

THE THREE LITTLE WITCHES STORYBOOK, text by Georgie Adams, illustrated by Emily Bolam
Orion, £9.99 ☎ £8.49

Zara, Ziggy and Zoe are witches but the magic doesn't always turn out right, and often gets them into trouble – like the time the self-washing crockery went wild with the soap, or Zoe called up a whirlwind while trying to cast a tidying-up spell. Their nasty schoolmate Melissa is always ready to brew up mischief but that, too, has a tendency to backfire. The eight sparkling stories are beautifully balanced by the illustrations.

ROOM ON THE BROOM, Text by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler
Macmillan, £9.99 ☎ £8.49

It's not surprising that hats and ribbons fly off when riding the wind on a broomstick. But every time the witch has to interrupt her journey to look for her hat or wand, it is found by an animal who asks for a lift and being a kindly witch, she always says yes. Then the broom breaks, just as a dragon approaches. With glorious illustrations and funny lines, this is ideal for any child under four.

THE STORY OF THE TITANIC, illust. by Steve Noon, text by Eric Kentley
Dorling Kindersley £12.99 ☎ £10.39

With illustrations spanning more than two feet, this book shows just how vast the Titanic was. Every aspect of the ship, from her launch in 1911 to her fatal encounter with the iceberg a year later, is detailed, with fascinating information about passengers, crew and survivors. It even takes the story up to the controversy over retrieving artefacts from the wreck.

THE YOUNG OXFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE, edited by Robin Kerrod
OUP £25 ☎ £20

Many encyclopedias tend to overwhelm rather than inform, but not this one. Each page is well designed and thought-out and – best of all – the text is written in such clear and simple language that even subjects like genetics and microchips become understandable. It also has a brilliant and easily accessible website, with illustrations, animations and experiments, as well as links to hundreds of other recommended websites. There couldn't be a better present for the budding scientist.

THE WISH CAT, by Ragnhild Scamell, illust. by Gaby Hansen
Little Tiger Press £9.99 ☎ £8.49

When Holly sees a shooting star she wishes hard for a cuddly kitten but what she gets is a mangy-looking cat with a crooked smile called Tom. At first she refuses to let him in, but his persistence pays off in the end. When the next shooting star comes past the window, neither she nor Tom, now snuggled up beside her, can think of anything else to wish for. A gentle reminder that appearances aren't everything.

THE SNOW FRIENDS, by Ian Whybrow, illust. Tiphonie Beeke
Gullane, £9.99 ☎ £8.49

Pig has lots of books and he's quite happy all by himself, until he comes across the word 'friend' and suddenly feels lonely. He makes himself a snowman and together they look for another friend. Soon they find a lonely Penguin. This book is based on a single idea: reading books and making friends make life more fun – so let's do it!