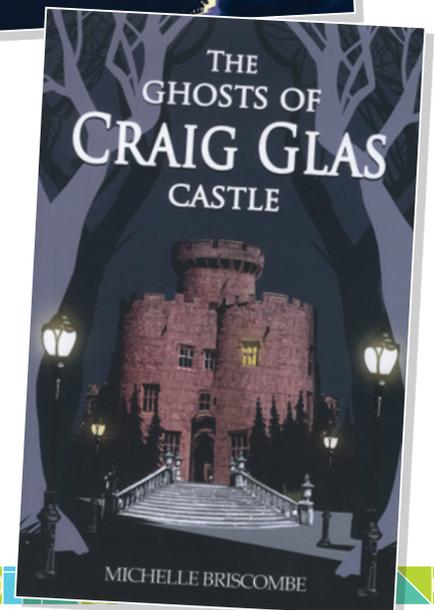
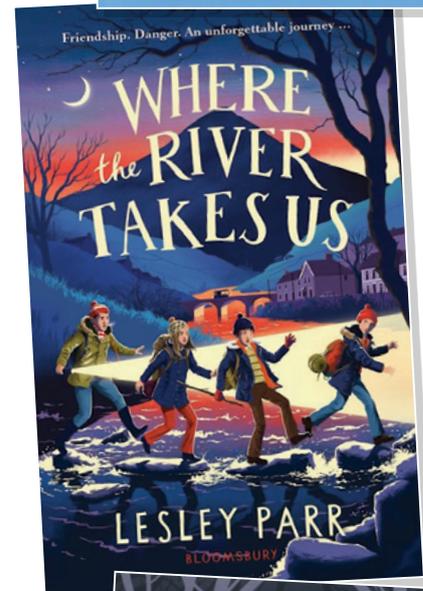
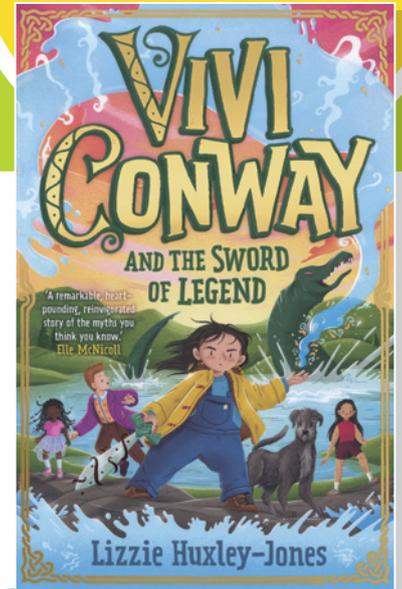


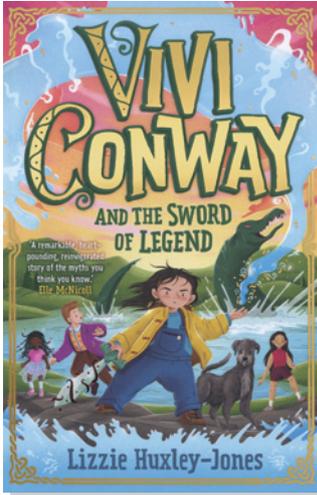
2024

Tir na n-Og Awards
Shadowing Pack 2024
English-language category

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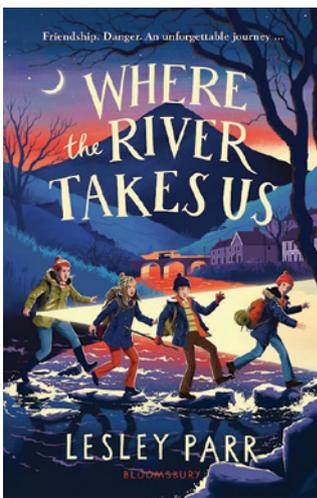


Vivi Conway and the Sword of Legend (Knights of Media)

Fiction

Author: Lizzie Huxley-Jones

The first instalment of Huxley-Jones' fantasy series finds the eponymous twelve-year-old befriending a magical group of children who share the souls of legendary witches. A riotous blend of Welsh mythology and breezy adventure!

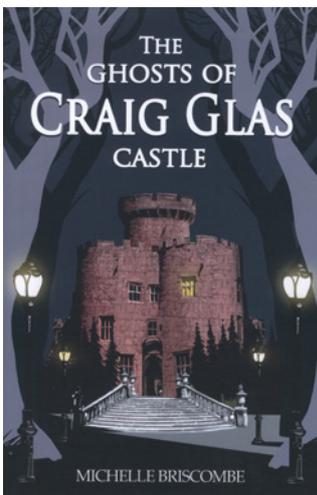


Where the River Takes Us (Bloomsbury)

Fiction

Author: Lesley Parr

From the author of *The Valley of Lost Secrets* comes a thrilling historical adventure set against a backdrop of the 1970s miners' strikes. Here is a brilliant adventure story with a page-turning plot and relatable themes. *Where the River Takes Us* is a timeless piece of historical fiction.



The Ghosts of Craig Glas Castle (Candy Jar Books)

Fiction

Author: Michelle Briscoe

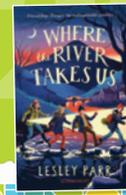
It's flattering when ghosts trust you with their stories – if only they'd stop talking occasionally! When Flora and Archie are offered a trip to Craig Glas Castle in Wales, and take a break from talking to ghosts, they can't wait to go. But not everything at the castle is what it seems, and soon the best friends embark on another ghostly detective adventure.

Remember to visit your bookshop, local library, or our website www.gwales.com to find the above titles.



Conversation-sparking questions and discussion points

- What did you enjoy about the book?
- Describe your favourite part of the novel. Why is this your favourite part?
- Was the book easy to read?
- What questions do you have, having finished the book?
- Do you think that you will remember this story in a few months or years? Why?
- Was the book different to your expectations? If so, how?
- Were you happy with the ending of the story? Why?
- What didn't you enjoy about the book?
- What would you like to change about the book? Why? How would you change it?
- Would you like to read the book again? Why?
- What questions did you have while reading the book? Were they answered? If so, how?
- In your opinion, who is this book suitable for?
- What is your opinion of the cover?
- If you could be in the book, which events in the book would you like to experience yourself and why?
- Would changing the location of the story have an effect on the story? How?
- Do you think that the title of the book suits the story? Why? If not, which title would you give to the book?
- What surprised you in this book? How so?
- Did the book remind you of any other books, films, or TV programmes?
- If the book was made into a film or TV programme, who would you cast as actors for the main characters? Why?
- Would you like to read more books like this? Why?
- What is your opinion about the themes that are discussed in the novels?
- If you were to meet the authors, which three questions would you like to ask them?
- Describe the book in one sentence.
- Have you learnt anything from reading the books? If so, what?
- How many of the stories in the book were you familiar with before you read it?
- If you had three copies of the book to give as presents, to whom would you give them? Why?
- Which patterns or recurring themes did you see in the book?
- Is there anything else you would like to learn more about after reading these novels?
- If you could meet any character from the book, who would you like to meet and why?



What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

Vivi Conway and the Sword of Legend
by Lizzie Huxley-Jones

What about ...

Design

Why not design your very own Excalibur or Sword of Legend? Or another special magical object, like a wand or spell book? You could use the internet or pictures from books to help inspire your creations. Create and decorate your sword and magical objects using paper, cardboard or other art materials that you may have in school.

Research

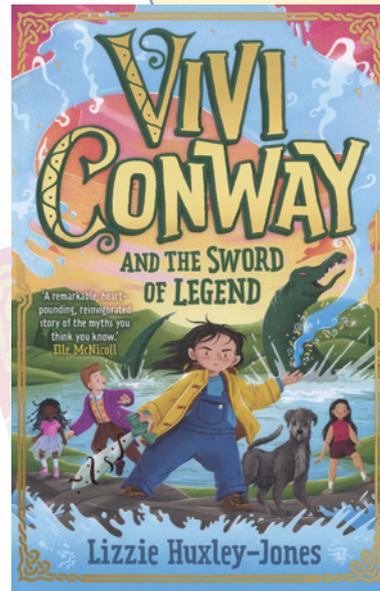
In chapter one, Vivi describes the type of stories that her Mumma used to tell her, saying: "we would look for proof of the myths... I always hoped I'd find a whole other world, that I'd discover magic". (p.8–9) How about researching myths from around the world? Are there any legends that originate from your local area or from Wales? You can work in pairs and compare myths with your partner. What are the similarities and differences between these tales? Can you work together to create your very own myth?

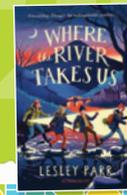
Discuss

Vivi explains at the beginning of the novel that she has autism and that many autistic people "struggle with change and newness". (page 3). In pairs or groups, why not discuss the range of emotions that you think Vivi experiences when she must leave her home to move to a new city and go to a new school? What advice would you offer to someone coping with a completely new situation?

Areas of Learning

Expressive Arts, Languages,
Literacy and Communication,
Health and Well-being





What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

Where the River Takes Us

by Lesley Parr

What about ...

Play a part

The hot seat ...

Sit in the 'hot seat' and play the role of one of the characters from the book, such as Jason, Richie, Catrin, Jinx, Tam, Rhodri, Aunty Pearl, Gary Hall, Dean Bolan or Snook Hall. The rest of the class can ask you questions.

Create

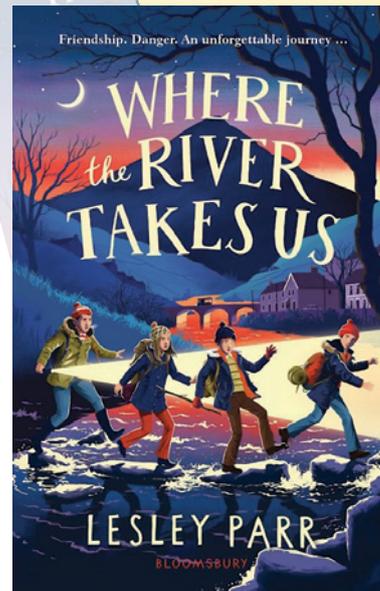
The novel is set in 1974. How about creating a presentation all about the 1970s? What do you know already about this era? How is it similar or different to today? What kinds of things were popular in the 1970s? Think about fashion and music, for example. Can you find examples of books and films that were popular during this period? To complete your research, use books or information on the internet.

Discuss

"I've got mates, good ones. Mates with a wild idea and just the right mix of stupidity and determination to pull it off." (page 38). Two of the book's big themes are friendship and adventure. Why not split into two groups and discuss these themes in more detail? Can you find more examples from the book, like the one above, that exemplify these themes? How does the author showcase themes of adventure and friendship? Do these themes cross over in the story, and if so, how and where?

Areas of Learning

Expressive Arts,
Humanities,
Health and Well-being





What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

The Ghosts of Craig Glas Castle

by Michelle Briscombe

What about ...

Design

How about designing your very own castle? You could do this using paper, or alternatively, you could create 3D models using cardboard and other materials you have in your classrooms. Or, using apps and technology available on computers or iPads, you could design your own digital castle. Remember to include, for example: turrets, a drawbridge and moat. Research different castles to help inspire you. Here are a few to help you get started: Conwy Castle, Caernarfon Castle, Cardiff Castle and Dolbadarn Castle.

Create

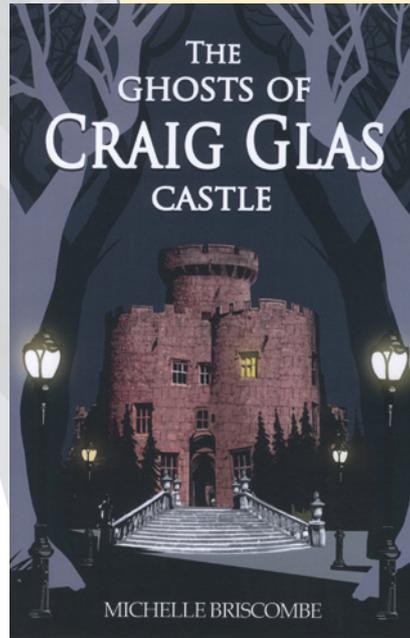
In groups or in pairs, create your own ghost story. You could then create your very own radio shows and record yourselves reciting your ghost stories. Remember to choose spooky music to play in the background!

Perform

How about creating a performance inspired by your favourite scene in the book? You will need to re-read the scene, write a script, and assign characters. You can take turns to perform in front of your classmates or film your performances and add effects using video editing software. You can then have a spooky cinema session and watch all your clips!

Areas of Learning

Languages, Literacy and Communication, Science and Technology, Expressive Arts



Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Rhuddlan, a village in north Wales that has its very own castle, which is kind of neat.

Where did you go to school?

For primary, in Rhuddlan – we had that castle on our school jumpers which was kind of cool. As a teenager, I went to school in Abergele where the *I'm a Celebrity* castle is, so it was a very castle-heavy childhood.

What was the best / worst thing about your school?

In primary school, I got to be one of the people in charge of the little library we had, so sometimes I'd get to go and tidy it up. I can still remember how that room smelled of fresh books, and the warm heat coming off the radiator.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Well, I wanted to be a vet! That was what I was going to do right up until my late teenage years when I realised I was probably going to not get in to vet school, and decided to study Zoology instead. I didn't know you could just be an author, and I didn't do English Literature or Creative Writing at university at all, though I loved doing it all through high school.

What are your hobbies?

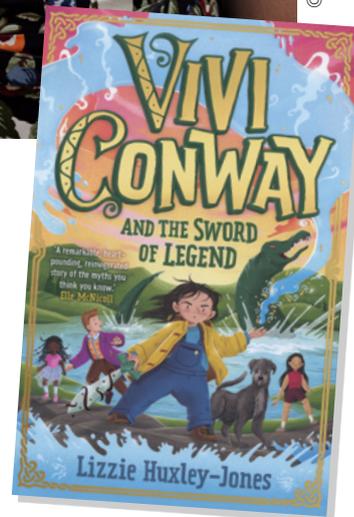
I love video games, particularly any RPG with a good story, and I love playing board games with my friends. Mostly, I love cooking and going out to eat at new restaurants. Naturally, I also love reading and I'll read anything: novels, manga, graphic novels, poetry, non-fiction. I love to listen to them on audiobook especially, while I'm baking cookies.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had a few because I was a Matilda-type kid with a stack of books at the library all the time. But the books that really stuck with me were *Northern Lights* by Philip Pullman, *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman, and *Sabriel* by Garth Nix.



© Jamie Drew



They were all, in part, about people challenging their understanding of the world and trying to change it for the better.

When did you consider being an author?

Not until I was in my mid-twenties. I wrote all the time as a kid, but I grew up in the 90s and early noughties when we barely had internet at home, so I didn't really know how someone even became an author, and I'd never met an author, so I just didn't think it was something I could do. It was only when I realised that working in offices really didn't work for my various disabilities, so I quit my job to become a bookseller. It was only then that I started to think about being an author as a long-term goal, and so I set about teaching myself to write books. That was about eight years ago.

Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

A found family always makes its way into my writing. I was a really lonely kid, because I didn't know I was autistic and had been bullied by different people. But as an adult, I've got a great group of people who I absolutely adore, and I always want to reach back and say you'll find your people, I promise.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

Read, read, read. Not just in the genre you want to write in but read bits of everything, because you'll learn all sorts of things and it'll make you come up with lots of ideas for your own writing. Reading thrillers helped me think a lot about plotting and tension, while reading poetry makes me think about beautiful ways to say things in not many words. The other thing is you have to write, and the blank page can be intimidating, but you can't edit nothing! Writing is humbling – the first draft will always be rubbish and not quite what you were going for, but that's where editing comes in. Take a second look at it: what can you improve? How can you get this idea closer to what you were trying to say?

Do you have any rituals when you write?

Yes! I write books for adults and children at the same time, and often need to swap between books very quickly. I realised that my very strong senses, thanks to being autistic, could be harnessed to help me feel immersed in the book. Each book has a playlist that I play when I want to write that book, and I have smells that I associate with each book – perhaps a candle, or a perfume.

My other ritual is having a packet of jellybeans or white rabbit candy on the go all the time for when it's a hard writing day.

What's the best / worst part about being an author?

The best part is getting to meet young readers and talk about the stories that we love. I wouldn't say it's the worst part so much as the hardest, but writing books is a marathon, so it takes a lot of time and effort to get a story from a blank page to being book-shaped. It's all worth it though; I absolutely love my job.

Quick Questions**What's your favourite childhood book?**

Sabriel.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Lyra Belacqua.

Where is your favourite place to write?

British Library.

What's your favourite food?

Cake.

What's your favourite film or show?

The Owl House.

What's is your favourite word?

Sglodion.

What would be your superpower of choice?

Healing.

What makes you smile?

Nerys, my dog.

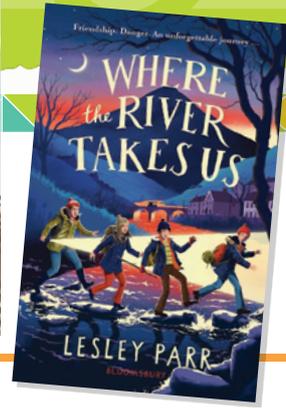
If not an author what would you be?

Studying Welsh.

What's your advice for budding writers?

Keep going!

Lesley Parr

**Where did you grow up?**

Cwmafan, Port Talbot.

Where did you go to school?

Cwmafan and Margam.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

That changed a lot but, for a long time, I wanted to be a naturalist.

What are your hobbies?

Cooking, walking, reading, seeing friends.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had two: *The Little White Horse* by Elizabeth Goudge and *Watership Down* by Richard Adams, but what I read most was the *Beano*.

When did you consider being an author?

All my life, really, but I decided the time was right in 2011. It took ten years of hard work, learning and becoming a better writer till my first book, *The Valley of Lost Secrets*, was published.

Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

I definitely seem to veer towards accepting change as a theme. And my books are always about relationships above all else – both friendships and familial. And always working-class!

What advice can you give to budding authors?

The best advice I can give is to know when to walk away from your desk and take a break if the words aren't flowing. It's amazing how much more productive you can be if you give yourself a break – both physically and metaphorically.

Do you have any rituals when you write?

Not really but I like to put on music to suit the mood. I listen to a lot of albums by tenor Joseph Calleja; so much so he gets a mention in the acknowledgments of my first book, which he has read and enjoyed, by the way – the whole book! He sent me a voicenote to tell me – that was a moment!

Quick Questions**What's your favourite childhood book?**

The Little White Horse by Elizabeth Goudge, and *Watership Down* by Richard Adams.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

I have a huge soft spot for Todd Hewitt in Patrick Ness's YA *Chaos Walking* trilogy. I also love Gina Kaminski from *Gina Kaminski Saves the Wolf* by Craig Barr-Green and Francis Martin. A picture book, so the other end of the young reader spectrum!

Where is your favourite place to write?

At my desk at home, with all my familiar and encouraging things around me.

What's your favourite food?

Pizza or curry. I can't choose, sorry!

What's your favourite film or show?

I love TV and film! Favourites are *Neighbours*, *Life on Mars* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Film-wise, it's between *Pride* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

What would be your superpower of choice?

To fly.

Favourite social media network?

Instagram.

What makes you smile?

My husband and my friends. And thinking of my mother.

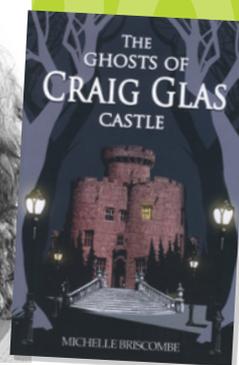
If not an author what would you be?

A detective!

What's your advice for budding writers?

The best advice I can give is to know when to walk away from your desk and take a break if the words aren't flowing. It's amazing how much more productive you can be if you give yourself a break – both physically and metaphorically!

Michelle Briscombe



Where did you grow up?

Cardiff and I moved to Barry when I was twelve.

Where did you go to school?

Cardiff and Barry.

What was the best / worst thing about your school?

The best thing about school was learning and meeting my friends every day. When I was in primary school, I was given the best role as school librarian which obviously meant I needed to read as many books in the school library as possible.

No worst thing – but perhaps school dinners in the 1980s weren't as nice as they are now!

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be an actress, specifically a Shakespearean actress!

What are your hobbies?

Reading (obviously) and I love walking and spending time in the countryside.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

Can I name three? *The Tale of Mrs Tiggy-Winkle* by Beatrix Potter when I was very young (I loved the illustrations, the fact that it was a very small book, as well as the idea that animals had other lives). *The Wind in the Willows* – animals and the countryside, the riverbank and adventures – what's not to love! When I was fourteen, I read *Wuthering Heights* and it was the first book to make me cry. I've read it numerous times since and it still makes me cry.

When did you consider being an author?

I've written stories for a long time. When I was a child, it was a way to escape, but I seriously considered it when I had my son and daughter. I wanted them to read a story that I had written.

Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

I like historical ghost stories, but I also like fantasy and sci-fi.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

Read, read and read some more!

Read the books you love. Let them inform you and don't be afraid to write like your favourite authors until you find your own individual niche. It will come!

Carry a notebook with you, you never know when inspiration might strike.

Do you have any rituals when you write?

I like to write during the day. I have a desk in my bedroom that faces the tree that is outside my window. I think it's about 70 or 80 years old, and although I don't have a specific ritual, I like to think that tree has watched me writing my stories over the years.

What's the best / worst part about being an author?

The best part is when a story arrives in my head and I spend the time thinking, planning, researching and eventually writing it, and then after about a hundred years of editing, I hold it in my hand as a perfectly formed book.

No worst part – but there are moments of anxiety when I worry that nobody will like my story.

Quick Questions

What's your favourite childhood book?

The Tale of Mrs Tiggy-Winkle.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Mrs Tiggy-Winkle.

Where is your favourite place to write?

At my desk in my bedroom.

What's your favourite food?

Greek Salad with lots of feta cheese.

What's your favourite film or show?

It's a grown-up show and very dark, so I will probably not say.

What is your favourite word?

I use 'consistently' quite ... consistently!

What would be your superpower of choice?

Flight – but can I also have invisibility?

Favourite social media network?

Instagram.

What makes you smile?

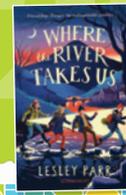
My children and my husband.

If not an author, what would you be?

A Shakespearean actress.

What's your advice for budding writers?

Read, read, read!



Simon Fisher

Chair of the Panel, primary school teacher and book blogger



Since reading some iconic texts from Wales as a youngster, I've known that reading was a way to connect me to my country. This is something I've encouraged in my own children, and through the website familybookworms we have highlighted and championed books of the highest quality from Welsh authors, illustrators and publishers. I love sharing stories, and reading aloud is a daily privilege. As a teacher and parent, it's an honour to be a part of an enthusiastic reading community and spread the enjoyment I get sharing stories, inspiring youngsters, engaging with authors, and discovering new books.

Elizabeth Kennedy

School librarian



There is truly no better job in the world than to encourage children to read and develop the same love for reading that I have. I devoured books as a child and was frequently found reading by torchlight when I was meant to have been asleep. I had ridden polar bears in the North, joined an academy for witches, eaten snozzcumbers, flown with dragons, jumped down rabbit holes and enjoyed secret gardens – all before secondary school! It is my aim to encourage and support every child in their reading journey, whether it is with a graphic novel, magazine, non-fiction book, manga, classic novel, young adult fiction or an e-book. I was delighted to be asked to be a Tir na n-Og panellist as I never say no to reading new books. Being asked to read and explore books with a Welsh background and connection is a pleasure.

Karen Gemma Brewer

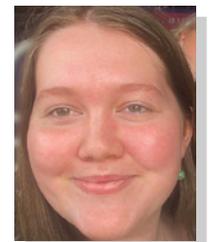
Poet and bookseller



As a poet, bookseller and joint organiser of Gŵyl Lyfrau Aberaeron Book Festival, books are my life and livelihood. As someone who's never mastered the art of growing up, children's books are always a large proportion of my reading pile. I was an early reader and quickly moved on from *Mr Nobody* and *The Cow Who Fell in the Canal* to *Paddington*, *The Borrowers* and Roald Dahl, while lately my adventures have been with blue books, floating pumpkins, wishful candles, and clockwork crows. Wales has a wealth of imaginative writers, publishers committed to a diversity of literature, and a government keen to put books in children's hands. Add the phenomenon of social media and the result is more and more youngsters at our shelves with a clear idea of the sort of book they want. So, I'm excitedly looking forward to bringing those views to the Tir na n-Og judging panel.

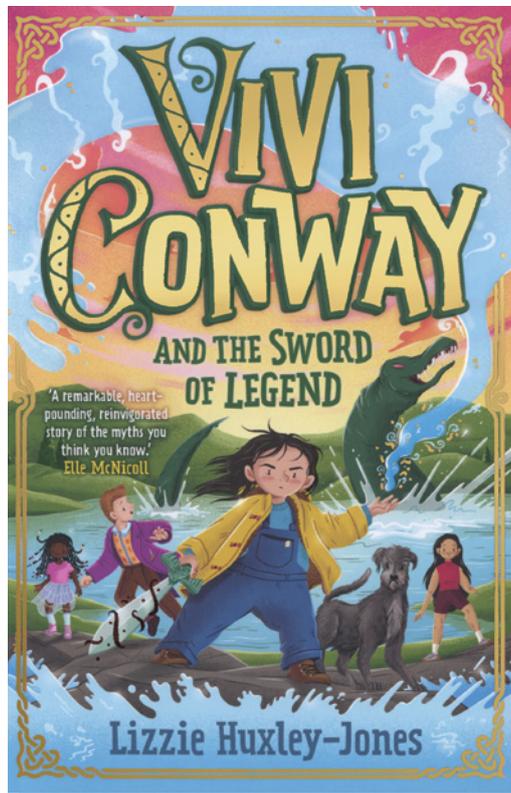
Katie Rees

English Literature and Media student at Swansea University



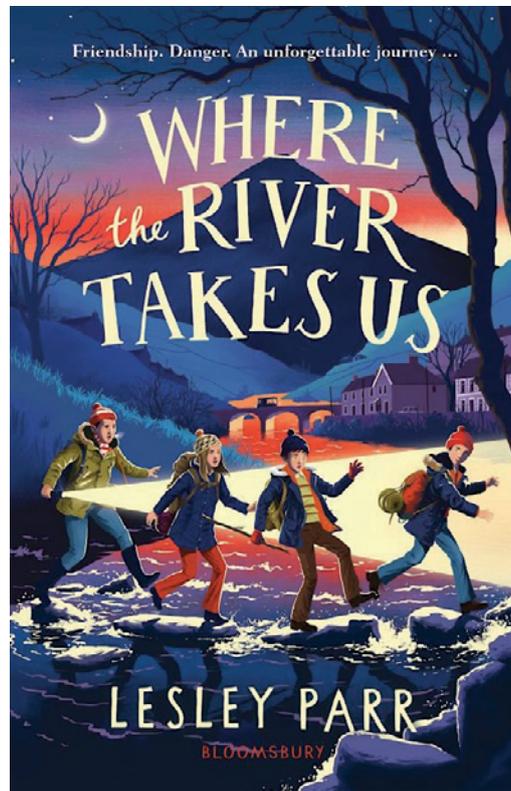
I have been an avid reader from a young age, loving the stories from Julia Donaldson and Roald Dahl. My love of reading has stemmed my passion for writing and assessing other people's work. The invitation to review books for the Books Council of Wales has given me the opportunity to read a variety of different genres and styles of books, which is something which will benefit me in the future. I believe that it's so important that everybody from the moment they're born have access to literature, and by working with the Books Council I will be supporting the work they do to promote literature in Wales. During my studies at university, I will be re-learning the Welsh language to ensure it becomes a part of my everyday life. I'm extremely excited to be a part of the Tir na n-Og English Panel for 2024 and I am truly grateful for the opportunity!

A fantastic, inclusive story full of Welsh myths and legends which sweeps you away on a gripping adventure. The cherry on the top being a ghostly talking dog called Gelert! We all need a Gelert in our life.



An exploration of society in a children's novel. Many children will be able to relate to the characters in the novel and it's exciting to see such a diverse piece of literature.

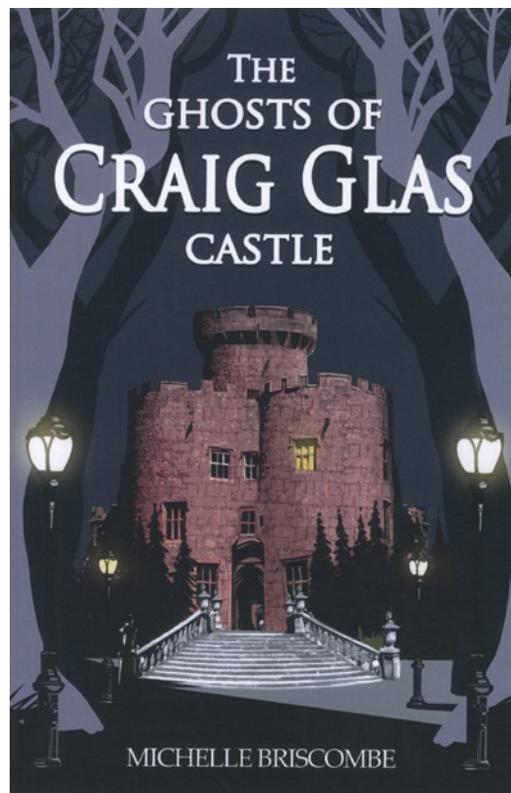
A great novel, one that I can see exciting children and inspiring new readers.
A Famous Five of the modern day.



Mystery beast sightings lead to a dangerous quest with startling discoveries to be made along the way. Is the reward worth the risk? Historical Welsh fiction at its best.

Follow Flora and Archie as they delve into the spooky secrets of the past in Craig Glas Castle. A fast paced and exciting story filled with phantoms, friendship and family.

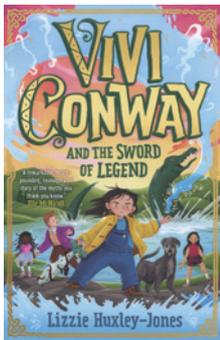
Who doesn't love a good ghost story?
Especially when it is this exciting!

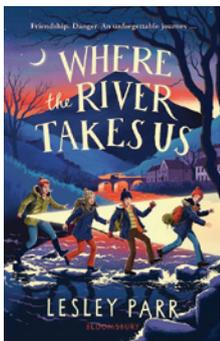


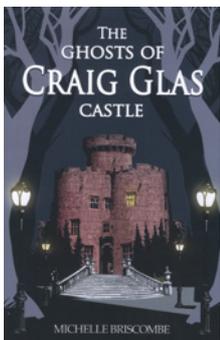
I thoroughly enjoyed reading this novel, I think it shows such great promise for many other novels for children's literature.

Use this page to write any notes you may have on these books.

Photocopy this page for each reviewer.

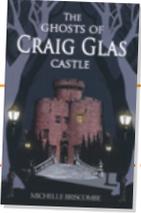




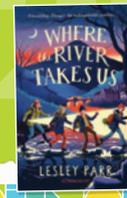




Giving the books a rating may help you choose your favourite.

Book			
<p>Title / Blurb /5</p> <p>Does the blurb attract you to read the book? Does the blurb make it clear what kind of book it is? Is the title of the book suitable/effective/appealing? Does the blurb say enough/too much about the book? Do you like the title?</p>			
<p>Cover / Appearance /5</p> <p>Do you like the cover? What do you think is most special about the cover or the way the book looks? Does the cover add to the story? Do you think the cover is playful/exciting/interesting? Does the cover attract your attention?</p>			
<p>Style / Language /5</p> <p>What kind of language has the author used? e.g. dialect, descriptions, rhymes. What are the characteristics of the author's style? Was the language too easy or too difficult? Did you understand the language? Was the language and style interesting?</p>			
<p>Maintain interest /5</p> <p>Did you enjoy the book? What kept you interested? e.g. humour, adventure, characters, information. Were you keen to read the whole book? Is the book going to stay in your memory? Is the book original?</p>			
<p>Characters /5</p> <p>What kind of characters are in the book? Are the characters interesting/believable? How would you describe the characters? Did the characters appeal to you? Were you able to identify or empathise with the characters?</p>			
<p>Total /25</p>			

Voting Cards



Now that you've read and discussed the books shortlisted for the 2024 Tir na n-Og Award, here's your chance to vote for which book your group thinks is the best. Put an **X** in the box to mark your winner.

Remember to vote in the Readers' Choice category: this is a special trophy awarded by children and young people who take part in the Tir na n-Og Shadowing Scheme.

Voting Card

Vivi Conway and
the Sword of Legend

Where the River Takes Us

The Ghosts of
Craig Glas Castle

Voting Card

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2024

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#TNNO2024

#TNNO2024ShadowingScheme

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