

# READING RAMPAGE 2022

## INTRODUCING

**Elle McNicoll**

author of *A Kind of Spark*

Knights Of

### About the Author

Elle McNicoll is a debut children's author from Scotland, now living in East London. As a neurodivergent writer, she is passionate about disability rights and representation and assists as a mentor for neurodivergent students at UCL. When she isn't writing fiction, she works as an editor and in her spare time, makes colourful chokers for friends to wear. *A Kind of Spark* is her first novel.



 @BooksandChokers

 [linktr.ee/ellemnicoll](https://linktr.ee/ellemnicoll)

### About the Book

Addie's class are told they have a 'fun' new project to study in the run-up to Halloween. As the teacher recounts how 16th century women were accused of witchcraft for reasons as innocuous as being left-handed, 11 year old Addie is left stunned. She's horrified that innocent people, including women from her own area, were persecuted, executed, then forgotten by society. The revelation leaves her determined to lobby for a local memorial in her small Scottish village.

Oppression of those with perceived 'differences' is of course not confined to the history books. And Addie, who is autistic, experiences this at first hand and in various forms, both at school and in the local community. But we soon see that she is not one to sit back and accept injustice – and with support from a new girl at school - she fights valiantly for what she knows is right.



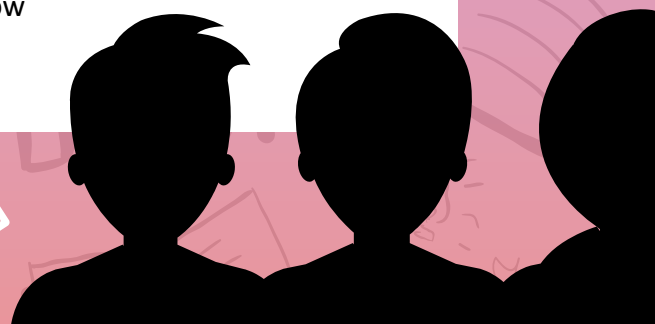
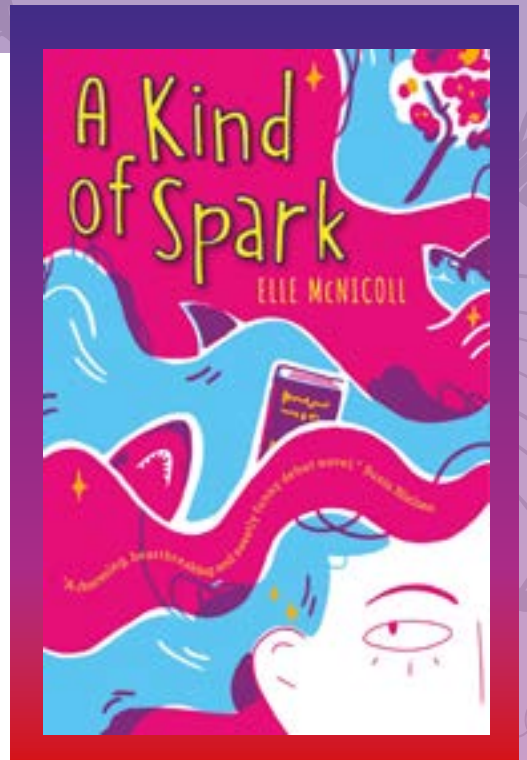
# Book Group

## READING NOTES

### **A Kind of Spark** by Elle McNicoll

*Here are some key questions and discussion points about the book to get you started:*

- What similarities and differences did you see between Addie and the women trialled as witches?
- Why do you think the people of Juniper were resistant to Addie's idea for a memorial commemorating the women trialled as witches? Think about the controversy over statues and their removal in 2020 as part of the Black Lives Matter movement.
- If you were to build a statue celebrating the life of someone - who would it be?
- *"The ocean needs all kinds of fish...Just like the world needs all kinds of mind. Just one would be really dull, wouldn't it?"* (Keedie, p163) Do you think this book helps you to understand autism and autistic people? What did you learn from this story?
- The story portrays different experiences and perspectives of autistic people - such as those of Addie, Keedie and Bonnie. How did their different stories make you feel?
- What were your first impressions of this book from the cover? Did these change after you had read the book?
- Keedie and Addie introduce the reader to the concept of masking early in the book on p16: *"Masking is when we have to pass as a neurotypical person, as someone who is not like us"*. After Keedie's burnout she says to Addie: *"All I've done this term at university is mask. I've masked so well, I've fooled myself. And the more I've pretended to be like them, the more they've applauded. And the more I've pretended, the more I've felt myself slipping away"* (p165). What do you think this means? Do you mask any behaviours or feelings you have?
- How do people at school treat Addie? Think about her fellow pupils and Mrs Murphy and Mr Allison. Do they treat her differently? Why?



# WORD SEARCH



## A KIND OF SPARK BY ELLE MCNICOLL



ADDIE  
AUDREY  
AUTISTIC  
EDINBURGH  
FRIENDSHIP

INFLUENCER  
JUNIPER  
LIBRARY  
MEMORIAL  
SCOTLAND

THESAURUS  
UNIVERSITY  
WITCHCRAFT

A	W	I	T	C	H	C	R	A	F	T	Z	J	W	L
F	P	R	E	N	C	E	R	D	A	H	S	U	X	I
R	T	I	J	U	R	O	Q	D	L	E	C	N	M	B
I	E	A	W	Y	A	U	R	U	A	S	O	I	E	R
E	D	I	N	B	U	R	G	H	N	A	T	P	M	J
N	I	N	M	U	T	E	N	D	D	U	L	E	O	T
D	N	F	E	R	Z	Y	L	I	B	R	A	R	Y	U
S	R	L	M	G	W	I	T	P	J	U	N	U	Q	N
H	A	U	D	R	E	Y	A	Y	E	S	D	N	X	I
I	D	E	N	C	H	A	U	D	U	C	H	I	A	V
P	D	N	W	Q	X	R	T	H	E	S	M	Z	D	E
T	I	C	J	U	N	Y	I	S	T	I	K	N	D	R
H	F	E	A	S	C	O	S	J	M	N	P	S	I	S
E	Z	R	I	T	C	H	T	Y	L	F	G	I	E	I
X	U	M	E	M	O	R	I	A	L	L	R	T	W	T
I	P	E	R	O	T	E	C	I	S	Q	H	Y	O	Y

# QUICK QUIZ QUESTIONS

- 1 What kind of book does Addie carry around with her that was originally a gift from Keedie?
- 2 At the end of the book what do Addie and Audrey plan to dress up as for Halloween?
- 3 What does Addie's older sister Nina do for a job?
- 4 What 'misunderstood' animal does Mr Allison give Addie a book on at the start of the story?
- 5 Who confronts Mrs Murphy after the incident in school with Emily?



Remember A Kind of Spark is an Accelerated Reader book. Log that you have read this book and complete the quiz to earn points.

## CHALLENGE

The cover image on a book is really crucial in attracting or intriguing you as a reader.

Do you think the cover of this book does a good job at appealing to you? You may think it is a little misleading or doesn't convey what the story is about. Could you do better?

### Your challenge

Having read and discussed the book, think about possibilities for a different or alternative book cover design. Remember you can't give too much of the story away!

Create a new book cover for A Kind of Spark which you think reflects the story better. Include the title and the name of the author and some key ingredients or elements from the story which would tempt a new reader.

Once you have completed your new design, explain your thoughts and ideas to the group and how you came up with your cover. For example, why did you choose particular colours or images? Explain your choice of fonts for the writing on the cover.

As a group decide who has created the most effective alternative cover.

**GOOD LUCK!**