

IGNITING LEADERS CHANGING LIVES

PiXL Reading

READING FOR PLEASURE



PARENT NEWSLETTER - SPRING TERM 2025

We hope you've had a chance to pause and recharge in whatever way worked best for your family over the break. As we begin a new half-term, we're excited to share a range of events and activities that are designed to inspire curiosity, creativity, and important life skills in your children.

These celebrations offer opportunities for learning and joy that can fit into your family's routine, whether it's through shared stories, simple acts of kindness, or sparking meaningful conversations. Whatever your family's approach, there's something for everyone to explore and enjoy.

Let's take a look at what's coming up and how you might join in, in a way that works for you!

Please note that the following texts are suitable from the age group stated, but please do research the books before selecting them to ensure that they are appropriate for your child.



MEET THE AUTHORS

In this section, two brilliant authors take you behind the scenes of their latest creations, sharing the stories, inspirations and ideas that brought their books to life.

CRESSIDA COWELL: THE MAGIC OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN *HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON TALES*

In a special video snippet, Cressida Cowell shares her thoughts on the illustrations she created for her new short story collection, *How to Train Your Dragon Tales*. Known for her unique artistic style, Cressida reveals how drawing the world of Hiccup and Toothless helps her bring the characters and adventures to life in vivid detail.

Don't miss her video insight – it's a fascinating look into the creative process of an author-illustrator who has inspired countless imaginations!



J.J. ARCANJO: THE INSPIRATION BEHIND *CROOKHAVEN: THE SCHOOLS CHALLENGE*

In this special video, J.J. Arcanjo opens up about the creative journey behind *Crookhaven: The Schools Challenge*. He shares the sparks of inspiration that shaped his thrilling world of masterful young thieves and reveals how he brings his characters to life. Alongside discussing the story's origins, J.J. offers his top tips for aspiring writers, encouraging everyone to unlock their own creativity and start crafting their own tales. Don't miss his insight into storytelling and the secrets to building a captivating plot!



NATIONAL STORYTELLING WEEK

1ST-9TH FEBRUARY 2025

National Storytelling Week is a wonderful annual event that highlights the magic of sharing stories. Taking place this year from Saturday 1st February to Sunday 9th February, it's a time to celebrate how stories teach us about the world, foster empathy, and allow us to explore limitless possibilities – all while building essential literacy skills.

In 2025, the theme invites children and families to find the extraordinary in the ordinary. Whether it's spotting something unusual on a walk, imagining what might be behind a mysterious door, or dreaming up what happens in the quiet corners of the world, stories help us uncover hidden possibilities all around us.

Stories spark our imaginations, help us see life from another perspective, and encourage creative thinking. Whether passed down orally, shared from a book, or invented on the spot, storytelling brings people together and creates unforgettable moments.



WAYS TO BRING STORYTELLING ALIVE AT HOME:

Nature's Stories:

Collect leaves, stones, or other natural objects and invent stories about their journey. Who might have stepped on the stone, or where the leaf blew in the wind?

Celebrate Personal Stories:

Share family memories and turn them into bedtime tales.

Story Swap:

Take turns sharing favourite family stories, cultural folktales, or made-up adventures.

Neighbourhood Tales:

Walk around your local area and imagine the stories behind places you see — a tree might have seen a hundred years of history, or a shop might hold a hidden secret.

Everyday Objects Adventure:

Use items you already have at home — spoons, socks, or shoes — and make them the heroes of a story. A sock could become a brave explorer or a spoon a treasure-seeker.

Picture Book Tales:

Use wordless picture books or your own photos to create a story together. Let children imagine what's happening in the images.

Host A Family Storytelling Night:

Dim the lights, grab some torches, and take turns spinning tales. Encourage creativity with "What if?" questions like, "What if the moon disappeared?"

Reimagine Your Favourite Stories:

Take a story your child loves and imagine what happens next, or retell it with new characters or settings.

Chalk and Sidewalk Stories:

Use chalk to draw scenes or characters on the pavement outside, weaving a story as you go.

Family Story Quilt:

On pieces of paper, each family member draws or writes a short story or memory. Tape or pin these together to make a "quilt" of your family's shared tales.

Lullaby Stories:

Turn storytelling into a calming bedtime tradition by telling soothing, simple tales inspired by lullabies or gentle rhymes.

RECOMMENDED READS TO GET YOU STARTED:

If National Storytelling Week has got you excited, why not explore some of the best books from last year to enjoy with your family? These brilliant stories are great for reading together, whether it's at bedtime, during a quiet moment, or just for fun. From magical adventures to funny tales, these books are perfect for sparking imaginations and sharing special moments.

HELP! WE NEED A STORY

JAMES HARRIS (AUTHOR), MARIAJO ILLUSTRARO (ILLUSTRATOR)

A wonderful book about storytelling and the art of creativity with an inspiring rhyming text from James Harris (*The Unbelievable Biscuit Factory*) and beautiful, characterful illustrations from Mariajo Illustraro (*Flooded*).

It's a dull day in the jungle and Artie the macaque's friends are bored, bored, BORED! But with paper, pens and ink, a splash of inspiration, and a pinch of imagination, Artie creates something magical... a book! Filled with hordes of zombie hens, a fire-breathing dragon and robot sharks (yikes!), Artie's newly-created book busts the friends' boredom, and the next day they can't wait to do it all over again.

With a clever book-inside-a-book concept, *Help! We Need a Story* illustrates the power of imagination and will help to nurture kids' creative sides. Just like *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds, *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Salzberg and *What Do You Do With an Idea?* by Kobi Yamada and Mae Besom, this is the perfect tale for book lovers and any child who enjoys creating their own stories.



AGENT HARRIER: THIS BOOK WILL SELF-DESTRUCT

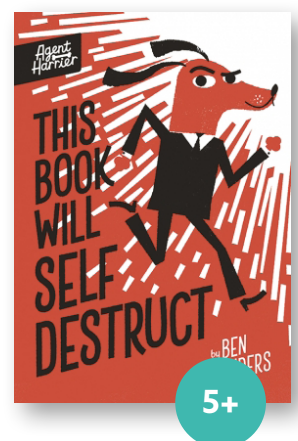
BEN SANDERS (AUTHOR)

This book will explode in 5 minutes. NO TIME TO LOSE!

Agent Harrier must follow the red wire and defuse the bomb before it's too late. Will our canine spy extraordinaire save everyone from being blasted to smithereens? And just WHO planted the wretched bomb in the first place?! Be careful not to bark up the wrong tree, Harrier – it looks like something very fishy could be *ahem* apaw...

This stylish graphic novel is a funny, punny twist on the traditional spy caper.

The first in a series by award-winning illustrator Ben Sanders, it's perfect for early readers transitioning from picture books.



BIG BAD WOLF INVESTIGATES FAIRY TALES

CATHERINE CAWTHORNE (AUTHOR),
SARA OGILVIE (ILLUSTRATOR)

Join the Big Bad Wolf as he debunks your favourite fairy tales with SCIENCE! Written by the hilarious Catherine Cawthorne and illustrated by award-winning Sara Ogilvie.

Did a princess really feel a tiny pea through a mountain of mattresses? And could a pumpkin actually turn into a carriage to carry Cinderella to the ball? Of course not! It's all a load of fairy tale NONSENSE! Or is it...?

The Big Bad Wolf is on a mission to find the truth behind these tales, and clear his name in the process.

Combining STEM topics with classic stories children know and love, this hilarious non-fiction picture book is perfect for inquisitive children always asking big questions!



ME AND AARON RAMSEY

MANON STEFFAN ROS (AUTHOR)

Me and Aaron Ramsey tells the story of Sam and his dad who both love football, which is always there for them however tough real life becomes. That is, until Dad's dreams of football stardom go horribly wrong.

Sam's love for the footballing legend becomes tangled with his relationship for his father as things go south in their family life.



SAFER INTERNET DAY11TH FEBRUARY 2025

Safer Internet Day is celebrated every year to promote the safe, responsible, and positive use of technology for children and young people. Organised in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre, it has grown into a global event, with over 170 countries taking part to make the internet a better place for everyone.

This year, Safer Internet Day takes place on Tuesday 11th February 2025. It's all about helping young people think critically about the information and influences they encounter online, empowering them to make thoughtful choices and be positive role models in the digital world.

The event is also a great opportunity for families to come together and talk about online safety. Whether it's learning about data privacy, cyberbullying, or how to manage social networks responsibly, these conversations can help children build the confidence and skills they need to stay safe online.

Safer Internet Day reminds us that creating a safer online world isn't the responsibility of one person or organisation — it's something we can all contribute to by working together. Let's join the global effort to make the internet a safer, kinder, and more positive space for everyone.

RECOMMENDED READS TO GET YOU STARTED:**TROLL**

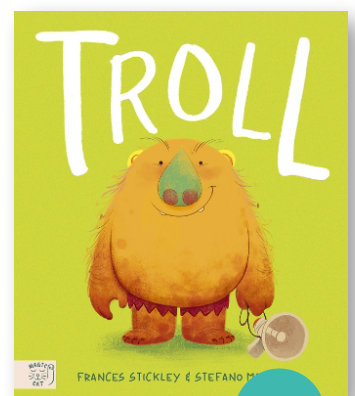
FRANCES STICKLEY (AUTHOR), STEFANO MARTINUZ (ILLUSTRATOR)

A funny, heartwarming story about internet trolling and learning to love yourself.

Below the bridge, beneath the log, underneath the burping bog, where townsfolk whispered, cringed and crept, a terrifying monster slept... In this funny tale, inspired by both internet trolls and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, there is a terrifying troll that lives under a bridge.

Unseen, he delights in shouting nasty things to passers-by. But when a deaf bunny unwittingly faces up to him, he realises that it's not so fun to say nasty things to someone's face. Can Troll finally learn to love himself and others?

This is a funny story that addresses internet trolling in an accessible way. A charming character-led tale with Troll learning the error of his ways and getting a second chance.



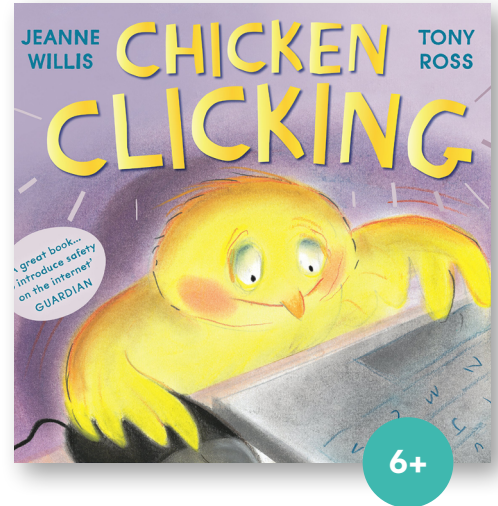
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CHICKEN CLICKING

JEANNE WILLIS (AUTHOR), TONY ROSS (ILLUSTRATOR)

One night Chick hops into the farmer’s house and has a browse on his computer – CLICK – soon she’s shopping online for the whole farm! But when she arranges to meet up with a friend she’s made online, she discovers all is not as it seems...

Little Red Riding Hood for the iPad generation, this is the perfect book for teaching children how to stay safe online.



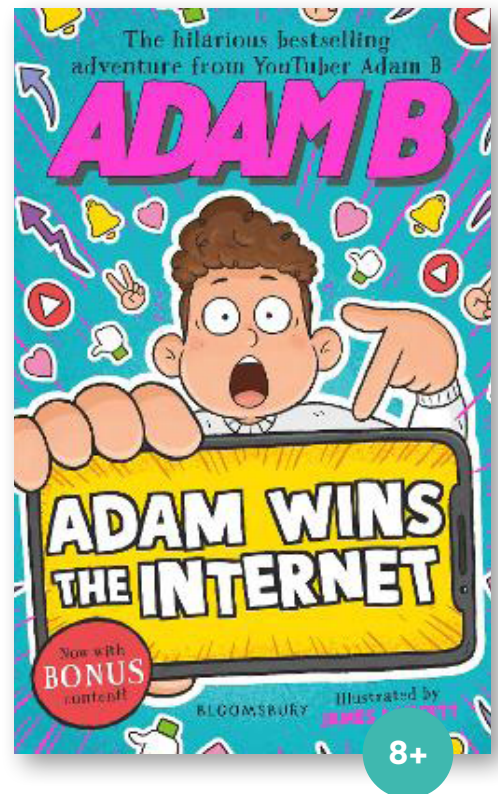
ADAM WINS THE INTERNET

ADAM B (AUTHOR), JAMES LANCETT (ILLUSTRATOR)

The spectacular debut children’s book from TV presenter and YouTube star Adam B! Everybody dreams of becoming a superstar YouTube sensation, but for Adam – a penniless, cameraless nobody, with only one friend – it isn’t just a dream, it’s a complete and utter, Never-Going-To-Happen-In-A-Million-Years, Absolute Impossibility!

That is until he stumbles across the mysterious Popularis Incrementum website. As if by magic, Adam is thrown into a world of fame, fortune and hotels with really, really, really fancy TVs! But Adam’s luck may be running out. When he accepts a mission to reach one million subscribers in one year, it becomes clear that he has bitten off way more than he can chew, and his life becomes one epic fail after another. Fortunately for Adam, he still has a trick or two up his sleeve.

Featuring bold black-and-white illustrations from James Lancett throughout, this brilliant, bright hardback will make the perfect Christmas gift for budding young YouTubers everywhere!



TIME TO TALK DAY

6TH FEBRUARY 2025

Time to Talk Day is all about starting simple conversations about mental health. Taking place on 6th February 2025, it's a reminder that even a quick chat can make a big difference to someone's day – or even their life.

Talking about mental health isn't always easy, but it helps build stronger, more understanding communities. Run by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, in partnership with the Co-op, this day encourages us all to take small steps to open up and listen.

As parents, it's also a chance to show children that talking about feelings is important. Why not ask your child how their day has been or share something about yours? These little moments can help them feel supported and confident to express themselves.



HERE ARE SOME MORE SIMPLE AND ACCESSIBLE IDEAS TO SPARK MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS:

Walk-and-Talk:

Take a walk together and use the time to chat about anything on their mind. Moving can make it easier for children to open up.

Storytime Chats:

After reading a story, ask how they think the characters might be feeling and if they've ever felt the same way.

Feelings Jar:

Write down different feelings on pieces of paper and take turns picking one to talk about. Share a time when you've both felt that way.

Question of the Day:

Start a fun routine by asking questions like, "What made you happy today?" or "What's one thing you're looking forward to?".

Drawing Emotions:

Encourage children to draw how they feel instead of using words. Talk about their picture together afterward.

Celebration Conversations:

At the dinner table or during quiet time, share one thing each person is proud of that day. Celebrate achievements, big or small.

Quiet Time Connection:

Sit quietly together for a few minutes, then ask, "What's been on your mind lately?" Sometimes a calm setting makes it easier to share.

Music and Feelings:

Play a song and ask how it makes them feel. Use music as a way to explore and express emotions.

Gratitude Moments:

Before bed, share one thing you're thankful for that day. Gratitude can create a positive space for connection.

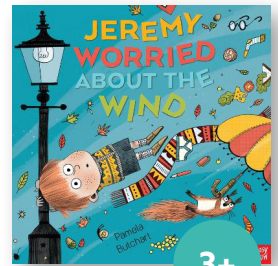
RECOMMENDED READS TO GET YOU STARTED:

JEREMY WORRIED ABOUT THE WIND

PAMELA BUTCHART (AUTHOR), KATE HINDLEY (ILLUSTRATOR)

Jeremy is a worrier. He worries about odd socks, spotty bananas, evil squirrels, burnt toast, dinosaurs and, most of all... the wind! His friend Maggie isn't worried about anything – after all, what's the worst that could happen?

But when Maggie decides to go outside and play in the wind, Jeremy must act fast to keep her out of danger, and he is soon to discover that a bit of courage leads to the most exciting adventures.



FIND PEACE IN A POEM

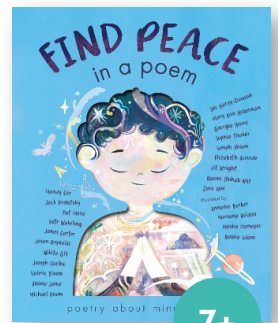
VARIOUS

This is a book of poetry for everyone.

Inside is a treasure trove of writing celebrating mindfulness. Read the poems aloud or curl up with them in a quiet corner. Begin your journey into a lifelong love of poetry.

This beautifully illustrated collection features powerful poems written by a wide range of contemporary voices. They share their unique perspectives on the topic of mindfulness, from listening for silence and living in the moment to the colour of our dreams and what the trees can teach us.

Showcasing original poems alongside existing works, this is a book to share and treasure forever.

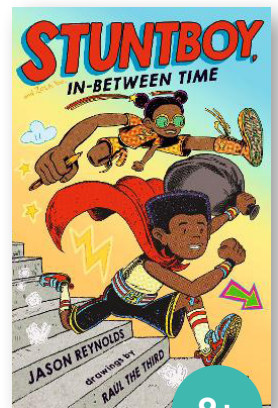


STUNTBODY, IN BETWEEN TIME

JASON REYNOLDS (AUTHOR), RAUL THE THIRD (ILLUSTRATOR)

Stuntboy is BACK... Or front. Depends on if his super friends (Zola and Herbert the Worst Who Is Now Herbert the Okay) are running faster than him... into the EMPTY apartment they've found.

Could this be the perfect home base from where three superheroes can save the iguanas, trick the bullies, and not have to deal with the FRETS?



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS DAY

17TH FEBRUARY 2025

Random Acts of Kindness Day is a wonderful reminder of the power of small, thoughtful actions. Taking place on Monday 17th February 2025, this day is all about consciously spreading positivity and making someone's day a little brighter.

From leaving a kind note for someone to paying a heartfelt compliment or helping a neighbour, acts of kindness don't need to be grand gestures. Even the smallest actions can create ripples of joy and inspire others to pass it on.

Created by the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, this day encourages people, schools, and organisations to work towards a kinder world. It's a perfect opportunity to teach children the value of being kind and to involve the whole family in spreading positivity.



GET CREATIVE WITH KINDNESS:

Create a Kindness Jar:

Together, write down simple, free acts of kindness on small pieces of paper, like *"smile at someone"* or *"help a friend."* Each day, pick one to try as a family.

Donate What You Can:

If you have clothes, toys, or books your family no longer needs, consider donating them to a local charity or community group. Every little bit helps someone in need.

Make Kindness Cards:

Use paper or recycled materials to create cards with kind messages. Leave them somewhere to surprise someone – like a library shelf or in a shared community space.

Pitch In at Home:

Encourage children to do something kind for their family, like tidying their space or helping with a task. It's a great way to practise thoughtfulness close to home.

Share Kind Words:

Take a moment to tell someone – whether it's a family member, friend, or teacher – something you appreciate about them. A little kindness goes a long way.

Brighten Your Space:

If you have access to outdoor space, plant some seeds or tidy up a small area to make it more cheerful. Even a small patch can bring joy.

Care for the Environment:

Go on a family walk and pick up litter together. It's a simple way to show kindness to the world around us.

Reach Out with Stories:

Call or message a loved one to share a funny story or memory. It's a lovely way to brighten someone's day, especially for those who might feel a bit lonely.

RECOMMENDED READS TO GET YOU STARTED:

THE BLUE UMBRELLA

EMILY ANN DAVISON (AUTHOR), MOMOKO ABE (ILLUSTRATOR)

The most magical things can happen even on the rainiest of days... How many people can you fit under one umbrella? It wasn't even meant to rain the day the blue umbrella turned up, but for the people who used it that day, they found something more than just shelter: something truly amazing had happened.

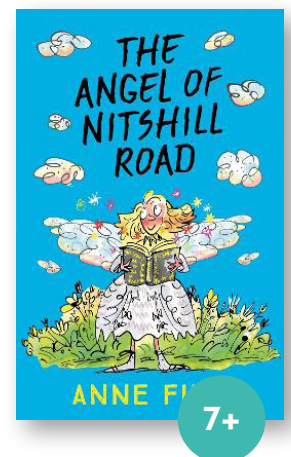
A community had come together, bound by kindness and friendship.



THE ANGEL OF NITSHILL ROAD

ANNE FINE (AUTHOR)

Until the angel came, Penny, Mark and Marigold were bitterly unhappy. 'Fat.' 'Freak.' 'Smelly.' Barry Hunter was bullying them and everyone at Nitshill Road School knew it. But the angel brings a clever solution. Life at school is going to be very different from now on.



BACK OF THE NET

EVE AINSWORTH (AUTHOR), LUNA VALENTINE (ILLUSTRATOR)

Eva's football skills make her stand out while playing at break-time at school, so her friends can't understand why she's reluctant to join them in playing for their local team, the Lightmoor Lionesses (whom readers will recognise from Finding Her Feet).

Horribly bullied at her last school due to a painful skin condition, Eva is terrified that the same thing will happen again if her new friends find out. Her instinct is to hide away, but can she find the courage to take to the field and play the game she loves?

Sensitively considers the impact of the skin condition psoriasis on confidence and promotes positive messages about kindness and acceptance.



WORLD THINKING DAY

22ND FEBRUARY 2025

World Thinking Day is a special day celebrated on 22nd February each year. It's a chance to reflect on the importance of friendship, care for others, and make a positive difference in the world. Originally created by Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the day now invites everyone to join in celebrating the values that bring people together.

This year's theme, "Our Story," is all about exploring the power of stories to connect us. It's an opportunity to think about the journeys we've taken, the people who inspire us, and how we can make a difference in our communities.

You don't need to be part of Guides or Scouts to celebrate. Families can join in by sharing stories from their own lives, reading about inspiring young people, or exploring ways to make a positive impact together. Whether it's helping a neighbour, learning about different cultures, or discussing ways to care for the planet, every small action counts.

RECOMMENDED READS TO GET YOU STARTED:

SOMEBODY SWALLOWED STANLEY

SARAH ROBERTS (AUTHOR),
HANNAH PECK (ILLUSTRATOR)

Everybody has a taste for Stanley — and the other ocean creatures just keep mistaking him for a delicious treat — but this is no ordinary jellyfish.

Most jellyfish have dangly-gangly tentacles, but Stanley has two handles...
Other jellyfish have a magical glow, but Stanley has stripes...

Because Stanley **(spoiler alert)** is a plastic bag!



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RECOMMENDED READS TO GET YOU STARTED:

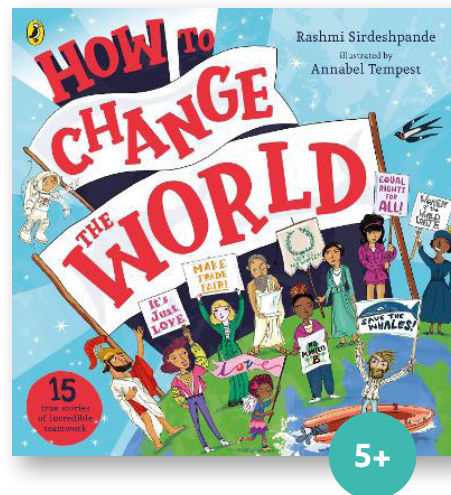
HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD

RASHMI SIRDESHPANDE (AUTHOR),
ANNABEL TEMPEST (ILLUSTRATOR)

Could you and your friends change the world?

This book will inspire you with 15 true stories of groups of amazing humans who've changed the world. Discover the astonishing things humans can achieve: from the campaign for women's votes, to the efforts to heal the ozone layer. Or travel back to the start of democracy in Ancient Greece, and into space to see the incredible teamwork on the international space station.

Above all, uncover just some of the MANY ways we can work together to change our world – all brought to life with astonishing story-telling and illustration.



THE GIRL WHO THOUGHT HER MOTHER WAS A MERMAID

TANIA UNSWORTH (AUTHOR)

Even though she's terrified of the sea, a girl who believes her mum might have been a mermaid runs away to the ocean to solve the mystery of who she really is.

Stella is the odd one out. She sleepwalks, is terrified of water, yet obsessed by the ocean. Her mum who died when Stella was eight remains the biggest mystery of all. Who was she and why did she give Stella a necklace called 'the word of the sea' before she died? Nobody can give her any answers. Her father is consumed by grief and her grandmother's memories are fading with dementia.

When Stella's only friend in the world, Cam, moves house, Stella runs away. She's determined to find out who her mum was and who she is too. She ends up in the Crystal Cove, a run-down aquarium with a mermaid show. There she meets Pearl who reveals disturbing secrets. It's only by facing her fear of the ocean that Stella will truly uncover the truth.



PiXL Reading

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