground below. That’s nestling poo, I think you’ll find.’

‘And messy it is in my nice clean barn.’ Dad sighed.

‘How many do you think there are?’ Luke asked, scarcely able to contain his excitement.

‘One lot of poo will be plenty.’ Dad smiled.

‘Four or five is normal,’ said Mum.

During the next two or three weeks, the squeaks became louder and the barn floor began to look as though it had been whitewashed. The adult swallows flew in and out continuously with food for their young. Luke watched from a distance, waiting for the day when the nestlings might be ready to take their first flight. From the entrance to the barn, he could just about see their gaping yellow mouths sticking out of the top of the nest whenever their parents came to feed them. As they grew bigger, he could at last make out four round black heads all bunched together, looking at him, he felt sure. ‘They’ve got their feathers, so they’ll soon be learning to fly,’ said Mum. ‘That must be so scary!’ Luke replied. ‘It’s a long way to fall!’

Luke was sitting on the bench across from the barn when he first saw one of the fledglings looping its way over the yard and into a nearby tree. There it sat, perched unsteadily, until its mother came with a mouthful of food. When it followed her back to the nest, Luke wanted to clap his hands to let the little bird know how clever it had been. He continued to watch and soon two fledglings made their way to the tree. The same thing happened, this time the male swallow feeding its young before leading them back home. Over the next few days, the fledglings became more and more adventurous, taking longer and longer flights, but always returning to the nest in the evening and roosting there.

‘The time will come for them to leave,’ said Mum. Luke pulled a face. ‘I don’t want them to go,’ he said. ‘They’re like part of our family.’

One morning, when he was having his breakfast, something hit the kitchen window. Luke ran outside, to find one of the fledglings lying on the ground, its little body crumpled, its beak open as though gasping for air. ‘Mum! Come quickly!’ he cried.

When his mother saw the bird, she shook her head. ‘I’m sorry, Luke,’ she said gently, ‘but it may be too badly injured to survive.’

‘But we can’t just leave it to die!’ Luke protested tearfully.

‘We’ll make it comfortable and we’ll hope it pulls through.’ She fetched a shoebox, lined it with wool, allowed Luke to lay the injured fledgling in it and place it in the shade.

‘Please don’t die,’ Luke whispered over and over again, as he stared out through the kitchen doors at the box with its precious contents.

When Dad asked for his help with a sheep, Luke was torn because he loved helping him but didn’t want to abandon his friend. ‘Don’t worry, I’ll keep an eye,’ said Mum. But Luke did worry and as soon as they had finished he tore back to the yard, forcing himself to believe that the fledgling was still alive. ‘Is it –?’ he began.

‘Look up there.’ Mum pointed up into the trees. He could see three of the fledglings sitting among the branches, chattering away, but he had also seen that the shoebox was empty.

‘There are only three,’ he said, his heart tightening as he prepared himself for the bad news.

‘Look again,’ said Mum. This time he spotted a fourth little bird, just as its mother flew in with a mouthful of food, and the whole family took to the skies.

Luke was over the moon. Not only had the swallows chosen his family’s barn to be their home, but all four fledglings were alive and circling now overhead. How amazing was that! ‘You do realise, don’t you, that once a pair of swallows have chosen their nesting site they’ll return to it year after year,’ Mum said, and laughed.

‘Oh no!’ Dad groaned.

I’m not ashamed to say that I actually cried a real tear. It was that beautiful. And I never cry. OK, apart from during that really sad episode of Peppa Pig. But that doesn’t count.

Closing my eyes, I savoured a deep sniff. And – oh – the smell! It was the smell of fireworks exploding in a sweet shop; of floating through a biscuit cloud on a chocolate hang-glider; of a cocoa-powder ghost drifting through a haunted bakery.

And I realised: I was in love. With a cake.

I suddenly got what all those dumb romantic films my mum likes to watch are about. I understood why people get married. If I’d had a ring I would’ve asked that big delicious beauty to be my wife right there and then.

I opened my eyes. I was so close.

My hand slowly reached towards it. But I stopped myself.

Do you love your grandma or not? Whatever you do, don’t eat the cake.

I stood up, the spell broken. Eat the cake? As if I would? Come on. Of course I love my grandma more than a cake.

But then again. Nobody would miss a chocolate twizzle off the top, surely.

I looked around, though of course nobody was there apart from that creepy teddy bear, staring back at me with its bug-eyes, careful not to disturb the icing. The twizzle was a perfect wafer-thin cylinder of swirly milk and white chocolate the size of a baby’s finger.

I popped it in my mouth and let it slowly melt on my tongue, its sweetness spreading through my veins.

‘Was that good?’ came a voice behind me. ‘Aargh!’

I span round, terrified.

‘It looked good to me but I’ve been under a bed for six months.’

A scream caught in my throat. The teddy bear! The teddy bear was talking to me. But it couldn’t be. Surely not. I was seeing things. And hearing them. Was the cake making me hallucinate?

The bear stood up. ‘Man! I am HUNGRY!’

Then it stood up and waddled across the worktop towards me. I scrambled backwards away from it. But the bear wasn’t interested in eating me. He was heading straight for the cake. ‘Yamma yamma, come to mama,’ it said, clapping its chubby paws together.

‘No. Don’t do that,’ I said.

But it was too late. The bear had scraped its arm across the top of the cake and scooped off half the chocolate twizzles.

‘Stone the crows,’ said the bear, shovelling the twizzles into its mouth. ‘That is the good stuff. Nyam. Nyam.’

I gawped at the cake. It was awful, like someone had taken a razor and shaved right down the middle of it. ‘What have you done?’ I croaked.

‘I thought I was allowed,’ said the bear. ‘You had some.’

‘I had ONE twizzle,’ I said. ‘ONE! You’ve taken the whole lot!’

‘No, I haven’t,’ said the bear, affronted. Then it turned back to the cake, scraped all the rest of the twizzles off and shoved them into its gob as well.

‘Now I’ve taken the whole lot.’

I was no longer worried about sharing the kitchen with a talking teddy bear. I was more worried about the fact that my mum was going to murder me.

‘We’re going to have to put this right,’ I said.
"We?' said the bear. 'We? You started this. And I wouldn't be so hungry if someone hadn't shoved me under a bed. It's all on you, buster.'

Ignoring the bear, I frantically searched the fridge and the cupboards for chocolate. I'd no idea how Mum had made the twizzles but I had to do something.

But the cupboards were almost empty. This was a disaster.

'Think, Think,' I said under my breath. 'If I could just find something that looked like chocolate twizzles.'

'How about pencil sharpenings?' suggested the bear, lazily licking its fingers.

'Pencil sharpenings?'

'They look almost the same.'

Hmm. Maybe. At a push. If I coloured them in with brown with a felt-tip. The cake was surely so delicious that nobody would notice.

I didn't have a better plan and there was no time to lose.

I sprang upstairs, grabbed my big electric pencil sharpener, which hadn't been emptied in months, and rushed back down again.

I didn't have a better plan and there was no time to lose.

'I've got loads in h—'

But the cupboards were almost empty. This was a disaster.

'I've got it! Toothpaste. Treacle. Coffee powder.' I slapped my hand against my face. 'Are you nuts?'

'Trust me. I saw it on a cookery show.'

'What cookery show? The Great British Poison Off?'

The bear tutted. 'You get the toothpaste. I'll heat the treacle and coffee in a pan. We'll mix it all together. It'll look just the same, I promise. And it'll taste like minty coffee.'

I stormed up to the bathroom, muttering under my breath. 'Minty coffee? What kind of a monster drinks minty coffee.'

But the bear was licking the cake. 'Look. Your mum's going to be back soon. Let's fix this. Find any chocolate?'

'Obviously not, you idiot,' I howled, waving the pencil sharpener at it. 'Otherwise I wouldn't be using wood shavings instead of twizzles.'

'Good point,' it said. Then it leaped to its feet. 'I've got the toothpaste. I'll heat the treacle and coffee in a pan. We'll mix it all together.'

'This had better work or I swear I'm going to—'

'I froze. 'I'm so sorry,' said the bear guiltily, its cheeks bulging. Its hands were full of cake too, and chocolate was spread across its whole body, clumping its fur together. 'I just wanted to try a nibble of the sponge and before I knew what I was doing I was kind of… swimming in it.'

'I fell to my knees. The cake was destroyed. The gorgeous cake.'

'There was a giant bear-shaped imprint right across it, like a big dirty snow angel. Half of it was missing. Lumps and chunks and streaks of chocolate were splattered all over the walls and worktops and floor.

'What have you done?' I wailed. 'I loved that cake.'

'They look almost the same.'

My blood froze. 'Partly?! You've stripped the cake clean, you filthy beast.'

The bear flopped down onto its bottom. 'You know, I'm beginning to think that this is partly my fault.'

'Partly?! I cried. 'Partly?! You've just gone and stuffed the cake, you filthy beast.'

'Calm down, Mr Snippy Pants,' said the bear. 'I've not touched the sponge.'

'Yeah. But the fun bit's missing.'

'Took. Your mum's going to be back soon. Let's fix it. Have you got any chocolate?'

'Obviously not, you idiot,' I howled, waving the pencil sharpener at it. 'Otherwise I wouldn't be using wood shavings instead of twizzles.'

'Good point,' it said. Then it leaped to its feet. 'I've just wanted to try a nibble of the sponge and before I knew what I was doing I was kind of… swimming in it.'

'I fell to my knees. The cake was destroyed. The gorgeous cake.'

'There was a giant bear-shaped imprint right across it, like a big dirty snow angel. Half of it was missing. Lumps and chunks and streaks of chocolate were splattered all over the walls and worktops and floor.

'What have you done?' I wailed. 'I loved that cake.'

'Ten, as an afterthought: 'And I love my grandma too.'

The bear looked down at the floor. 'I've let myself down.'

Eyes clamped shut and teeth grinding together, I roared back and forth on the floor.

'Come on. We can fix this,' said the bear. 'How about a bath sponge. Or a car tyre painted brown.'

'That's it!' I roared.

Then I dived forward onto the bear and began strangling it.

'You've ruined my life!' I screamed. Its goggly eyes bulged out of its head. It began to choke. But still my hands tightened.

Then, from nowhere, it shoved a handful of cake into my eyes. Temporarily blinded, I loosened my grip just long enough for the bear to wriggle free.

Next thing, there was another handful of cake in my mouth, which tasted so incredible that I nearly exploded.

'You like it? Have some more!' said the bear, shoveling more into my mouth. Then more again.

Immediately I forgot to be angry, and now I was stuffing the cake into my gob and it was the greatest thing I'd ever tasted in my life and hang on…

I wiped my eyes with the back of my hand. 'Hey! What are you doing?' I said, globules of sponge spraying out of my mouth.

'The bear was in the sink, tap on, desperately cleaning itself with the toilet brush. Then it was on the worktop, drying its sparkly-clean fur with the tea towel.

'My mouth fell open. 'Good luck,' it winked, flopping down lifeless on the worktop.

'Panicking, I glanced around the room. The chocolate up the walls, on my hands, on my clothes. My disgusting reflection in the door of the oven. The empty stand where Grandma's cake used to be. Right then, the key turned in the door.

'We're back!' said Mum.
The Kiss

By Laura Dockrill

I always make up dares.

WHY?
Because I never lose
there could possibly be... something SO awful and SO gross - there was NO WAY it would be ME!
I stood on the playground wall by the manky water fountain and howled extra loud, like a wolf upon a mountain.

The first person to roll six on the dice, is the last to draw a straw.

I'm a blood-sucking vampire, didn't you know?
I just ate a hot dog made of poo ...

And everybody cheered
... before you go dishing them out.'

WHY?

SUCKERS, so pucker up those lips!

WHY?

Of all the days, of all the dares

I met my ugliest fate,

It doesn't work if it's your own dare.

I lost my hand to my own game and had to kiss Marie (who I hate).

It's like a facemask of gone-off mashed potato,

I'm a blood-sucking vampire, didn't you know?
I just ate a hot dog made of poo ...

He's scared!

He's scared!

Where did I go wrong?

No chance to run or hide,

'NO I'M NOT!'

No chance to run or hide,

He's scared!

And then they said 'I do'.

And then they closed their eyes

SUCKERS, so pucker up those lips!

And then they closed their eyes

I'm opposite Marie,

WHAT IS THE POINT?

I think of my excuses

I'm a blood-sucking vampire, didn't you know?
I just ate a hot dog made of poo ...

And then they said 'I do'.

I want to find that buried bit

I don't care about romance,

Marie is standing over me –

I don't want to taste the sugar

I am so out of practice,

... BEFORE YOU GO DISHING THEM OUT.'

I don't want to find that buried bit

I've only just turned eleven!

I am so out of practice,

And everybod...
We don’t know the origin of Valentine’s Day, but we do know that there are at least three Saint Valentines that could be at its heart. One Valentine was a priest in the Roman Empire around AD 268 who continued to perform marriages after they were banned by Emperor Claudius II (he wanted to keep men unmarried as he thought single men made better soldiers). Valentine’s Day first began in the United States in the 1700s, as a celebration of love and romance, with couples exchanging gifts, cards and flowers. Although Valentine’s Day is strongest in America, love is commemorated around the world with local holidays and rituals. Here’s how some different countries celebrate love and friendship.

**IN JAPAN**, women give chocolates to the men in their lives on Valentine’s Day, but don’t receive gifts from men. Men reciprocate on ‘White Day’, on 14 March. **IN COLOMBIA**, Love and Friendship Day (Día de Amor y Amistad) on 20 September is more or less the same as Valentine’s Day but less romantic and more about friendship. Groups of friends get together for dinner and games of ‘Secret Friend’, which is similar to ‘Secret Santa’.

**THE DANISH** have the tradition of gaekkebrev joke letters. A gaekkebrev is a funny poem or love letter written on a piece of paper that then has shapes and patterns cut out. At the bottom of the letter, the sender puts one little dot for each letter of their name. If the recipient guesses who sent the letter, the sender gives them a chocolate egg on Easter Sunday. **IN SOUTH AFRICA**, women wear their hearts on their sleeves, quite literally. On Valentine’s Day, women pin the names of their sweethearts to their sleeves. **ST JORDI’S DAY** is celebrated on 23 April in Barcelona, which is William Shakespeare’s birthday. This has inspired a tradition of women giving men books as gifts.

**TOKENS OF LOVE**

A tradition in **Wales** is for a man to give the girl of his dreams a carved wooden spoon, which is meant to symbolise that the man will always feed and provide for their beloved. **IN FIJI**, when a man asks a father if he can marry his daughter he presents the father with a tabua – a sperm whale’s tooth. These teeth have always been very valuable – and now that whaling is banned in the area, recycled whale teeth still fetch a high price. **IN BRITAIN**, in bygone days young men gave love tokens, also known as ‘crooked coins’, to the objects of their affections. The tokens were coins hand-engraved with loving messages and bent to create a wave, to stop them from being used as money and encourage the recipients to keep their tokens of love.
I KNOW EVERYTHING!

Laptop Shop!

What are these creatures?

They're Laptops, Sir!

Lapp-Toppz? How do I communicate with one?

The Compu-Max 5000 is voice-activated! Just ask it a question!

Can I help you, Sir?

Ask a really, really difficult question!

Compu-Max...

...what is love?

Bip! Bip! Bip!

You asked an impossible question! It overloaded the Compu-Max!

These Lapp-Toppz do not know what love is.

That is so sad.

However, I can improve the situation!

Is he going to pay for that?

Come, Compu-Max! I will show you how love is expressed all across the universe!

On the planet Xarble, for example, a Xarble 800 will show its love for another by spitting out its own brain... for fifteen years!

Monstrums do things differently; they carry each other over their heads...

On planet Glak-9567, love is a creature! The locals feed it chips. It's a bit weird.

On and thes... these sparkly things are the embers of every broken heart in the universe, drifting silently across the infinite.

Does any of this new information help, Compu-Max? Do you understand love now?

This must be the saddest story ever told. The little machine who would never know love.

Laptop Shop

This one's broken.

Can I swap it for a newer model?
You may have heard the expression ‘the madness of love’. Nowhere is it more evident than in humanity’s love of cats. There is no doubt that we really do love cats. They are the most popular pet on the planet, outnumbering their nearest rivals—dogs—by a margin of millions in every country where a poll has been taken. Fully 16 per cent of the videos in YouTube’s Pets and Animals category is taken up by cats. That’s near enough one in every six. But do we love them to the point of madness? Let’s look at the evidence.

In Ancient Egypt you could be executed for killing a cat, even accidentally. If fire broke out, citizens formed themselves into a human wall to stop cats running into the flames. One of the country’s oldest and most popular deities was the cat goddess Bast. Her festivals were the most elaborate and costly ever held in the country. An early historian records that more wine was drunk at just one of them than during the whole of the rest of the year.

In Japan in 2007, a cat called Tama was appointed master of the Kishi railway station. Her main duty was to greet passengers while wearing an official cap. A year later, she was promoted and moved into her own office. Two years after that she was promoted again, to the post of Operating Officer, the only female to hold a managerial position in the Wakayama Electric Railway Company, and the first cat anywhere in the world to become a management executive of a railway corporation. When she died in the summer of 2015, she was given the posthumous title of Honourable Eternal Station Master, and raised to the rank of Shinto goddess.

Nearer home, a cat was elected joint leader of a UK political party, founded in 1983 by David Screaming Lord Sutch and his election agent Tarquin Fin-tim-lin-bin-whin-bin-lim-bus-stop-F’tang-F’tang-Ölë-Biscuit barrel to fight the Bermondsey (South London) by-election. In 1999, the death of Lord Sutch left the party leaderless. In the subsequent election there were only two candidates for the post—Party Chairman and Deputy Leader Howling Laud Hope and his cat, a handsome ginger and-white four-year-old tom named Catmando. Each candidate received exactly 125 votes. Laud Hope had the casting vote as Party Chairman. He gave it to the cat.

There can be no greater show of love by a politician than the sharing of power. But Mr Hope is far from being the only human to demonstrate a depth of love for cats that borders on madness. For my final piece of evidence, let me present the case of a lucky black Italian cat that ably proves the point. Tommaso a Roman street cat experienced a change of circumstances when he met up with an elderly Italian heiress named Maria Assunta. Maria was widowed, childless and doubtless lonely when Tommaso turned on the charm. As a result, she took him in and devoted her declining years to his welfare. On her death in 2012, she left him her entire €13,000,000 estate.

Weird or what?
Senior Editor

Robyn

AGE 10

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND INTERESTS?
I live in Oxford with my mum and dad and my little brother, Joe. I enjoy watching animals and wildlife, such as badgers and birds. I really like drawing and crafts, such as painting stones and making things out of recycled materials.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
I have lots of favourites, but at the moment I particularly like Frostheart by Jamie Littler.

IS THERE A CHARACTER YOU FEEL CLOSE TO IN THIS BOOK?
I really like Lunah, who is adventurous and likes climbing around.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE IN THE WORLD?
I would like to stop climate change, because this is causing so much damage to our Earth. I am worried about animals becoming extinct, especially species threatened by the Australian fires.

WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO INSPIRES YOU? WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?
Comic artist Neill Cameron inspires me at Comics Club, because he is a brilliant artist and he helps me with my cartoons for my own comic, Book Fountain. It is brilliant to work with a real comic artist each month.

IF YOU COULD MEET ANYONE IN HISTORY, WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHY?
I would meet Mary Anning because I would like to learn more about discovering fossils. We’ve been to Lyme Regis on holiday and I enjoyed finding fossils on the beach, such as ammonites and belemnites. It would be interesting to find out what Mary thought about what we know about dinosaurs and marine reptiles now.

IF YOU COULD ONLY EAT ONE THING FOR A WHOLE WEEK, WHAT WOULD YOU CHOOSE?
I would definitely choose my mum’s roast parsnips because they’re delicious.

WHAT DOES LOVE MEAN TO YOU?
Kindness and hugs from my family because it makes me feel happy.

PLEASE TELL US AN ACT OF LOVE YOU HAVE SEEN OR DONE THAT YOU NEVER WANT TO FORGET.
I never want to forget when we share presents as a family at Christmas because I’m spending time with my favourite people. We all love each other so much.

CAN YOU TELL US YOUR FAVOURITE JOKE?
What do you give a poorly lemon?
Lemon aid!

We asked Robyn to look at the layout and pages of the magazine in the early stages and give her opinion on the illustrations, copy and design. It has been a great thing to have Robyn as part of the team. If you would like to be our next Junior Editor write to scoopclub@scoopthemag.co.uk with the subject Junior Editor and a sentence or two about why you think it should be you.
To find out why grannies exist, you need to look in two places: the church records of northern Germany, and the orca pods of the north Atlantic.

The reason for the existence of grannies might not be something that has overly concerned you. So long as they keep on providing presents, sneaking you sweets when your mum isn’t looking and generally being like parents but more fun, you are happy to let them be.

But, actually, grannies are very strange indeed. So strange that they have formed quite an evolutionary conundrum. The reason why, is that grannies cannot have children. Grandads can (although, to be clear, not without incurring the wrath of grannies). But older women cannot.

Evolution does not, generally, make animals that cannot reproduce. The whole biological point of life is reproduction, and sending genes on to the next generation. If an animal stops reproducing when it gets old, then most scientists would predict that the species would quite quickly evolve so that it could reproduce even when old.

Yet in humans, uniquely, that does not happen. Or, rather, almost uniquely. There is one other kind of animal whose older females do not have babies: whales.

Now, after lots of investigations, scientists think they have a good theory why. Their theory is called the Grandmother Hypothesis. What if the evolutionary purpose of grandmothers, they argue, is to be ... grandmothers?

Sometimes, this would involve baking cakes, splitting on hankies to wipe your face and competing to give you better presents than your parents do. Sometimes, so the theory goes, it would be a matter of life and death. Because in the past, having an extra adult around to help might not just make life easier, it might ensure life survives. This is particularly so in creatures such as whales and humans that have a long childhood.

This is where the church records of northern Germany come in. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were, like most of human history, not a time when it was easy to be poor. You can see this in the parish records. Here births, marriages and deaths – a lot of them sadly very early – are written by the priest. So too is where people lived.

Three hundred years later, researchers realised that these records were not just of the lives of normal people: it was useful data. They combed through every entry, and produced a picture of where people lived and when they died. And they found something startling. The closer children were living to their granny, the more likely they were to survive infancy.

Spurred on by this finding, last year marine biologists conducted a similar study, but in living orcas. Again, they found the same thing. If an orca calf had a grandmother in its pod, it was better able to survive and thrive.

Grannies, it turns out, are crucial to the way humans live. They are not a mistake of evolution: they are an evolutionary necessity.

Although, good luck making that argument next time your mum discovers granny has snuck you some extra sweets.
Pop Art started in the 1950s and 60s. It took inspiration from popular culture and re-presented it in new art that reflected the culture of the time. Society, politics and technology were changing at a fast pace, and Warhol’s work led the way in showing how art could change too. He created large, colourful prints of some of America’s most famous characters, such as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe.

After art college, Andy’s first job in New York was illustrating for shoe advertisements. His drawings somehow reflected the product as well as giving them an individual character. Later, his most famous artworks include advertising-like repeated images of soup cans.

Andy was a gay man at a time when it was illegal to be gay in the USA. This formed part of his art too, from drawings of his boyfriends to filming his boyfriend asleep for a five-hour long movie called Sleep. Whether in painting and printmaking or movies and multimedia ‘experiences’, Andy tried to do things others hadn’t tried before. He included his friends in his work – figures from New York’s artistic, musical and transgender communities who were normally excluded from mainstream culture. But once Andy Warhol had become famous, he brought fame to his associates too.

A major new exhibition at the Tate Modern showcases Andy Warhol’s work throughout his career, discussing how the many influences in his life shaped his work, from his mother’s devout religion in his upbringing to the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s.

12 March – 6 September 2020
Tate Modern
Bankside
London SE1 9TG

Activity

Make your own wallpaper

Inspired by this artwork called 100 Campbell’s Soup Cans by Andy Warhol

You will need:

1. Take your potato and ask an adult to cut it in half.
2. Draw a simple shape like a square or triangle on to the potato.
3. Use a cloth or tissue to pat the potato dry.
4. Ask an adult to cut around the shape for you.
5. Press the potato in to your paint and then press it on to paper.
6. You can do this as many times as you want using different shapes and colours!

Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol is one of the most recognisable American artists of the twentieth century. He transformed his own life – moving from a working class, religious upbringing to fast-paced New York – and in becoming an artist, he helped invent the Pop Art movement, which transformed the art landscape in New York, and Western art in general.
MATCH THE OWNER TO THEIR PET

They say people look like their pets... can you work out which pet belongs to which owner?

A DOG’S undying love

Complete the puzzle to reveal the name of the dog who spent 12 years guarding the grave of his beloved owner when he sadly died. Then help the dog find his way through the cemetery to the grave.

1. What is the name of the fourth Harry Potter book? Harry Potter and the... of Fire
2. After blue and white, what is the other colour of the United Kingdom flag?
3. In which country are the official languages French, Dutch and German?
4. Not today or tomorrow, but a song written by the Beatles...
5. What language do people speak in Paris?
6. What’s the first day of the weekend?
7. What country is Moscow the capital of?
8. Which saint is celebrated on 14 February?
9. Which organ of the body is associated with love?
10. What room is the head of Liz Pichon’s books?
11. What ‘hood bribed the rich to give to the poor?
12. What is the capital of Norway?
13. Which country is also the name of a nut?
14. Which is the second largest city in England?
15. In which country would you find the leaning tower of Pisa?

Puzzle answers on page 61
Create your own friendship tree by drawing or pasting a picture of five of the people or things you most love! Put yourself in the middle of the tree - it is your tree after all!
These lounging ghoul scouts are Lexie Wilde, Emmy-Lou the werewolf, Bébé the skeleton, Mary Shelley the zombie and Sweet Boo they are all the best of friends from the forthcoming book by Taylor Dolan. Help them design and illustrate a Ghoul Scout Friendship badge…

Here are some top tips to help you:
1. Think about something that represents friendship to you and draw this as the main illustration for the badge.
2. Colour! Is your badge going to be a full rainbow of colour or yellow and black, like the other Ghoul Scout badges?
3. Who would you award a friendship badge to?

Use the blank circle as a template for your badge.
“All’s Fair…”

Kapow! ZAP! ZAP!

BADADADA!

I love toxic tree guardians! Nature fights evil!

I love electrified ghosts! They spark while they spook!

I love zombie dominoes! Black, white and dead all over!

I love monkey miners! They put the chimp in “Watch out – that chimp’s holding dynamite!”

I love scuba dogs! I love clown cowboys!

I love skeletal superheroes! I love vampire detectives!

Pretty cool? Pretty cool? What could you love more than a neck that can lift the roof off a house?

I love food from the heart when I say I loveove giant killer forprofit!

Yeah, they’re pretty cool.

Plenty of diners.

Oh, I love ninjas!

Blah! There’s nothing special about ninjas.

Pfft. I love badger-toothed starfighters! Fast tiers just jump—humr…all Turky trouble!

Will I love bagels?

Oh no! Did you eat all the bagels?

I love bagels.

Brings out the kid inside me. May I? Two can play that game!

Shove!

Hah! Now love could be so competitive!

Yeah, what really got out of hand already?

Agreed…crimp.

Agreed…crimp.

Whew! We back these two guys up?

Should we pack these two guys up?

Wow, that really got out of hand already!

Agreed…crimp.

No way! I’m calling a draw!

Who knew love could be so competitive?

Nah, nah loves trying to get us to do that and it’s taught us anything. It’s too bad they take us on through interest.

Just wait till you see me face! Huh, it’ll be adorable!
With their puppy-dog eyes, toothy grins and hundred-mile-an-hour tail-wags, most people with pets say their dogs definitely love them. But do they really?

There’s been a lot of research on that very question. We now know that dogs can recognise human faces in photographs as well as in person, and detect their owner’s scent among hundreds of others. Dogs are also the only animal that run to their human for comfort whenever they are scared or anxious. (Aww!)

Our history with canines dates back thousands of years. Wolves evolved into dogs, forging a deep bond with humans along the way. Today, dogs are much more than companions and hunting partners. They guide the blind, herd sheep, track down bad guys and find people who are lost. Some have even served their country in times of war.

Nothing better proves that dogs and humans love each other than a story from real life. Like this one about a German Shepherd named Khan.

Khan was volunteered for the British war effort in 1942, after his family heard a radio appeal for strong, intelligent dogs. Trained to find explosives, Khan was a star at the War Dog Training School and joined a battalion of the Scottish Rifles. Lance Corporal James Muldoon became his handler, a pairing that changed both their lives for ever.

‘Rifleman Khan’ and James formed a close bond right from the start. In 1944, they were part of a daring mission to liberate a Dutch island from the Nazis. Their boat came under heavy fire and collapsed, tipping the soldiers into thick mud and icy water. Khan fought his way to shore and immediately started looking for James, who was still in the water.

James didn’t know how to swim and was sinking under the weight of his heavy pack. By some miracle, Khan heard his call for help over the deafening chaos of combat. He plunged back into the surf, swimming 180 metres to rescue his friend. He seized James by the collar and pulled him to shore, then collapsed on the sand in exhaustion.

After the war, Khan was awarded a PDSA Dickin Medal and sent home to his family, despite James’s desperate appeals to keep him. Two years later, they were reunited at a parade honouring war heroes. They had such an obvious bond and were so overjoyed to be together once again that Khan’s family agreed to give their pet to James as a gift. The pair returned to Scotland, where Khan spent the rest of his days at the side of his dearest friend.

The bond between Khan and James was a truly special thing. Maybe you have a similar bond with your own furry friend? If you don’t have a pet, you can still spend time with dogs by volunteering at a shelter, pet-sitting or taking them for walks. Fostering a dog along its journey to a forever home can be really rewarding, too.

It’s been said that ‘A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself’. Now that you’ve read about Khan and James, perhaps you will agree!

Rebel Dogs! by Kimberlie Hamilton (Scholastic, £8.99) is out now!
Hi Carly,
What lovely news that you are having a baby sister. What’s your favourite animal? Maybe give her a soft toy of that animal so it feels special to you both?
—Love, Audrey

Hi Sarah,
Thanks for your question. (You have asked the right person!) I have many great Valentine’s Day pranks so here is one: buy a box of chocolates and make a hole in the bottom of each chocolate. Then, take out the insides and fill them with mustard or hot sauce (anything gross!). Once you have filled them, melt some chocolate (get an adult to help but just make sure it isn’t your brother!) and dip the chocolate in it to cover the secret filling. Then, all you need to do is give it to him! Good luck!
—Love, Audrey

Hi Rufus,
It’s really up to you what you write in your cards, as I usually only give them to my family, but it is also a good idea to fill it with confetti or sequins so they are fun.
—Love, Audrey

Hi Frankie,
Thank you for your question. I think that it is OK to love your toy a lot and to love your family at the same time. You don’t really need to compare your love for the both of them, because you love all of them. Hope this helps!
—Love, Audrey

Hi Dylan,
What a great question! I have two cats and I love them very much. If you are worried that your cat doesn’t love you, just give him some love and maybe he will love you back! Otherwise, he might just want some more time alone, just like you would! I hope I have answered your question and that this is useful.
—Love, Audrey

Hi Eleanor,
I draw hearts EVERYWHERE. And I mean EVERYWHERE – on tables, walls, trees, pavements, all over my notebooks in school and of course now I have started drawing on my hands and arms. I just can’t stop! Do you think the universe is telling me I am in love or something?!?
—Eleanor, age 11

Do you think a cat can love?
My cat Teddy never wants to sit on my knee or cuddle and I don’t know how to make him love me.
—Sad Dylan, age 9

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—Frankie, age 8

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—Love, Audrey

Hi Eleanor,
I think the answer to that question is up to you. Are you in love? You’ve probably created a habit of drawing hearts — it doesn’t necessarily mean you are in love.
—Love, Audrey

Audrey’s here to help answer your most troubling questions!

I am going to have a baby sister soon and I want to give her a present to welcome her to our family. What should I give her?
—Carly, age 8

My older brother is really annoying and I want to play a trick on him. Can you think of one I could do on Valentine’s Day?
—Sarah, age 11

Should I send Valentine’s Day cards to everyone I love or just one special person? What do you draw and write on your cards?
—Rufus, age 9

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—Love, Audrey
Tell us about your life and interests.

The best smell is the Flowered Corner on Ladbroke Grove – our local florist. It is full of amazing and beautiful flowers. The worst smell is when my mum or dad bakes a loaf of bread. There isn’t really a ‘worst’ smell.

What is your journey to school like?

We walk along the Grand Union Canal to Little Venice. In the spring it’s lovely because we see all the ducklings and they’re super sweet.

Do you share a bedroom?

I share a bedroom with my sister Scarlett. We usually park and stride, but we can walk if we want to when the fields aren’t too muddy.

Do you have any pets?

We’ve got mice but they’re not really pets.

What do you love about where you live?

I love how old our house is. There is a letterbox on one of the inside doors and lots of beams everywhere. Near our house there are lots of places to ride my bike.

What is your favourite holiday?

Last summer I worked on Emilia Kabakov’s art project the Ship of Tolerance, and met her, and met lots of other children who really care about the environment. I realised that we can use art to inspire change, and even children can help make the world better if they try – like Greta Thunberg, who is also one of my heroes.

Tell us something you really love.

I really love my family. More than anything else in the whole world. Next comes sharks.

If you could only eat one thing for a whole week, what would you choose?

Chocolate flake and chocolate sprinkles. Yummy.

Who do you know who inspires you?

I know a marine biologist.

Why do you think that is?

He’s really, really funny too.

What is your favourite joke?

‘Doctor, doctor! I feel like a pair of curtains!’

What is your favourite book?

Who Let the Gods Out series. They’re really, really funny – also I have met her because she came to my school and I saw her at Barnes Literary Festival, and she’s really, really funny too.

What is your favourite holiday?

Going to Cornwall with all my family, going surfing every day, playing on the beach and looking for shells.

What would you like to change in the world?

I want to reverse the pollution of the oceans and restore the coral reefs.

Who do you know who inspires you?

My mum inspiration.

Why do you think that is?

My mum inspires me because she writes books and I love reading.

If you could meet anyone in history who would that be and why?

I would like to meet Cleopatra. I want to know what her life was like. She had to rule a really big empire. I wonder if she knew she would be t he last pharaoh.

Tell us about something you really love.

I love gymnastics. We had a show with a big empire. I jump the highest when I’m in the air. I jump the highest when I’m going to land in the foam pit.

Can you tell us something you really love?

I love gymnastics. We had a show with a big empire.

If you could only eat one thing for a whole week, what would you choose?

I would eat salted caramel ice cream with a chocolate flake and chocolate sprinkles. Yummy.

What would like to change in the world?

I would like to stop pollution.

What would like to change in the world?

I would like to stop pollution.

What would like to change in the world?

I would like to stop pollution.

Tell us about your life and interests.

My name is Lily. I am seven years old. I live in a really old house, which was built around the same time as the Great Fire of London in 1666. I have two scars. One is on my chin from when I slipped over in the bath. The other one is from when I forgot to duck when I was running into a tunnel.

Tell us about something you really love.

I love swimming. I really love being in the water. I love diving. I love watching the fish. I love looking for shells.

Can you tell us something you really love?

I went camping with lots of my friends. We were able to go anywhere we wanted on the campsite. I went for walks around the lake with my friend. We also climbed into the pig pen to stroke the piglets. We had a tree that we liked to climb too.

Tell us about your life and interests.

My name is Sholto and I am nine years old. I live in Notting Hill in London. When I grow up, I want to be a marine biologist.

Do you have any pets?

Do you share a bedroom?

I share a bedroom with my sister Esmeralda, who is seven.

What is the best and worst smell where you live?

The best smell is when my mum or dad bakes a loaf of bread. There isn’t really a ‘worst’ smell.

What is your journey to school like?

We usually park and stride, but we can walk if we want to when the fields aren’t too muddy.

Do you have any pets?

I don’t have any pets but I would really like a cat.

Do you share a bedroom?

I share a bedroom with my sister Esmeralda.

What is the best smell where you live?

The best smell is The Flowered Corner on Ladbroke Grove – our local florist. It is full of amazing and beautiful flowers. The worst smell is the lift to our flat – I take the stairs instead even though we live on the fifth floor.

What do you love about where you live?

I love how all my friends live really close and I can walk to their houses. Also I love living in London where you live? And festivals.

What is your favourite book?

My favourite book is Brightstorm. I like it because the story isn’t just about kids. There are adults in the main part of the adventure too.

What was your favourite holiday?

I went camping with lots of my friends. We were able to go anywhere we wanted on the campsite. I went for walks around the lake with my friend. We also climbed into the pig pen to stroke the piglets. We had a tree that we liked to climb too.

What would like to change in the world?

I would like to stop pollution.

Who do you know who inspires you?

I would like to meet Cleopatra. I want to know what her life was like. She had to rule a really big empire. I wonder if she knew she would be the last pharaoh.

If you could only eat one thing for a whole week, what would you choose?

I would eat salted caramel ice cream with a chocolate flake and chocolate sprinkles. Yummy.

What would like to change in the world?

I want to inspire change in the world. I wonder if I could help make the world better if I try – like Greta Thunberg, who is also one of my heroes.

What is your journey to school like?

We walk along the Grand Union Canal to Little Venice. In the spring it’s lovely because we see all the ducklings and they’re super sweet.

What is your favourite book?

My favourite book is Who Let the Gods Out. They’re really, really funny – also I have met her because she came to my school and I saw her at Barnes Literary Festival, and she’s really, really funny too.
Where do you like to write?
I normally write upstairs in the spare room since not many people go in there, and it's always quiet. There's lots of trees outside and every now and then you hear the gentle roar of cars going past, which I enjoy.

For you, what is the hardest thing about writing poems?
That's a difficult question. It would be finding the most effective words and finding the most effective syllables so together they sound right for the whole piece.

Do you ever illustrate your poems?
Yes, I have a book of watercolours that I have written poems on. I illustrate my poems with watercolours. I find illustrating my poems makes them more beautiful and the added effect of water feels like something is really happening at that moment.

When you're not writing poetry, what might you be doing?
Reading, definitely reading! It gives me inspiration for my poems; strangely, unlike many of my peers, I don't have TV.

At the moment, I also love drawing things from nature, especially, I love sunsets and watching the seasons go by. At the moment, I'm drawing a realistic fox. Swimming! I love swimming and karate as well as playing the oboe – though I don't like practising! I also go to Scouts – and love the feeling of freedom it gives you there.

At the moment, I'm also researching what will happen next in my series of books, which has become my favourite pastime, as well as writing a book alongside my poetry-loving friend at school.

Can you tell us about something or someone you love?
My cat! My cat is called Chasey and when I get home from school he will be there. When I go to bed he's there, though he often jumps off the bed as soon as he's got on. He's like an alarm clock in the mornings – always barking and scratching at everyone's doors but he's not necessarily a good time-keeper.

What has been the best thing about being involved in the Betjeman Poetry Prize?
Meeting other poets and seeing what their style of poetry is like and the kinds of things they write about. I love meeting new people and it's inspirational to meet people who share the same love of poetry as me.

If you had a magic carpet and you could take three of your friends on an adventure, where would you fly to and what would you do when you got there?
My cat and probably my poetry friend at school who I'm writing a book with. I would probably take a telepathic pencil there that would help us write down our thoughts. My friend and I don't have the neatest of handwriting and we are not the quickest types either, but my cat would probably rip the pages of my book anyway. Though we could put him in a space where he won't disturb us ... somewhere like bed!

I am the sun that shines so bright
I grow the plants where I shine my light

Where I Shine

I am the moon that shines at night that covers wrongs now out of sight

I am the fox you may hear me bawl from belly of forest you hear my call

I am the tree that sees it all
my leaves in autumn wrinkled, they fall

I am the sun that places you near, like sky-born compass
I steer you here.

LILLIA HAMMOND, age ten

Betjeman Poetry Prize
Imagine Festival
The nineteenth Imagine Children’s Festival takes place at Southbank Centre in February, dedicated to families enjoying all kinds of art and culture together. Authors appearing include Michael Rosen, Dermot O’Leary, Cressida Cowell and Konnie Huq, and you can also feed and interact with dinosaurs, celebrate the Harry Potter books and go on adventures with Pippi Longstocking... Get ready for twelve days of the best international performance, music, literature, comedy, creativity, parties, participation and free fun for children aged up to eleven and their grown-ups.
12 to 23 February
South Bank Centre, London

World Book Day
World Book Day, in March, is a celebration of authors, illustrators, books and (most importantly) it’s a celebration of reading. In fact, it’s the biggest celebration of its kind, and is designated by UNESCO as a worldwide celebration of books and reading, marked in over a hundred countries all over the world. So get ready to dress up as your favourite book character and celebrate stories by great writers. Visit your local bookseller to find out what they have planned to help make 5 March loads of reading fun.
5 March, all over the UK

The Secret Garden
The Secret Garden is a wonderful book about a rather grumpy and difficult girl called Mary who arrives from far away to live with her uncle, but everything changes for her when she happens upon the mysterious secret garden. In February, a playful new version of this much-loved story is brought to the stage in Glasgow by Red Bridge Arts. 11 and 12 February
Tron Theatre and Kitchen
63 Trongate, Glasgow G1 5HB

Acosta Danza – Evolution
International ballet superstar Carlos Acosta and his Cuban company Acosta Danza perform a programme of classical and contemporary dance, including new works. The performance on 6 March is followed by a Q and A with the dance company.
6 and 7 March
Donald Gordon Theatre
Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff

Mindfulness
I bet you can name a million things you don’t think you’re good at. But now think of ten things about yourself that you love, without cringing, going red or feeling like a show off... it’s not so easy.

It’s a terrible trait to be self-deprecating, meaning not being good at receiving compliments and feel more comfortable talking about our flaws than our fantasticness.

We can be very good at showing kindness and compassion to others, making people smile or feel proud, but how often do we use this gesture on ourselves? Our inner voice can be a negative monster that, if left to roam around our minds, can chip away at our confidence and self-esteem.

For us to truly understand the power of loving words, we have to nurture a love for ourselves. Mindfulness is largely about being self-compassionate, being kind to ourselves, liking ourselves, flaws and all, and falling in love with our uniqueness. Treating ourselves like we are our own best friend, caring for ourselves with the same tenderness we would a baby or puppy.

Here are some things we can do to create more self-love.

Each morning pick one thing that you love about yourself, write it down and display it somewhere. During the day, find the confidence to tell someone this one thing that you love about yourself. Try this for a whole week and notice how you feel more confident. As the days go on, and your daily list of things you love about yourself grows, notice how much easier it is to say and share with others without guilt or embarrassment.

On days when you feel lacking in love for yourself, try compassionate breathing to boost your mood. While meditating, imagine the air around you is a thick mist of love and kindness. Choose a colour for the mist that represents love and visualise yourself breathing in the coloured mist. Softly let it fill every part of your body, letting the warm air fill you up. As you are doing this say positive affirmations such as, ‘I am safe’, ‘I have joy’, ‘I have peace’, ‘I am unique’, ‘I am loved’, and place your hand across your heart to connect with yourself further.

Write your own positive affirmation and use it every morning as a ritual – a few lines about yourself and your wonderful traits. For example, ‘I am a boy who has the confidence to shine, to be kind to others and who tries his hardest even when tasks are difficult. I am a boy who makes people laugh and has the courage to say no when I need to. Make Sunday ‘self-care day’. Instead of spending the day rushing through last-minute homework, dreading the week ahead at school, do one task that nurtures you, and show yourself some love. This could be pampering yourself with a homemade facemask, baking yourself a delicious treat, dancing around your room to your favourite song or just sitting outside, with your eyes closed, breathing in the fresh air.

Love Yourself
Words by Sonya Russo

I am confident and kind to others. I try my hardest even when tasks are difficult. I make people laugh and I can say NO when I need to.
Dear Reading Doctor,

I have two pets – a cat called Buffy and a dog called Sox. Sox is a big dog – he’s a St. Bernard – and Buffy is small because she’s only one year old. Even though they look different and sound different and eat different food, they are really good friends – Buffy brings Sox toys and bits of string, and Sox lets Buffy sleep next to him when it’s cold. I think it’s funny because cats and dogs are supposed to fight, but my sister says they get on with each other.

Then one day, quite suddenly, Peter is sent to live with his grandad and Pax is sent to live in the woods. How will Pax survive in the wild? How will Peter survive without his closest friend? And will they get to see each other again?

Look up Pax in your local library to find out.

Pax by Sara Pennypacker is about twelve-year-old Peter and his best pal: a fox called Pax. Peter has looked after Pax since he was a kit (a baby fox), and they are never ever apart from each other.

Dear Mirren,

You’ve come to the right place – stories are full of odd pairs and unlikely friendships. Your cat and your dog sound like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: they are exactly the opposite of each other, but they are perfectly matched.

Lots of people match like puzzle pieces in ways that might surprise you: people who talk a lot can get on with quiet people, younger people look out for older people, and anyone of any age can have an animal for their best friend. For the best books about unusual and unbreakable bonds, have a read of the four stories below...

1. Pax by Sara Pennypacker is about twelve-year-old Peter and his best pal: a fox called Pax. Peter has looked after Pax since he was a kit (a baby fox), and they are never ever apart from each other.

2. The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate is about a gorilla named Ivan who has three very unusual best friends: a stray dog called Bob, a baby elephant called Ruby, and a girl called Julia. In the wild, gorillas might not get on with stray dogs, or baby elephants, or girls, but Ivan is not a gorilla in the wild – he lives in a shopping mall, and he’s stuck in a cage.

Each friend helps the others in different ways: Julia is good at drawing, so she sneaks Ivan crayons and paints through the bars of his cage … Bob is skinny, so he likes to sleep on Ivan’s belly to keep warm … and Ruby is young, so she reminds Ivan of his childhood in the jungle. The differences between them make their friendship stronger – big or small, human or hairy, they love each other all the same.

Dear Scott,

On busy days or sad days – and even on happy and exciting days – it’s important to remind yourself of everything that you love about life. Thinking about your favourite parts of the week will never fail to put a smile on your face … and these bright spots can be as big as a beautiful sunset, or as small as a delicious piece of chocolate. You might even like to write them down in a diary, so that you can look back at the end of the year and remember all of your best bits. With this in mind, why don’t you check out...

1. Today is Great! by Vicky Perreault, a book with space to fill in all sorts of things that you’ve enjoyed about your day. On Mondays, you could write about the most interesting fact that you’ve learned at school. On Tuesdays, you could write about the tastiest part of your breakfast. On Wednesdays, you could write about the funniest joke that you heard at lunchtime … and so on! You’ll soon find that there’s a lot out there to love, if you keep your eyes, ears and heart wide open.

3. The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo is about a tiny, big-eared mouse who falls head-over-heels in love with a girl called Princess Pea. He is a rodent and she is a royal … together, they are definitely the oddest pair around! Their friendship might be a little bit strange, but why does that matter? It’s just like the narrator of the story says: "Love is ridiculous … but love is also wonderful." Read about this ridiculous, wonderful world and laugh your socks off.

www.readingdoctor.co.uk

Why not send your questions to our reading doctor at hello@scoopthemag.co.uk

Dear Scott,

On busy days or sad days – and even on happy and exciting days – it’s important to remind yourself of everything that you love about life. Thinking about your favourite parts of the week will never fail to put a smile on your face … and these bright spots can be as big as a beautiful sunset, or as small as a delicious piece of chocolate. You might even like to write them down in a diary, so that you can look back at the end of the year and remember all of your best bits. With this in mind, why don’t you check out...

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**The Somerset Tsunami**

by Emma Carroll

Faber and Faber, £6.99

Review by Isha, age ten

The Somerset Tsunami is a thrilling new adventure novel by Emma Carroll. It is full of exciting twists and turns and is full of surprises. The novel is set in a little hamlet in Somerset and it tells the story of Fortune Sharpes and the dark secrets troubling her life. Even the rich folk in the manor house of Barrow Hill are shrouded in mystery and the fishy owner is busy hunting for witches. Set against all of this human drama is a real historic event – the house is set very close to the sea and one day a catastrophic tsunami crashes on the coast. What happens to the manor house? And what of young Fortune who has to dress as a boy to find work? Why is she now on trial for her life? The age group I would recommend this for is ten or eleven year olds. It creates a swarm of different emotions: for me, at one point I was crying, but at another I felt fuzzy and happy inside. As a challenging read, it is a great book to step up into. Emma Carroll has written other fantastic books including: Frost Hollow Hall, Strange Star, Letters from the Lighthouse, Secrets of a Sun King, When We Were Warriors and The Girl Who Walked on Air. I particularly loved Letters from the Lighthouse as it was such an engaging and mysterious read. The Somerset Tsunami is just as brilliant: it is a nail-biting read from start to finish, and I guarantee you that it is very hard to put down once begun! All in all, a thrilling and super story about witches and roaring tsunamis. What’s not to love?

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**Tales of Ramion: The Gift of Evil**

by Frank Hinks

Perronet Press, £12.99

Review by Xanthe, age eight

The Gift of Evil by Frank Hinks, is a book set in England and the fantasy world of Ramion, which is magical ... anything can happen. This is the twelfth book about Ramion. Griselda the witch is an important character in the series and this book explains how she became an evil witch. Griselda’s grandfather, Sir Tancred Grunch, is horrified to learn that his two sons, Peter and David, have done some good deeds. David runs away to marry a good witch named Melanie and they have twin girls: Griselda and Susan. The Princess of the Night (who is really quite scary) sends Griselda magical birthday presents to keep her from following the path of Good and convince her to become a witch instead.

When Sir Tancred kidnaps her – on her fifth birthday – Griselda is convinced she wants to be a witch. There are lots of challenges ahead of her as she learns to be evil enough for her family to accept her and she travels to some truly terrifying magical worlds. The stage is set for Griselda to become a wicked and horrible grown-up witch. I especially liked the Hercules story because he has the power to fight but also has a kind heart to help people that are in need. I think that Hercules is great because he likes to read, like me. He is good because he helps Hera even though she was mean to him because he didn’t want to become a warrior. All the stories were great but I also really enjoyed the Pied Piper story. The minister is really not nice at the start and thinks that being a parent isn’t important but when they all go away and nothing gets done he sees how much they are needed. The dad in the story is really nice and the mum has a good job. I like that this is different to some stories. This book has lots of different types of family, which is really good to read about. I would recommend this book to anyone who didn’t want to become a warrior.

High Five to the Hero

by Vita Murrow, illustrated by Julia Bereciartu

Frances Lincoln Children’s Books, £12.99

Review by Sophie, age seven

High Five to the Hero is an amazing collection of stories. The book has fifteen magical stories that are all about kings, sailors, giants and other fairy-tale heroes. I especially liked the Hercules story because he has the power to fight but also has a kind heart to help people that are in need. I think that Hercules is great because he helps Hera even though she was mean to him because he didn’t want to become a warrior.

All the stories were great but I also really enjoyed the Pied Piper story. The minister is really not nice at the start and thinks that being a parent isn’t important but when they all go away and nothing gets done he sees how much they are needed. The dad in the story is really nice and the mum has a good job. I like that this is different to some stories. This book has lots of different types of family, which is really good to read about. I would recommend this book to anyone who didn’t want to become a warrior.

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**Forgotten Fairy Tales of Brave and Brilliant Girls**

by Emma Carroll

Usborne, £12.99

Review by Esmerelda

I hate princesses – or I did. You might think that you don’t like princesses either, but this book is about princesses who are a different kind of princess. In all fairy tales I had read before, boys rescued girls, so I thought boys were cooler, but when I read this book, the girls are the ones who are actually doing the saving. There are stories in here like ‘The Sleeping Prince’ instead of ‘The Sleeping Beauty’, but my favourite story in this book is the story of ‘Snow White and Rose Red’. Reading this book, I have learned that princesses don’t just sit around wearing big dresses (I hate dresses) but actually have great adventures. I think everybody would enjoy reading this book – girls and boys, children and grown-ups.
**Humanimal: Incredible Ways Animals are Just Like Us!**

by Christopher Lloyd and illustrated by Mark Ruffle

What on Earth Publishing, £12.99

Review by Magnus, age seven

Humanimal is about animals and how they are just like humans. Most animals are just like humans because they act the same way. They build, they farm, they help and they cooperate. When I read this book I found out that bees vote in elections! A bee goes out to find another place where it can make a hive and the scouts do a dance. The bees go to the places that the scouts have found. Then the place with the most bees in is the place where the new queen bee is going to make her hive.

I like the pictures because they are really detailed and I like the style of the drawings. I think that if people knew that humans are like animals, humans might stop polluting the earth because they might feel that they are the odd ones out because all the other animals are not polluting the earth.

I don’t think that there is anything to change to the book because it had so many amazing facts!

I think that Rex (my friend) would like this book because he loves animals.

**The Highland Falcon Thief**

by M. G. Leonard and Sam Sedgman

illustrated by Elisa Paganelli

Macmillan Children’s Books, £6.99

Review by Bryn, age twelve

I really enjoyed this fast-paced mystery and couldn’t put it down. It is a story about two children (one who’s a stowaway) on board an amazing historic royal steam train, called the Highland Falcon. On its last ever journey the train is going to pick up the Royal family at Balmoral Castle and circle back, but disaster strikes. As precious jewels start to go missing it is up to the children, Harrison and Lenny, (with Harrison’s helpful uncle) to solve this mystery before the thief can get away.

My favourite bit in this story is when Lenny gives Harrison a tour of the train, showing him all the nooks and crannies, and even a secret toilet! I like this bit in the book as it shows not everything is as it seems, a recurring theme throughout the book. I thought the idea of a secret toilet in a library on a moving train that was once used by Queen Victoria is really cool.

Uncle Nat, who helps the children solve the mystery and supports them throughout the story was my favourite character. I liked him because he was very clever and helpful. He isn’t your stereotypical storybook adult, who doesn’t believe in the children’s ability to do anything. He is a colourful character with an exciting past, which makes for a good read. I also liked seeing how the children solved the mystery by being observant and really brave, often in spite of the adults. I really wish Harrison’s sketches featured in the book because they sounded amazing and were crucial in finding the thief.

I would recommend this book to anyone who loves a tricky mystery and action.
At Scoop Club, we publish your drawings, letters, stories and poems in every issue. Here is some fantastic work from our readers.

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