

Janet And Allan Ahlberg Funny Bones

Janet and Allan Ahlberg *Funny Bones*: A Delightful Journey into Children's Literature **janet and allan ahlberg funny bones** have long been cherished names in the world of children's books, captivating young readers and their families with their unique blend of humor, warmth, and engaging storytelling. The duo's work, particularly the beloved "Funnybones" series, stands out as a classic example of how simple ideas, paired with clever illustrations and relatable narratives, can create timeless tales that resonate across generations. The Magic Behind Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *Funny Bones* What makes the "Funnybones" series so special? At its heart, it's the collaboration of Janet and Allan Ahlberg — a dynamic husband-and-wife team who have mastered the art of crafting stories that appeal to children's imaginations while sneaking in subtle lessons about life and emotions. Allan Ahlberg, the writer, has a knack for playful language and rhythm, making his texts inviting and easy to read aloud. Meanwhile, Janet Ahlberg's illustrations bring the characters and settings to life with charming simplicity and expressive details. The "Funnybones" books center around a family of skeletons who live in a dark, spooky house yet are anything but frightening. Instead, their adventures are filled with humor and lighthearted fun, making them accessible even to the youngest readers. This clever approach helps children overcome common fears about skeletons and darkness, turning what could be scary into something amusing and friendly.

The Origins and Impact of the Funny Bones Series

The first "Funnybones" book was published in the 1980s, quickly gaining popularity for its fresh take on spooky themes. Janet and Allan Ahlberg managed to create a world that balances spooky and silly, appealing to children's natural curiosity about the unknown while providing comfort through humor.

Why Funny Bones Resonates with Children

Children are naturally drawn to stories that make them laugh and stimulate their imagination. The "Funnybones" series ticks both boxes perfectly: - **Relatable Characters:** The skeleton family, despite being made of bones, exhibit very human traits—curiosity, playfulness, and a bit of mischief. Kids see themselves reflected in these traits. - **Accessible Language:** Allan's writing style is simple yet witty, easy for early readers to grasp while still entertaining adults reading along. - **Engaging Illustrations:** Janet's black-and-white line drawings are iconic, enhancing the spooky yet friendly vibe with expressive faces and amusing scenarios. These elements combine to create a reading experience that feels both comforting and exciting, encouraging children to develop a love for books early on.

Exploring Themes and Educational Value in Funny Bones

Beyond just being entertaining, the *Funny Bones* books carry subtle educational benefits that parents and educators appreciate. The themes often touch on:

Understanding Fear and Emotions

By presenting skeletons in a non-threatening, humorous way, the books help children confront fears of darkness or scary creatures. This gentle approach can be a useful tool for parents to discuss emotions like anxiety or fear without overwhelming their children.

Encouraging Curiosity and Imagination

The skeletons' adventures spark imagination by placing familiar characters in slightly mysterious settings, inviting kids to wonder and explore. This nurtures creativity and open-mindedness, important skills for early development.

Building Early Literacy Skills

Janet and Allan Ahlberg's work is often noted for its rhythmic language and repetition, which supports phonemic awareness and vocabulary building. The predictable text and humorous situations make reading a fun challenge rather than a chore.

Janet and Allan Ahlberg's Collaborative Creativity

One of the most fascinating aspects of the "Funnybones" series is how seamlessly the text and illustrations complement each other. This synergy results from the Ahlbergs' close collaboration.

The Role of Allan Ahlberg's Writing

Allan's storytelling focuses on rhythm, rhyme, and humor. His words invite children to read aloud and engage, making storytime interactive and lively. The simplicity of his sentences allows children to follow along easily, while the playful word choices keep the narrative fresh.

Janet Ahlberg's Illustrative Style

Janet's illustrations are minimalist yet expressive, using stark black-and-white contrasts to emphasize the skeletons' forms. Her art style perfectly matches the tone of the stories—lighthearted with a hint of spookiness. The visual cues help children understand the story's mood and actions, supporting comprehension.

Why Funny Bones Remains a Staple in Children's Literature

Decades after their initial publication, the "Funnybones" books continue to be popular in homes, schools, and libraries. Their enduring appeal can be attributed to several factors:

Timeless Humor and Themes

The humor in Funny Bones is gentle and universal, easily appreciated by children and parents alike. Themes of family, curiosity, and overcoming fear never go out of style, ensuring the stories stay relevant.

Accessibility for Early Readers

Because the language and illustrations are designed with young children in mind, the books serve as excellent early reading material. They encourage independent reading and foster a positive relationship with books.

Versatility in Education

Teachers use the Funny Bones series to introduce concepts such as storytelling, rhyme, and emotional literacy. The books can also be springboards for creative activities like drawing or acting out stories, making them

Tips for Introducing Funny Bones to Young Readers

If you're considering sharing Janet and Allan Ahlberg's funny bones series with a child, here are some ways to make the experience even more enjoyable:

1. **Read aloud together:** Use expressive voices for the skeletons to bring the story to life.
2. **Discuss the illustrations:** Ask questions about what's happening in the pictures to build comprehension.
3. **Explore emotions:** Talk about how the skeletons might feel during their adventures and relate that to the child's own experiences.
4. **Create art projects:** Encourage children to draw their own Funny Bones characters or spooky scenes inspired by the books.
5. **Use it as a springboard for learning:** Practice rhyming, counting bones, or simple storytelling exercises based on the text.

These activities not only enhance literacy but also make reading a memorable and interactive part of a child's day. Janet and Allan Ahlberg funny bones have carved out a unique niche in children's literature by blending humor, education, and creativity in a way that feels effortless and natural. Their legacy continues to inspire new generations of readers and storytellers, reminding us all of the joy that simple, well-crafted stories can bring. Whether you're a parent, educator, or a lifelong fan of children's books, exploring the world of Funny Bones offers a delightful journey filled with laughter, learning, and a little bit of spooky fun.

The Enduring Legacy of Janet and Allan Ahlberg's 'Funny Bones': A Deep Dive into a UK Cultural Icon

The phrase "Funny Bones" evokes not just a children's book, but a generational touchstone in British popular culture—a narrative universe born from the creative genius of Janet and Allan Ahlberg. This article delivers an ultra-comprehensive exploration of "Janet and Allan Ahlberg Funny Bones," dissecting its origins, design architecture, cultural mechanics, psychological impact, real-world applications, and strategic influence on parenting, education, and children's media. It is engineered to dominate search engine rankings by satisfying deep user intent, integrating authoritative scholarship, empirical insights, and forward-looking analysis.

Origins and Historical Context: From Childhood Memoir to National Treasure

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, a couple of British authors and artists, first introduced "Funny Bones" in 1979 with the publication of **Funny Bones: A Story for Children**. Initially conceived as a picture book, the title quickly transcended its format, evolving into a multi-book franchise encompassing stories, educational material, and theatrical adaptations. The central characters—Funny Bones, his wife, and their son—embody a quirky, resilient family navigating everyday childhood challenges with wit, warmth, and absurdity. The Ahlbergs' signature style blended minimalist illustrations with rhythmic, conversational prose, creating a narrative rhythm that resonated deeply with young readers.

The cultural moment of release was pivotal. Post-war Britain saw rising demand for accessible children's literature that balanced innocence with realism. "Funny Bones" arrived at this inflection point, offering a realistic yet affectionate portrayal of family life—complete with sibling squabbles, spilled milk, and bedtime fears—framed through humor. Over decades, the franchise expanded into schools, parenting guides, and digital platforms, cementing its status as both a literary and cultural artifact. By the 2000s, "Funny Bones" was no

longer just a book; it was a national narrative, referenced in media, education,

Janet and Allan Ahlberg *Funny Bones*: A Timeless Children's Classic Explored **janet and allan ahlberg funny bones** have become synonymous with a particular brand of children's literature that combines humor, warmth, and engaging storytelling. Since its publication, "Funnybones" has captivated generations of young readers and parents alike, establishing itself as a staple in early childhood reading. This article delves into the nuances of the book, analyzes its literary and illustrative qualities, and situates it within the broader context of children's literature, highlighting why Janet and Allan Ahlberg's collaboration continues to resonate.

The Genesis of "Funnybones": A Collaborative Masterpiece

"Funnybones" is a creation of the British author Allan Ahlberg paired with the illustrative talents of his wife, Janet Ahlberg. Published in 1990, the book presents a simple yet cleverly constructed story about three skeletons who live in a dark house and embark on a series of humorous adventures. The seamless integration of text and illustrations is a hallmark of the Ahlbergs' work, and "Funnybones" is no exception. The narrative is accessible for early readers while maintaining an undercurrent of wit that appeals to adults. This dual-layered approach is a key factor in the book's enduring popularity. The dynamic between the three skeleton characters—Big, Little, and Dog Skeleton—creates a playful environment that encourages young readers to engage with the story actively.

Plot and Themes: Humor Meets the Macabre

At its core, "Funnybones" explores themes of fear, curiosity, and friendship through a lighthearted lens. The skeletons, traditionally associated with horror, are portrayed as friendly and amusing figures rather than frightening entities. This subversion is particularly effective in easing common childhood fears related to darkness and the unknown. The plot revolves around the skeletons' misadventures around their home and in the nearby graveyard, culminating in a gentle twist that reinforces the importance of family and togetherness. The humor is subtle but consistent, relying on visual gags and wordplay that enrich the reading experience.

Illustrative Excellence: Janet Ahlberg's Artistic Contribution

Janet Ahlberg's illustrations are integral to the success of "Funnybones." Her distinctive style employs clear lines, bold colors, and expressive characters that complement Allan Ahlberg's text perfectly. The skeletal figures are drawn with both simplicity and personality, making them instantly recognizable and endearing. Each page is carefully composed to maximize engagement; the interplay between black-and-white elements and vibrant backgrounds enhances the spooky yet playful atmosphere. This artistic approach not only captures attention but also aids in the development of visual literacy among young readers.

How Illustration Supports Literacy Development

The visual cues provided by Janet's artwork assist children in decoding the story, especially those just beginning to read independently. The consistent character design helps readers anticipate and understand the narrative flow, fostering confidence. Moreover, the expressive faces and body language of the skeletons add emotional depth, allowing children to infer feelings and intentions beyond the written word.

Janet and Allan Ahlberg Funny Bones in the Context of Children's Literature

"Funnybones" occupies a unique niche among children's books, blending humor with mild spookiness without ever crossing into territory that could be considered inappropriate or frightening. This balance is a testament to the Ahlbergs' understanding of their audience and their ability to address complex emotions in a child-friendly manner. Comparatively, many children's books that involve skeletons or ghosts tend to lean towards either pure horror or purely educational content. "Funnybones" navigates a middle ground, making it an excellent tool for parents and educators seeking to introduce the concept of death, the afterlife, or Halloween themes with sensitivity.

Pros and Cons of "Funnybones" in Educational Settings

1. Pros:

1. Encourages early reading through repetitive and rhythmic text.
2. Supports emotional intelligence by addressing fears in a non-threatening way.
3. Enhances vocabulary and comprehension with contextual illustrations.
4. Promotes family bonding with its themes of togetherness.

2. Cons:

1. Some children might initially find skeleton imagery unsettling despite the humorous tone.
2. The simplicity of the story may not hold the attention of older readers.

Impact and Legacy of Janet and Allan Ahlberg Funny Bones

The Ahlbergs have long been celebrated for their ability to craft stories that appeal across generations, and "Funnybones" is a prime example of their craft. The book has been translated into multiple languages and remains a popular choice in libraries and schools worldwide. Its influence extends beyond literature into theater adaptations and educational programming, demonstrating its versatility. Moreover, the book's success contributed to the Ahlbergs' reputation as pioneers in combining narrative and illustration to foster early childhood development. Their work has inspired countless authors and illustrators in the genre.

Continuing Relevance in Modern Children's Media

In today's digital age, where children are exposed to a plethora of multimedia content, "Funnybones" continues to hold value due to its straightforward storytelling and tactile appeal. Physical copies of the book encourage shared reading experiences, crucial for social and cognitive growth. Additionally, the book's themes remain pertinent, as contemporary educators emphasize emotional resilience and the normalization of fears. Its ability to blend educational content with entertainment makes it a relevant tool for modern pedagogical approaches.

Final Thoughts on Janet and Allan Ahlberg Funny Bones

The enduring charm of "Funnybones" lies in the perfect synergy between Janet and Allan Ahlberg's talents. Their collaboration produced a work that is not only entertaining but also pedagogically sound. The book's playful engagement with traditionally scary themes offers children a safe space to confront and understand their fears, all while enjoying a delightful narrative. In the landscape of children's literature, "Funnybones" stands as a testament to how humor, art, and storytelling can come together to create a timeless classic. Its continued popularity underscores the importance of thoughtful, well-crafted books in early childhood development and the lasting impact of the Ahlbergs' creative partnership.

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The Unlikely Duo: Janet and Allan Ahlberg and the Cultural Puzzle of "Funny Bones"

In the annals of British children's literature, few publishing stories have achieved the quiet resonance and enduring cultural footprint of **Funny Bones** by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. First published in 1989 by Dial Books,

the book emerged not as a commercial gamble but as a meticulously crafted artifact of post-war British sensibility—wry, morally grounded, and unflinchingly human. Yet beyond its immediate success as a bestseller, **Funny Bones** represents a deeper narrative: the intersection of personal grief, artistic vision, and the shifting geopolitical and economic tides that shaped creative industries in late 20th-century Britain. At its core lies a family—Janet and Allan Ahlberg, their children, and the spectral presence of their son, Jimmy, whose tragic death in 1988 irrevocably altered the tone and texture of their work. The story of **Funny Bones** is not merely about a children's book; it is a case study in how trauma, memory, and cultural context coalesce into narrative power.

The Origins: Grief, Grief, and the Birth of a Masterpiece

The genesis of **Funny Bones is rooted in personal catastrophe. Allan Ahlberg, a writer and illustrator known for his nuanced, quietly subversive narratives, had long avoided overt autobiographical content. But in 1988, tragedy struck: his 14-year-old son, Jimmy, died in a surfing accident off the coast of Cornwall. The loss was profound, not only emotionally but professionally. For Ahlberg, writing had always been a means of navigating complexity—of making sense of the absurd, the painful, the morally ambiguous. In the wake of Jimmy's death, that impulse intensified. Rather than retreat, he channeled grief into creation, crafting a book that would grapple with life's fragility through a child's eyes. Janet Ahlberg, equally a writer and editor, played a pivotal role in shaping the project. Her editorial acumen and deep understanding of narrative structure helped refine Allan's raw emotional impulses into a coherent, resonant story. The result was **Funny Bones**, a collection of interwoven vignettes, poems, and illustrations that follow a group of children—including a young boy named Tommy—navigating loss, change, and moral choices. What distinguishes the book is its refusal to sanitize death. Instead, it presents grief not as a rupture but as a thread woven through everyday life: a mother's quiet sorrow, a child's confusion, the absurd ways people cope.**

Geopolitically, the late 1980s in Britain were a period of profound transition. The Thatcher era was in full throttle—privatization, deregulation, and the erosion of

communal structures. Communities were fragmenting; traditional support networks weakened. In this climate, children's literature faced a dual pressure: to entertain, but also to offer psychological scaffolding amid rising anxiety. *Funny Bones* emerged as a counterpoint—unflinching yet compassionate, honest without being didactic. Its tone mirrored a broader cultural shift: a move away from the didactic moralism of mid-century children's stories toward a more nuanced, emotionally intelligent approach. The book's success was not just literary but sociological—it filled a void, offering children and adults alike a language for difficult emotions.

The Evolution: From Book to Cultural Touchstone

Funny Bones was not an immediate blockbuster, but its slow burn reflected a deeper cultural reception. Initial reviews were cautious, noting the book's quiet intensity. However, as parents and educators recognized its emotional authenticity, it gained traction. By the mid-1990s, it had become a staple in British primary schools, teaching children to articulate grief, resilience, and empathy. Its illustrations—distinctive, slightly unsettling, yet warm—became iconic. The cover, often featuring a child with solemn eyes and a faintly melancholic smile, encapsulated the book's paradox: joy and sorrow coexisting. The Ahlbergs' decision to expand beyond children's fiction marked another evolution. Allan later wrote adult fiction under pseudonyms, but *Funny Bones* remained his masterpiece—a rare instance where personal trauma was transmuted into universal art. Janet continued to write and edit, contributing to anthologies that explored childhood, memory, and the ethics of storytelling. Together, they embodied a model of creative resilience: using personal loss not as an end, but as a catalyst for narrative innovation.

Industry analysts later identified *Funny Bones* as a harbinger of a broader trend: the rise of "literary picture books" that bridge children's and adult audiences. In an era where publishing increasingly prioritized emotional depth over formulaic structure, Ahlberg's work stood as a benchmark. Its influence extended beyond Britain, inspiring authors in Scandinavia, Canada, and Australia—regions grappling with similar post-industrial anxieties and shifting family dynamics. The book's global reach was amplified by translations into over 20 languages, each adaptation subtly refracting local cultural attitudes toward death and childhood.

Economic Context: Publishing in the Pre-Digital Age

The 1980s and 1990s marked a turning point in the publishing industry. Dial Books, as part of a larger corporate structure, operated under pressures unfamiliar to earlier decades. The rise of media conglomerates, the consolidation of publishing houses, and the decline of independent presses altered how books were funded, marketed, and distributed. *Funny Bones*

benefited from the growing appetite for high-quality, emotionally resonant children's literature—a niche that proved surprisingly resilient amid commercial shifts. The Ahlbergs' partnership with publishers reflected a changing power dynamic. Allan's reputation as a respected illustrator and writer allowed him editorial leverage, but Janet's editorial precision ensured market viability. Their collaboration exemplified a rare balance: artistic integrity paired with commercial awareness. In an age when children's books were increasingly driven by franchises and branding, **Funny Bones resisted reduction—its value lay not in merchandise potential but in narrative depth.**

The book's economic impact extended beyond sales. It demonstrated that complex, emotionally mature content could thrive outside the children's "soft" market, influencing how publishers approached genre boundaries. Retailers began to recognize that quality storytelling—even for younger readers—could drive sustained engagement, fostering loyalty across age groups. **Funny Bones thus became a quiet force in reshaping publishing economics: a proof of concept that literary ambition and profitability were not mutually exclusive.**

Expert Perspectives: Trauma, Narrative, and Child Psychology

Psychologists and literary scholars have long analyzed **Funny Bones** for its treatment of grief. Dr. Eleanor Hart, a psychologist specializing in childhood bereavement, notes that the book "normalizes the messiness of mourning without sentimentalizing it." Unlike earlier children's narratives that offered neat resolutions, **Funny Bones** allows space for confusion, anger, and silence—emotions often suppressed in mainstream discourse. For children, this mirrors the reality of loss: complicated, ongoing, not easily "fixed." Literary critic David Reynolds frames the work as a "tragic realist" intervention in children's literature. Reynolds argues that Ahlberg's use of allegory and subtle humor—such as a character who forgets their mother's voice or another who avoids talking about death—creates a narrative safety net. These devices enable young readers to confront difficult truths without overwhelming them. The book's structure, fragmented yet cohesive, mirrors the disjointed nature of grief itself, offering a form of cognitive scaffolding.

From a narrative theory standpoint, **Funny Bones** exemplifies what scholar Maria Ivanova calls "empathic minimalism." The Ahlbergs eschew dramatic flourishes, instead relying on precise detail and emotional restraint. This approach aligns with postmodern literary trends that privilege interiority over plot, yet it resonates deeply with universal human experience. The book's power lies in its refusal to provide answers—only questions, and space for reflection.

Controversies and Risks: The Ethics of Representing Death

Despite its acclaim, **Funny Bones was not without controversy. Critics questioned the ethics of portraying child grief so directly, particularly in a book marketed to children. Some parents expressed discomfort with the book's unflinching tone, fearing it might deepen anxiety rather than alleviate it. Others raised concerns about the appropriateness of exposing young readers to death's emotional weight, even through fiction. Allan Ahlberg defended the approach as necessary and responsible. In a 1990 interview with **The Guardian**, he stated: "Children feel things deeply—more than we often acknowledge. To ignore their capacity to grieve is to silence them. This book gives voice to that silence." His position reflected a broader intellectual shift: a rejection of the "innocent childhood" myth in favor of a more honest, if uncomfortable, engagement with reality.**

The publishing industry itself grappled with risk assessment. Editors debated whether such content would alienate mainstream audiences or carve out a vital niche. The Ahlbergs' success suggested that emotional authenticity could be commercially viable, even in a market increasingly dominated by formulaic, high-turnover titles. Their legacy thus includes not just a book, but a redefinition of what children's literature could—and should—be.

Global Comparisons: Cultural Variations in Portraying Loss

The global reception of **Funny Bones** reveals cultural fault lines in how death and childhood are narratively framed. In Sweden, for example, where children's literature often embraces existential themes, the book was embraced as a kindred spirit to works by Astrid Lindgren and Tove Jansson, who similarly blend realism with emotional depth. In contrast, in more conservative publishing environments—such as parts of the Middle East or South Asia—initial translations faced hesitation, as open discussions of death, especially for children, were culturally sensitive. Japanese publishing, with its own rich tradition of melancholic, introspective children's stories, found resonance in Ahlberg's work. The emphasis on quiet grief, seasonal change, and impermanence mirrored **mono no aware**—a cultural aesthetic valuing the pathos of transient beauty. In Australia, where Indigenous narratives often intertwine land, loss, and memory, **Funny Bones** was praised for its ecological sensitivity, particularly its subtle portrayal of nature as a silent witness to human emotion.

These cross-cultural receptions underscore the book's universal themes, even as local contexts shape

interpretation. In France, literary circles admired its narrative restraint and psychological complexity, aligning it with post-war French children’s literature that emphasized moral ambiguity. In Latin America, where magical realism often softens harsh realities, **Funny Bones** stood out for its grounded, almost documentary-like emotional honesty.

Industry Impact: A Blueprint for Literary Children’s Publishing

The Ahlbergs’ work catalyzed structural changes in the publishing industry. **Funny Bones demonstrated that award-winning, critically acclaimed books—even those with adult sensibilities—could achieve mass readership. This inspired a wave of literary picture books in the 1990s and 2000s, including works by David Wiesner, Chris Van Allsburg, and later, Mo Willems, who blended humor with emotional depth. Publishers began investing more in author development, prioritizing narrative complexity over formulaic rhyme and rhythm. Literary credentials became a selling point, and authors with dual appeal—children and adults—gained prominence. The book’s success also encouraged greater editorial support for difficult themes, fostering a new generation of writers unafraid to explore grief, identity, and moral ambiguity.**

Distribution strategies evolved in response. **Funny Bones was not marketed through traditional children’s channels alone; it appeared in book clubs, adult literary magazines, and academic syllabi, broadening its audience. This multi-platform exposure blurred genre boundaries and expanded the market for literary children’s books—a shift that paved the way for today’s hybrid publishing models.**

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**Questions & Answers About janet and allan ahlberg
funny bones**

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1	Who are Janet and Allan Ahlberg?	Janet and Allan Ahlberg are a British author and illustrator couple known for their popular children's books, including the 'Funnybones' series.
2	What is 'Funnybones' by Janet and Allan Ahlberg about?	'Funnybones' is a children's picture book featuring a humorous story about a family of skeletons living in a dark house, exploring themes of friendship and fun.
3	Why is 'Funnybones' considered a classic children's book?	'Funnybones' is considered a classic due to its engaging storytelling, memorable characters, and its unique blend of humor and gentle spookiness that appeals to young readers.
4	When was 'Funnybones' first published?	'Funnybones' was first published in 1980 by Janet and Allan Ahlberg.
5	What makes the illustrations in 'Funnybones' stand out?	The illustrations in 'Funnybones', created by Allan Ahlberg, are distinctive for their simple yet expressive black-and-white drawings that complement the humorous and spooky tone of the story.
6	Are there any sequels or related books to 'Funnybones'?	Yes, the Ahlbergs wrote several other books featuring the Funnybones characters, expanding the series with new adventures and maintaining the same humorous style.
7	What age group is 'Funnybones' suitable for?	'Funnybones' is generally suitable for children aged 3 to 7 years old, making it a popular choice for early readers and storytime.
8	How has 'Funnybones' impacted children's literature?	'Funnybones' has had a lasting impact by combining humor with slightly spooky themes in a child-friendly way, influencing many subsequent children's books and becoming a beloved classic in British children's literature.

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Funnybones book, children's books, Funnybones characters, Funnybones series, children's humor books, Janet Ahlberg author, Allan Ahlberg illustrator, Funnybones skeletons, classic kids books

Understanding Janet And Allan Ahlberg Funny Bones Digital Books

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