



2016 The Books of the Year

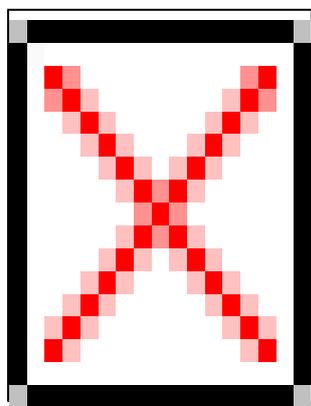
[221](#) [1]

Byline:

Selected by regular contributors to **Books for Keeps**

2016 has been another exciting year in children's books: the boom in illustrated non-fiction has continued, with the launch of new lists and publication of more eye-catching books; there's new interest in books in translation, with translated books now eligible for the **CILIP Carnegie Medal** and an interesting new initiative from the **Arts Council** and **Book Trust** to support publishers publish more books from overseas; Chris Riddell won an unprecedented third **Kate Greenaway Medal**, his ability with pen and ink matched by his passion as a campaigner for libraries, shockingly under more threat than ever. New prizes have been launched, including the **Amnesty CILIP Honour** and the **Klaus Flugge Prize** for debut picture book illustrator; the **CLiPPA**, which puts poetry in the spotlight, grows more exciting and reaches more readers each year. Lots therefore to look forward to in 2017, but which were the best books of 2016? We asked contributors to **Books for Keeps** for their nominations.

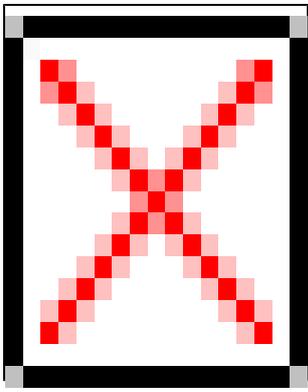
Kevin Crossley-Holland, award-winning author and president of the **School Library Association** chooses **The Singing Bones** by Shaun Tan.



Genius is extremely rare, immediately recognisable, and very humbling. Shaun Tan's gloriously original and immensely physical maquette interpretations of Grimm, engaging not with individuals but with bedrock characteristics, have much more affinity to prehistoric clay carvings than to any contemporary artist, and they're by turns comic, alarming, beautiful, macabre, utterly disarming and deeply moving. Each dramatically-lit image is accompanied by a short passage from the matching tale, while the endnotes summarise each tale in the book. Foreword by Neil Gaiman... Introduction by Jack Zipes... the sheer thought and love that has been put into every aspect of this superb, cross-disciplinary enterprise makes it not only my book of the year but of the decade.

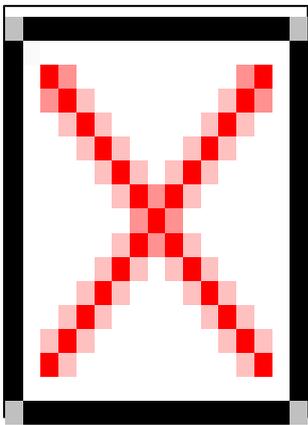
Pam Dix, Chair of **Ibby UK**, chooses [The Wolves of Currumpaw](#) [2] by William Grill

William Grill's eagerly awaited second book has thrilled me this year. His style uses a simple but strong narrative text merged with highly



individual and creative illustrations. Through the true story of Ernest Thompson Seton we are introduced to changes in thinking about wildlife management and conservation. **The Wolves of Currumpaw** is a tactile pleasure: large format, gorgeous paper, and a cover design and pattern which immediately sets the story in the context of a Native American world, of New Mexico. The colour palette of reds and greens gives a strong sense of landscape. Grill moves from minutely detailed images to filling the whole double-page with one image, giving pace to the narrative and forcing an emotional response, the sharp intake of breath, from the reader. His ability to convey huge landscapes and distance is exemplary.

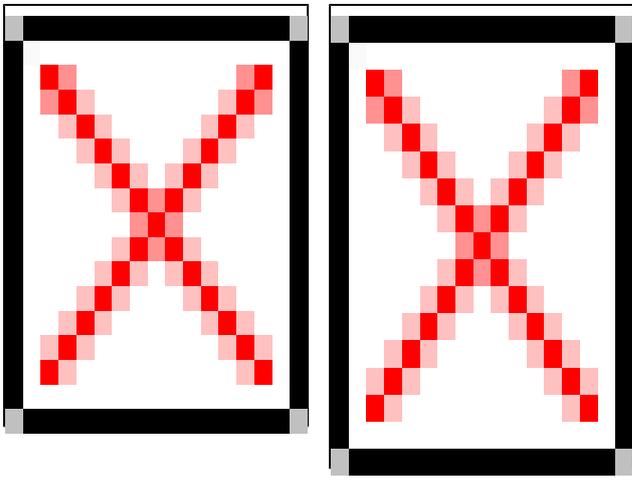
Daniel Hahn, writer, editor and translator, chooses **We Found a Hat** by John Klassen



The glorious third volume in Klassen's contested-hat-ownership trilogy, **We Found a Hat** has all the pleasures of its predecessors, not least those deliciously wicked tensions between what the characters are evidently thinking (as abundantly clear from the apparently simple, expressive illustrations), and their protestations of innocence in the all-dialogue text. Klassen can do so much with so very little, evoking character and eliciting out-loud laughter; and this time he even allows himself a sweet (ie. surprisingly non-murderous) conclusion, too ? the book, and the trilogy, end perfectly.

Nicky Parker, Publisher, Amnesty International UK

I've been struck by books on the refugee experience. Illustrator Barroux has succeeded twice, with gritty graphic novel [Alpha](#) [3], written by Bessora, as well as poignant picture book **Welcome**. Both give insight into the hostility and danger faced ? whether you're a migrant or a polar bear on a shrinking ice floe. Francesca Sanna's **The Journey** takes illustrative power to new heights. Marcus Sedgwick's brilliant YA thriller **Saint Death** describes a place in Mexico where rights violations make it impossible to live well with integrity. Finally, Laurence Anholt's **The Hypnotist** isn't about refugees, but it is about belonging, standing up to demons and finding yourself ? unputdownable!

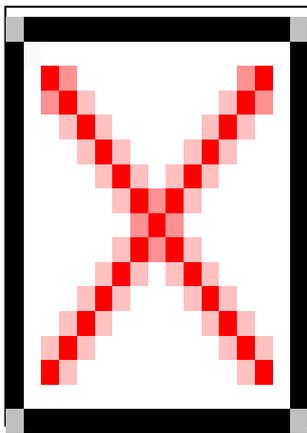


Professor Martin Salisbury, Cambridge School of Art chooses **Un Grand Jour de Rien** by Beatrice Alemagna

Thanks to the more far sighted publishers such as Roger Thorp (at Tate Publishing and more recently Thames and Hudson) and Rachel Williams at Frances Lincoln, we have finally begun to catch up with the rest of the world by publishing some of the works of the wonderful picturebook-maker, Beatrice Alemagna. Perhaps my highlight of this year's picturebooks, **Un Grand Jour de Rien**, (A Big Day of Nothing) will follow suit. The book tells of a little girl's arrival with her mother at their holiday cottage on a rainy day. Mum works at her keyboard as child attacks Martians on her tablet because 'there's nothing to do?'. Turfed out by exasperated mum, tragedy strikes as tablet tumbles into river. Though the ensuing discovery of the wonders of the natural world may be predictable, the magic of Alemagna's depiction of it never is.

Hannah Sackett is researching comics and creativity in the Key Stage Two classroom at the **Institute of Education, Bath Spa University**

The book I have chosen is **Hilda and the Stone Forest** by Luke Pearson. This is the fifth comic in the series that

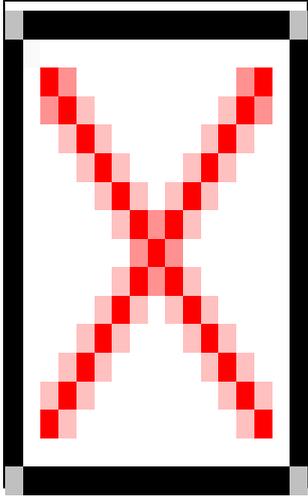


follows the adventurous and determined young Hilda as she explores the more mysterious aspects of the city of Trolberg and its surroundings. Luke Pearson's distinctive style of artwork and storytelling and have created a unique world with its own rules and inhabitants. At the heart of this beautifully produced, lovingly drawn and coloured comic, is Hilda's relationship with her mother and her mother's struggle to enable Hilda's independence, courage and determination while keeping her from danger. But don't think for a moment that this makes the book worthy or laboured or sentimental; this is a book packed with excitement, humour and strange, wonderful, and sometimes frightening, encounters. It is a story to be read and reread, with a wealth of visual detail and narrative layers to be discovered on each new reading.

Nicholas Tucker is honorary senior lecturer in Cultural and Community Studies at **Sussex University**.

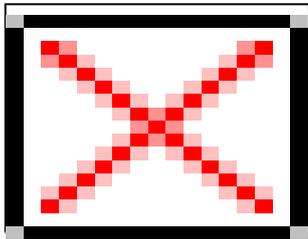
Hilary McKay's [Binny Bewitched](#) [4] is one more precious offering from this most gifted of authors. Unfailingly wise as well as witty, this is story-telling at its most beguiling. The late Mal Peet's [Beck](#) [5], completed after his death by Meg Rosoff, is the rough, tough and unforgettable story of a teenage orphan a hundred years ago surviving harsh conditions after leaving Britain for Canada. And Jonathan Stroud's [Lockwood and Co: The Creeping Shadow](#) [6],

more stories about young Lucy Carlyle and her ghost-hunting activities, is so good it almost reads itself.



Ann Lazim, Literature and Library Development Manager, **Centre for Literacy in Primary Education**

In a year in which the politics of migration continue to preoccupy the world, this human story stands out. Francesca



Sanna's stunning first picture book **The Journey** draws on the experiences of recent refugees from many countries. Each spread features a carefully chosen colour palette, depicting the variety of landscapes, real and emotional, through which a family passes, escaping conflict and seeking sanctuary. The book ends on a hopeful note but makes it clear that most refugees live with continued uncertainty, even when they hope they have reached a place of safety.

The Singing Bones: Art Inspired by Grimms' Fairy Tales, Shaun Tan, Walker Studio, 978-1-4063-7066-9 , £19.99 hbk

The Wolves of Currumpaw by William Grill, Flying Eye, **978-1-909263-83-3, £14.99 hbk**

We Found a Hat, John Klassen, Walker Books, **978-1-4063-4751-7, £12.99 hbk**

Alpha, Bessora, illus Barroux, **the Bucket List**, **978-1-9113-7001-7, £12.99 pbk**

Welcome, Barroux, Egmont, **978-1-4052-8052-5, £6.99 pbk**

The Journey, Francesca Sanna, Flying Eye, **978-1-9092-6399-4, £12.99 hbk**

Saint Death, Marcus Sedgwick, Orion Children's Books, 978-1-4440-0052-8, £10.99 hbk

Un Grand Jour de Rien, Beatrice Alemagna, Albin Michel Jeunesse, 978-2-2263-2937-0

Hilda and the Stone Forest, Luke Pearson Flying Eye Books, 978-1-9092-6374-1, £12.95 hbk

Binny Bewitched, Hilary McKay, Hodder Children's Books, 978-1-4449-2543-2, £12.99 hbk

Lockwood & Co. The Creeping Shadow, Jonathan Stroud, Corgi Children's Books, 978-0-5525-7315-3, £7.99 pbk

Beck, Mal Peet and Meg Rosoff, Walker Books, 978-1-4063-3112-7, £12.99 hbk

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