

THE Book Curator

THE LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE TO BOOKS FOR KIDS & TEENS

INSIDE

Meet the Author:
Samantha Wheeler

Teen Reading Habits

Fact Checking
Educational Tools

**CBCA
Awards
Special
Supplement**



APR 2017
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Detailed reviews on the latest
fiction to help you choose

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

The Book Curator is published by Apt School Resources, an Australian business jointly owned by two families who share a passion for books and a determination to provide outstanding service to our members.

We help schools all over the country by providing them with access to helpful information, detailed reviews and the latest fiction titles for their libraries.

Our goal is to provide the resources librarians need to choose the best books for their school library across a wide range of genres, age groups and formats. We provide a wide range of services to help support our members so they can get the best return for their time and their budget.

This magazine [previously called Review] and our service have developed based on what our members want. We invite your ideas, suggestions, feedback and constructive criticism to help us provide solutions to the challenges you face as you work to build an outstanding library for your school community.

In addition to library titles, we source and supply a wide range of interesting and effective resources to help teachers, counsellors and chaplains work with and support their students. We also help equip teachers and school leaders with professional development resources.

For more information about our services or to provide feedback please contact us.

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WELCOME

EDITORIAL



It has been a whirlwind here at The Book Curator HQ as we prepared to bring you our biggest collection of reviews to date!

With something like 135 books in the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards—30 of which are in the shortlists—this month brings a veritable treasure trove of Australian literature.

As well as all those fabulous books this issue is packed with features. There's valuable insights into teen reading habits courtesy of a Deakin University research project, as well as teaching resources to help develop your students fact-checking abilities. You'll find tips on how to make the most of the Sydney Writers' Festival (no matter where you are in Australia), essential factors for making the most of STEM education, a great new writers' podcast and more.

Within these pages (and the special CBCA Awards supplement) we hope you find many new books to both share and enjoy.

May your Easter be refreshing, safe and filled with the joy of family and friends. We'll see you in Term 2!

ROWENA BERESFORD

PS. If you have any comments on The Book Curator or suggestions on what we could improve or include in future issues, please call 02 8985 9435 or email your feedback to mag@aptschoolresources.com.au

» For information on our traffic light ratings, please refer to page 9.

Disclaimer: The reviews contained in this magazine are based on each individual reviewer's opinion only. While we do our best to pick up every potential concern in fiction titles, we cannot guarantee that to be the case. Should you purchase a book based on our reviews and then discover an issue of serious concern to you that was not included in our review, please contact us.

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What's on the horizon



MEET SAMANTHA WHEELER

With her latest book *Wombat Warriors* hot off the presses, Samantha Wheeler shares her love of wombats and her writing journey.

What was the inspiration behind *Wombat Warriors*?

I saw a newspaper photograph showing a roll of wire jammed into the entrance of a wombat burrow. I was so shocked by the article that I decided to visit a wombat sanctuary and talk to Conservation Volunteers Australia, where I learnt there are two sides to the story. Wombats are native Australian animals, but they also cause damage on farms. Farmers have understandably taken measures to prevent this damage, but sometimes these measures can harm wombats and other native animals. I'm hoping that *Wombat Warriors* will inspire the farmers of the future to make a change and care for all animals.

The main character, Mouse, has quite a transformation. What are you hoping readers will draw from that?

I think we all have a bit of Mouse in us. Sometimes we know we should speak up, but fear and old habits hold us back.

Whether it's standing up to a bully, or doing something right for our environment, no voice is ever too small. Together, we can all make a difference.

What did you learn about wombats to write this book?

I couldn't have written this book if not for the generosity of the wildlife carers. The people at the Wombat Awareness Organisation in South Australia, and at Safe Haven near Gladstone gave me hours of their time and loads of wombat cuddles as I gathered information about behaviour, diet, health and other wombat-y issues. I also spent a weekend with Conservation Volunteers Australia at their wombat sanctuary in Brookfield (SA), where I learnt more about farmers' perspectives when it comes to wombats.

What surprised you most?

The way they play, leap and roll around like puppies was quite a surprise. When I've seen wombats previously, mainly in zoos, I thought they just lay around and slept. How wrong I was.

All of your books have a strong theme of native wildlife. Was that a decision you made early on?

I don't think I made the decision consciously. I wrote my first book, *Smooch & Rose*, after becoming aware of the plight of koalas in SE Queensland, particularly in Redland Bay, and it all just snowballed from there.

Once I realised how much fun I'd had researching and immersing myself in the world of koalas, I didn't want it to stop. I've always loved animals, so I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. I began actively seeking other native wildlife issues to write about, and now I have hundreds of ideas to explore.

I don't think I'll ever run out of inspiration. As it turns out, native animals are an excellent theme for me!

In both *Smooch & Rose* and *Wombat Warriors* human homes are at risk. Why is that?

I travelled a lot as a young person, and I think home became my safe place in times of uncertainty. I'm still a homebody now, which is a perfect attribute for a writer – I can stay home every day if I like.

Imagine how I'd feel if my house was destroyed, boarded up or knocked down? It would be terrible. So when I see the homes of our wildlife destroyed like this, it hits hard. I don't think we have the right to deny other species a safe place to live. If only we could learn to live with, and cater for, our wildlife rather than destroying them.

Smooch & Rose and Mister Cassowary were both short listed for a number of awards.

What was that experience like?

A little surreal. One of the things about writing is that you're putting a lot of yourself on the line. Emotional connections to your childhood, your world, the people around you. It's tempting to be too hard on yourself – convincing yourself that your stories are no good. Being short listed for awards helps reinforce what keen readers have already told you—that they love your stories and hope you'll write more. The readers are who you write for, but the award nominations do help.

Tell us about your May Gibbs Creative Time Fellowship.

I was like a cat on a hot tin roof. I couldn't believe I actually had a whole month to devote to writing, and I hardly slept from the excitement! I worked about 15 hours a day on three projects: editing *Mister Cassowary*, researching *Wombat Warriors* and extending a story I'd written about a girl who can't talk. I was also the author-in-residence at St Mary's Memorial School for a week, which I loved. The May Gibbs Children's Literary Trust were wonderfully hospitable, but mainly, the fellowship made me feel very validated as a writer.

Your characters all discover how to make a difference. What difference do you hope your stories will make?

I hope they'll show young people that they don't have to be famous, rich, or politicians to change things for the better. The media often makes out that it's all doom and gloom when it comes to the environment, but I see so many stories of hope, where individuals and community groups are instigating real change. I hope my stories might empower young people to believe that their voices do

matter, and that together we really can change our world for the better.

I understand your first book, Smooch & Rose, was published by UQP after you pitched it to them face to face at the CYA Conference. What do you consider to be the pros and cons of connecting with prospective publishers in that way?

A definite con is the terrifying nerves that develop as you sit in front of a publisher with all your dreams in their hands. If you can get over those nerves, everything else is a positive. Publishers are real people just like us and they are friendly, helpful and honest.

If a story needs more work, then what nicer way to hear it than straight from the mouth of a publisher? Take their advice, work on your story and keep trying.

It took three years of pitching at CYA for a publisher to say yes, and my nerves never got better—but my writing did! I took their advice, worked hard, learnt more and re-submitted. And it paid off.

Connecting directly like this gave me an opportunity to ask questions and to learn, rather than just finding a rejection letter in my inbox.

You've written about bats, cassowaries, koalas and now wombats. Which animal (if any) will feature in your next story?

I love asking kids 'what next' and this time was overwhelmed by responses to write about turtles. Everyone loves turtles! So turtles it is!

Based near Bundaberg, *Turtle Trackers* (releasing early 2018) focuses on the problems litter and introduced pests such as foxes have on our precious turtles, who swim for thousands of kilometres to return to our shores. Don't we owe it to them to make sure they're safe when they get here?

What's next for you?

After editing *Turtle Trackers* with the editors at UQP, we'll work on the edit of a slightly different story. This one, due out in late 2018, is about a girl who can only use her eyes to communicate. It is a story based loosely around my daughter and is very close to my heart.

Is writing your main focus?

Writing and teaching I think. I love writing, but visiting schools, bookstores and libraries to talk to young people about their ideas and relive the curiosity of our world through their eyes is hugely rewarding.

I feel extremely lucky to be writing for such a receptive age group and love every minute I spend with readers.

Are you available for school visits? If so, what type?

Absolutely! I love visiting schools and explaining how I overcame my reluctance to write as a young person and became an author as an adult. I also enjoy encouraging students to write their own stories. I run a number of fun workshops on topics like creative writing to persuasive text and writing dialogue.

How can schools contact you?

They can email me direct on info@samanthawheeler.com or they can contact me via Speakers Ink:

sandie@speakers-ink.com.au

You'll find The Book Curator's review of *Wombat Warriors* on page 19 of this issue.

THE READING HABITS OF TEENS

Understanding teen reading habits has become easier thanks to Deakin University's research project *Teen Reading in the Digital Era*.

The project's interim findings will undoubtedly reassure librarians and other educators, in addition to providing valuable information to aid in the development of library collections.

While the 'death of the book' has been predicted in the media for sometime, the research shows otherwise. The project team found that around 63% of teen readers prefer paper books and dislike reading on digital devices, while a further 12-13% lean towards paper books while also seeing some benefit in e-books. Only 12% prefer e-books.

The belief that teens 'don't read any more' has also been proven untrue, with 70% regularly reading for pleasure.

The frequency of teens 'reading for fun' (reading for study and reading social media are both excluded) is reported to be as follows:

- * 16% read for fun every day
- * 11% read 5-6 days per week
- * 21% read 3-4 days per week
- * 22% read 1-2 days per week

The interim findings from the research project have been summarised in a helpful infographic by ACER [published in Teacher Magazine].

The project also looked at the types of books teens like to read.

The top five genres preferred by teens are:

1. Fantasy
2. Contemporary realist fiction
3. Science Fiction
4. Autobiography/biography
5. Action/Adventure

Teens top 10 books or series by Australian authors are:

1. The *Once* series by Morris Gleitzman
2. The *Treehouse* series by Andy Griffiths
3. The *Tomorrow* series by John Marsden
4. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
5. *Boy Overboard* by Morris Gleitzman
6. The *WeirDo* series by Anh Do
7. The *Deltora Quest* series by Emily Rodda
8. The *Ranger's Apprentice* series by John Flanagan
9. *Zac & Mia* by A. J. Betts
10. The *Rondo* series by Emily Rodda

These findings changed significantly when the scope changed to include international titles.

Their top 10 books overall are:

1. The *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling

2. The *Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins

3. The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series by Jeff Kinney

4. The *Maze Runner* series by James Dashner

5. The *Divergent* trilogy by Veronica Roth

6. The *Once* series by Morris Gleitzman

7. *The Fault in our Stars* by John Green

8. The *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan

9. The *Treehouse* series by Andy Griffiths

10. The *Skulduggery Pleasant* series by Derek Landy

We look forward to further insights from this valuable project in the months ahead.

Further information can be found at: teenreading.net

For the Infographic go to: tinyurl.com/m42bhk3

Source: tinyurl.com/ktpsvll

Turning Students into Fact-Finding Detectives

Equipping students with the skills to identify fake news is an important task, particularly in the current political and media environment.

April 2nd is the inaugural *International Fact-Checking Day*. It's an event established by the *International Fact-Checking Network* in partnership with fact-checking organisations around the world.

Recent figures indicate there are now 114 dedicated fact-checking teams across 47 countries.

Although widespread adoption of the day itself will take time, the topic of fact-checking is certainly an important one. Here are some helpful resources for raising awareness of—and developing skills in—fact-checking:

HIGH SCHOOL

Lesson Plan

factcheckingday.com/lesson-plan

Designed by fact-checkers, this lesson plan is aimed at students aged 14 to 16, but may also be suitable for other ages.

Trivia Night Quiz

factcheckingday.com/trivia-quiz

Although designed for adults, this quiz includes questions that could be used with older

students who are informed on current affairs. Alternatively you could always try it out on your fellow teachers!

How To's

factcheckingday.com/#how-to

Fact checkers share their knowledge on six topical areas: urban legends, fake news sites, Wikipedia entries, fake Twitter handles, politician's claims and online photos and videos.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Common Sense Education organisation employs educators to assess and recommend websites and apps that may help students to evaluate facts.

There are a range of resources available for download from their website free of charge.

Fearless Fact Finding

tinyurl.com/lzm97yy

This student handout includes internet rumour checker Snopes.com and OpenSecrets.org which tracks the influence of money in US politics.

Deceptive Detective

tinyurl.com/mlk6eee

This eye-catching poster asks five questions to help students in their analysis. They relate to intent, timing, emotions, source and attention seeking.

How to Spot Fake News

tinyurl.com/hxv499y

This must see 3 minute YouTube video, *How to Spot Fake News*, is suitable for students of all ages.

More than ever we need educators who are equipped to teach information literacy and critical thinking skills to students. We also need universities who will shed their biases and train teachers in these skills, irrespective of which side of politics they lean towards.

Source:

Common Sense Education

tinyurl.com/lopyfts

SMH Article - Seven tips to help you identify 'Fake News':

tinyurl.com/lafoyy7



Di's background includes a short term exchange to Denmark to work in a school library, past member of Nepean Blue Mountains CBCA, organiser of Literary Lunch for local schools, Relieving Editor, writer & reviewer for NSW DET SCAN magazine, participant in Australian Govt Summer School, recipient of NSW DET Excellence in ICT 2007; INTEL Teach Master Trainer, conference junkie and presenter. She holds a Grad Dip in Teacher Librarianship from CSU.

World Book and Copyright Day

23 April 2017

First proclaimed in 1965, this day reaffirms the importance and connection of books in over 100 countries. The date is a symbolic one, being the day in 1616 that three literary greats passed away – Shakespeare and the Spanish writers Cervantes and De la Vega.

UNESCO's World Book Capital City for 2017 is Conakry in Guinea, West Africa. Their chosen theme for this year is Initiation By Books.

www.unesco.org/new/en/wbcd



150 years - First Labor PM

9 April, 1867

In 1904, Chris Watson became the first Prime Minister of Australia belonging to the Labor Party. Australia also became the first nation in the world to elect a Labor Prime Minister.

tinyurl.com/leuq6om

170 years - Joseph Pulitzer

10 April, 1847

This Hungarian born publisher and journalist was devoted to raising journalistic standards. He founded the Pulitzer Prize, honouring excellence in journalism and the arts.

tinyurl.com/kc32opp

125 years - The Blickensderfer typewriter

12 April, 1892

The first portable typewriter (the forerunner of computers), was invented and patented by George Blickensderfer and offered the cutting edge ability to change font styles.

tinyurl.com/m5uhebc

125 years - Corrie ten Boom

15 April, 1892

This Dutch writer and speaker helped many Jews escape the Holocaust during WWII. She was imprisoned for her 'crimes' and wrote several books about her experiences, the most famous being *The Hiding Place*.

tinyurl.com/ptu5cx4

150 years - Wilbur Wright

16 April, 1867

Wilbur and his younger brother Orville are considered the "fathers of modern aviation". In 1903 they made the first free, controlled flight of a powered airplane. Wilbur had never finished high school or gone to college.

tinyurl.com/q3vfpj7



130 years - Mutiny on the Bounty co-author

22 April, 1887

James Norman Hall co-authored the novel *Mutiny on the Bounty* with his army colleague Charles Nordhoff. He was born on this date.

tinyurl.com/l944rzs

100 years - Sir Sidney Nolan

22 April, 1917

Born in Melbourne, Sidney Nolan is one of Australia's most famous artists, best known for his paintings based on Australian folklore and the bushranger, Ned Kelly.

tinyurl.com/lh6vh5e

75 years - Anne of Green Gables author dies

24 April, 1942

Lucy Maud Montgomery, a Canadian novelist, is best known for her *Anne of Green Gables* series, set in Prince Edward Island where Montgomery spent most of her life.

tinyurl.com/lvmtrlf



50 years - The Outsiders

24 April, 1967

Written by Author SE Hinton when she was 15-years-old, *The Outsiders* was inspired by class distinctions at her school and broke through established boundaries in Young Adult fiction.

<http://tinyurl.com/by5g5e>

350 years - Paradise Lost

27 April, 1667

John Milton signed a contract with a London printer for an initial payment of £5 for *Paradise Lost*. The initial print run of 1300 copies sold out in eighteen months, an incredible achievement at the time.

tinyurl.com/kwf7nnn

The STEM Education Path

The value and importance of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) for students in our future workforce is a hot topic.

A US report titled *STEM 2026* highlights essential factors that will strengthen STEM education in schools. These include:

- STEM professionals are needed to mentor and be role models for students across networked schools.
- It is necessary to integrate social and emotional learning and creativity into the learning of STEM subjects to develop innovative skills.
- School subjects should be blended to produce authentic learning opportunities for students.

Barriers to flexible learning are breaking down as the workforce cries out for 21st century employment skills. Results are showing that more girls are engaging and excelling in STEM subjects and careers, breaking the stereotypical view of these areas being more interesting or relevant to males.

The report emphasises that innovative STEM schools are being announced and planned by forward thinking educational bodies and governments. Ground-breaking learning practices and educators who promote progressive learning mindsets are coming to the fore. There is also increasing consciousness of student wellbeing and the importance of nurturing individual strengths and talents.

For those who have sought to encourage lifelong learning and the use of digital tools that encourage creativity, STEM is a welcome advent in the sphere of education.

You can access the report here: <http://tinyurl.com/k8njnf3>

Understanding traffic light ratings

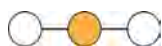
The traffic lights are a grading system to assist schools with conservative collection policies to easily identify which reviews to read more closely.



There are no concerns with the book.



There are very mild concerns which we consider unlikely to be an issue for the age group, but you should check them out just in case.



Mild to medium concerns, whether this book is suitable will depend on your collection policy.



Medium to high concerns. These books may be unsuitable for most schools with conservative collection policies.



This book is unsuitable for the vast majority of schools with conservative collection policies.

When considering how to rate each book, we weigh up the level of concerns with the quality of the book and the benefits to be gained from it. More information about the 'scales' process has been provided in a previous article. For a copy, please contact us. Your feedback is welcome.

A podcast 'for writers, by writers'

The Garret, a new podcast about writing, has recently been short listed in the *Cast Away Australian Podcast Awards*. It is presented by host Nic Brasch and produced by Astrid Edwards in partnership with the State Library of Victoria, Readings, Writers Victoria and Swinburne University.

Season 1 launched in November 2016 and focused on Victorian-based writers. The latest season features Australian writers, while Season 3 (launching 1 June) will focus on international writers.

Accompanying each episode are 'show notes' (a summary of some key points) and a full transcript of the podcast.

Writers who have appeared on the podcast to date include John Marsden, Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff of *Illuminae* fame, Andy and Jill Griffiths and Leigh Hobbs.

All episodes can be accessed via the website where they have been categorised into topics and/or genres. All episodes are also available from iTunes.

Website: thegarretpodcast.com

iTunes: tinyurl.com/lj4rq4a

Image Attribution page 8:

Main image: depositphotos.com

Very early example of a Blickensderfer No. 5 typewriter dated 1894 by Bwilson888 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, tinyurl.com/muocbtf

HMS Bounty II 1960 Tall Ship with full sails on Lake Michigan near the Port of Chicago for the 2010 Great Lake Tall Ship Challenge by Dan Kasberger - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, tinyurl.com/jvmmrk2

Resources from the Sydney Writers' Festival

The Sydney Writers' Festival, held in May each year, is one of the most important milestones on Sydney's cultural calendar. It includes more than 300 events presented by an impressive variety of well-known authors, academics, journalists and people of interest.

Whether or not you are able to attend, preparing for this event will help your school make the most of the resources of literature, stories and ideas that will result from the festival.

School Days for young adults include topics such as expressive poetry, creativity and building imagination into stories. Presenting authors include Sarah Crossan, Will Kostakis and Yassmin Abdel-Magied.

Primary School Days will focus on characters, creativity and resilience with authors such as Lauren Child, Jack Heath and Matt Stanton.

There are also 45 minute Student Sessions looking at everything from climate change to Shakespeare.

After the event, videos will be available on the festival's YouTube channel [selected sessions from the past four festivals can be viewed now].

YouTube Channel: tinyurl.com/luwwran

Audio podcasts are also available via iTunes and may be used as teaching resources. There are 100 podcasts from previous festivals and events accessible now with more to be added.

Podcasts: tinyurl.com/k32vns4

With over 90,000 attendees each year the Sydney Writers' Festival provides a rich supply of literary inspiration. Just some of the resources from past festivals include:

Stan Grant: Talking to My Country

YouTube: tinyurl.com/k8drudw

Stan Grant gives his perspective on Australian culture and reconciliation.

Give Me Back My Pre-Internet Brain

YouTube: tinyurl.com/l9lrkmn

This discussion gives a refreshing look at the constant distraction of connectivity and its positive and negative effects on our lives.

David Dyer: Titanic and the Suffragettes

Podcast: tinyurl.com/lz6qoyf

This podcast by an English teacher and writer gives a well-researched perspective on the era of the titanic and the culture of the time.

Sydney Writers' Festival

www.swf.org.au

The World's Most Prestigious Awards

Every two years, the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) nominates an Australian author and an Australian illustrator as candidates for the Hans Christian Anderson Award.

Considered the most prestigious international award in children's literature, it recognises lifelong achievement and is only given to those 'whose complete works have made an important, lasting contribution'. Nominees from 75 countries will be judged by a panel of children's literature specialists.

The 2018 nominees for Australia are author David Metzenthen and illustrator Jeannie Baker.

Metzenthen is the author of more than 25 books, and was an advertising copywriter and a builder's labourer before becoming an author. He has won a slew of awards during his career, including the 2015 Prime Minister's Literary Award for his ANZAC inspired picture book, *One Minute's Silence*.

Jeannie Baker is an artist, author and film maker. Her most recent book, *Circle*, looks at the incredible migration patterns of the Godwit and has just won the Children's category of the 2017 Indie Awards.

The winners of the Hans Christian Anderson Award will be announced at the 2018 Bologna Children's Book Fair.

IBBY: tinyurl.com/kc72c9h

Source: tinyurl.com/ledtg7b

Redesigning Libraries

Library design is high on the priority list of teacher librarians. Library budgets for projects of this kind range from what basically amounts to petty cash through to sizeable sums. Irrespective of the budget for your project, here are some examples of library makeovers to inspire you with new ideas.

Library Shoestring Makeover: tinyurl.com/jxzvpxz

Teacher librarian Ian McLean carried out his library renovation gradually on a shoestring, installing professional signs, creating clean clear spaces, motivating students with inspirational words and more visual book cover displays.

Making Your Library Epic: tinyurl.com/hjwbu6s

Diana's library had problems such as a difficult to manage space, clutter and fire hazards during special events. After a mammoth transformation she describes it as changing from a dark cave to a vibrant maker hub.

Ideas and Inspiration: skerricks.blogspot.com.au

Secondary teacher librarian Ruth Buchanan in her Skerricks blog, shows some very attractive library design creations as part of her project of re-imagining her school library. She lists practical ideas and outlines the changes that produced great results.

Ideas Take Flight: tinyurl.com/jelpbrq

On discovering that Jose Saracho, a parent at the school, had studied fine art in Barcelona, the P&C from Sorrento Primary in WA invited him to paint a mural in the exterior wall of the library.

The school symbol of seagulls is depicted in a sky full of clouds. The flying seagulls represent books leaving the shelves. The artist wanted to show the power of reading to generate imagination and ideas across a limitless sky. The library mural complements improvements made across the rest of the school.

Kevin Hennah – Library/Retail Consultant & Trainer

www.kevinhennah.com.au

Many of us have been inspired by the presentations of Kevin Hennah who challenges us to refurbish and reinvigorate our libraries. Hennah emphasises that good library design includes visual merchandising principles, uniformity of signage and ease of traffic flow.

Collaborative discussions about intended design changes should involve school leaders and library staff, and will develop a greater sense of ownership. Design requirements include creating technology rich areas, comfortable reading spots and maker spaces.

It is inspiring to see modifications that enhance the library environment and the resultant improvements in students' learning experiences.

Antiquarian Books

The 2017 Stockholm Antiquarian Book Fair was held recently in Stockholm's Royal Academy of Arts.

Organised by the Swedish Antiquarian Booksellers Association, it was an opportunity for some of Sweden's finest bookbinders and publishers to display their unique products. Priceless rare books and antiquarian printed works were exhibited by 25 booksellers from Sweden, Finland and the UK.

Antiquarian Books Database

www.antikvariat.net

Specialist collectors now have access to an online database where they may browse almost two million antiquarian and second hand books. It is connected to ninety one booksellers from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland.

The Bernadotte Library

tinyurl.com/hzhc2lx

Scandinavians have a deep respect for education. Libraries, books and publishers are greatly honoured. The royal printing press was erected in Stockholm in 1526. During the 1700s, publishers and printers traded in scholarly books in Latin with their European colleagues at book fairs. As a result, the Bernadotte Library contains many priceless treasures.

Outstanding in historic design, this beautiful library is housed in the Royal Palace in Stockholm. It contains the royal book collection of over 100,000 books belonging to Swedish kings and queens throughout the ages.

Source: tinyurl.com/jntn5nt



Millie Loves Ants

Author: Jackie French
ISBN: 978-1460751787
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

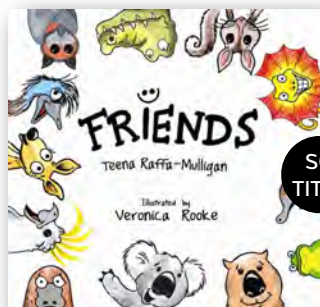
From the award-winning talented duo who created THE HAIRY-NOSED WOMBATS FIND A NEW HOME. Ages 4+'My friend Millie just loves ants.' Emily is intrigued to know why Millie the echidna loves ants so much. And so Emily carefully observes Millie until she discovers her secret. Millie is collecting food for her baby puggle! Created by talented duo Jackie French and Sue deGennaro, this delightful book explores the fascinating behaviour of these mammals.

» OUR REVIEW

Millie the echidna is on the prowl for ants, ants and even more ants. Her search takes her everywhere, both inside the house and out. This enables the depiction of ants carrying all manner of items from their corresponding locations and, in turn, expands vocabulary in a way that may lead to further questions.

Another wonderful offering from the marvellous Jackie French. Beautiful and a likely CBCA Award contender in 2018.

Recommended age: 4 years +



Friends

Author: Teena Raffa-Mulligan
ISBN: 978-0995410411
Published: 2/3/17
Publisher: Other

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

What makes a friend special? Join Koala and an endearing menagerie of Australian creatures to celebrate the many ways in which friends brighten our days. Playing the clown to turn frowns into smiles ... caring and sharing ... sticking around in sunshine and storms. Life wouldn't be the same without Friends.

Rhyme, rhythm and lively, fun-filled illustrations are a delightful mix in this warm-hearted celebration of friendship.

» OUR REVIEW

A fun look at friends and the important role they play in our lives. Each double page spread highlights one aspect of friendship, which is denoted within a simple rhyming sentence.

The accompanying illustration depicts Koala, with one of his many Aussie bush friends, in a humorous rendition which reinforces it nicely. Big and bold font and large pictures creates an easy to follow picture book for early readers.

Recommended age: 2 to 5 years



Nothing Can Frighten a Bear

Author: Elizabeth Dale
ISBN: 978-0857636478
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Nosy Crow

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

A humorous, heart-warming tale for any little bears who think they might have heard a monster... Daddy Bear insists he's the scariest creature in the forest - didn't you know that nothing can frighten a bear? - but when there's a noise in the night, Baby Bear isn't convinced. The bears set out to make sure there aren't any monsters but, as they vanish one by one, it looks like Daddy Bear might not be so brave after all!

This is a story full of comic surprises and gentle reassurance. After all, the things that go bump in the night are never as scary as you might think.

» OUR REVIEW

This very enjoyable picture book offers humorous, rhyming verse and wonderful, fun filled illustrations. There's good use of repetition and a wide range of vocabulary.

The story follows a family of bears who go looking for monster in the night, following Baby Bear being woken by a strange noise. Gradually they get separated and Baby and Daddy Bear are left wondering what happened to the others. A great read aloud book.

Recommended age: 3 to 6 years



Say Yes

Author: Jennifer Castles
ISBN: 978-1760294670
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Once there were two little girls who were best friends. They did everything together. As they got older they weren't allowed to do the same things anymore. Because they looked different. Because of the law ...

This is a story about the landmark 1967 Referendum, the two women who came together to change the law ... and how the Australian people said YES.

» OUR REVIEW

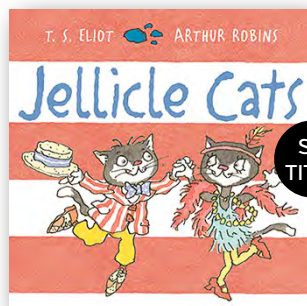
A simply told, powerful account of the 1967 vote to recognise Aboriginal Australians in the constitution. Simple arguments are often the most persuasive and when you have two friends, one white Australian and the other (Mandy) Aboriginal, yet the latter is refused entry to the swimming pool or cinema and even has to go to a different school, it's hard to understand the injustice.

The first part of the book focuses on the girls' friendship and all the things Mandy can't do because 'it's the law'.

The second half of the book begins with the realisation 'the law is not fair'. It showcases two women (one white, one indigenous) who got actively involved in the campaign to overturn these unjust and unfair laws.

This section includes photos and newspaper clippings from the time. A final appendix gives more detailed information. A fascinating account for young readers, who may find the concept of life as it was back then quite perplexing, given our very multicultural society.

Recommended age: 7 to 12 years



Jellicle Cats

Author: T.S. Eliot
ISBN: 978-0571333417
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Faber

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Jellicle Cats come one and all. Jellicles come to the Jellicle Ball...
 Join the Jellicle Cats under the Jellicle Moon in the fourth picture-book pairing from Arthur Robins and T. S. Eliot's Old Possum's cats, as they dance the night away.

» OUR REVIEW

This book is the latest rendition of a T.S. Eliot poem transformed into a wonderfully enjoyable picture book by Arthur Robins.

The words are a delight, and a little nonsensical, and the illustrations full of fun and frivolity. The poem speaks of the habits and characteristics of Jellicle cats and their particular penchant for dancing at the monthly full moon Jellicle Ball.

For those who wonder what a Jellicle cat is, it's believed to be what Eliot heard his young niece calling when looking for her 'jolly little cat'!

Recommended age: 3 to 6 years



Lulu

Author: Georgie Donaghey
ISBN: 978-1925563078
Published: 1/3/17
Publisher: Wombat Books

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Lulu's life was quite cosy and nice, with mountain of fish and even more ice. But something was missing, something wasn't quite right. She dreamed of the stage, she yearned for the lights. Join Lulu on her adventure and see what she discovers.

» OUR REVIEW

Lulu is a polar bear who dreams to perform on the stage. The animals tease Lulu and tell her she shouldn't dream such wild fantasies.

Rather than listening to them, Lulu chooses to go across the ocean to try and become a star. She conquers the stage, dancing and singing to sold-out performances. However, she finds fame to be a lonely affair and returns home to sing and dance for her friends and family instead.

Beautiful illustrations along with the simple rhyming language, create a positive and fun read for young children.

Recommended age: 2 to 5 years



We're All Wonders

Author: R J Palacio
ISBN: 978-0141386416
Published: 4/3/17
Publisher: Penguin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Wonder is the unforgettable story of August Pullman, an ordinary boy with an extraordinary face. With over 5 million copies sold, *Wonder* is a true modern classic, a life-changing read, and has inspired kindness and acceptance in countless readers. Now younger readers can discover the *Wonder* message with this gorgeous picture book, starring Auggie and his dog Daisy on an original adventure, written and illustrated by R.J. Palacio.

With spare, powerful text and richly-imagined illustrations, *We're All Wonders* shows readers what it's like to live in Auggie's world - a world in which he feels like any other kid, but he's not always seen that way.

We're All Wonders taps into every child's longing to belong, and to be seen for who they truly are. It's the perfect way for families and teachers to talk about empathy, difference and kindness with young children.

» OUR REVIEW

Following in the footsteps of the critically acclaimed and multi award winning novel, this picture book version bring the story of *Wonder* to a whole new audience.

It skillfully raises the topics of discrimination, differences and empathy within a framework which

young children can understand. The story depicts how Auggie views himself just like any other kid, but is also aware of the differences between them. Really, he just wants to be accepted for who he is, not how people view him. Beautifully executed both in words and illustrations. Definitely recommended.

Favourite quote: *I know I can't change the way I look. But maybe, people can change the way they see.*

Recommended age: 4 years +



Many Moons

Author: Remi Courgeon
ISBN: 978-1633222984
Published: 22/2/17
Publisher: Quarto UK

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Explore the different phases of the moon, from the new moon to a waning crescent, through beautiful, bright illustrations. Each spread features a specific phase of the moon, and compares it to different shapes, such as a cat's tail, a banana, and a brilliant smile. *Many Moons* introduces young children to basic astronomy, and is sure to instill a sense of curiosity about the world and the universe.

» OUR REVIEW

A wonderful and imaginative depiction of the phases of the moon. Each phase is shown with a humorous sketch evoking what it reminds us of. So, for Gerald the Monkey, the 'waxing crescent' makes him think of bananas!

Printed on black card, the moon is shown in bright yellow and accompanying text in white. A fun and useful way to remember the waxing and waning moon phases.

Recommended age: 4 years +



The Naughty Naughty Baddies

Author: Mark Sperring
ISBN: 978-1408849736
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Once there were four Naughty, Naughty Baddies. And each one was as naughty as the next. They liked nothing more than being diabolically dreadful. But best of all, they loved creeping ...

When Four suggests a cunning plan to STEAL all the spots off the Queen's Little Doggy Woof-Woof, they all grin fiendishly and chuckle evilly as they creep, creep, creep ...WHAT will the Queen do when she sees her spotless Little Doggy Woof-Woof? WHERE is the King sitting as they creep, creep past? [Clue- a throne of sorts]. WILL the Naughty, Naughty Baddies get away with it?

A very funny, deliciously naughty story that will have children and adults alike laughing with glee.

» OUR REVIEW

The Naughty Naughty Baddies get up to all sorts of relatively harmless fun in this humorous picture book. At their best when allowed to creep about, they

infiltrate the Palace to steal the spots off Her Majesty's dog. Their undoing comes when they have to run away, they're not as good at running as they are creeping! Dastardly fun and sure to appeal.

Recommended age: 4 years +



I Don't Want Curly Hair!

Author: Laura Ellen Anderson

ISBN: 978-1408868409

Published: 22/2/17

Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

NO! I do not want this BIG CURLY HAIR! It's messy and silly and just plain unfair. All Curly Haired Girl has ever wanted is straight and luscious locks, but when she meets a little girl with the smoothest silkiest hair, who says all she's ever wanted is spirally squiggly hair - they are BOTH confused!

A hilarious tale about loving the thing we have. And hair, lots and lots of hair.

» OUR REVIEW

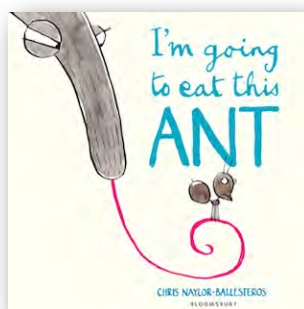
A young girl is increasingly frustrated by her very curly hair. She can't control it or get it to conform to any sort of order and as a result is forever wishing for lovely, easy to manage straight hair. On the other hand, another girl has very straight hair and she complains how boring it is and that it just won't curl.

When the two meet, they realise how silly they've been and start to

love their hair and the unique things they can do with it.

A fabulous picture book celebrating individuality and accepting how we look. Told via a witty, rhyming text, chock full of great word usage and useful vocabulary. The illustrations are a delight and bound to raise a laugh. Will make a great read aloud book too.

Recommended age: 4 years +



I'm Going to Eat This Ant

Author: Naylor-Ballesteros

ISBN: 978-1408869901

Published: 22/2/17

Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

There are so many scrumptious ways to eat this ant. Seared like steak or squished in a sausage, sundried, salted or sliced. But watch out, anteater! While you're salivating, this sneaky ant has got an escape plan up its sleeve.

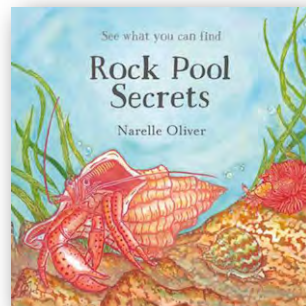
Take one starving anteater, one slippery ant and you have the super ingredients for a hilarious, stylish story. Perfect for fans of Jon Klassen, Chris Haughton and Steve Antony - minimalist illustrations with tons of humour.

» OUR REVIEW

Anteater is bored with just Hoovering up ants to eat. He needs some variety. On spying a particularly appealing ant, he starts dreaming about all the different ways it could be prepared. With so many culinary options he finds it hard to

decide, which gives the ant plenty of time to turn the tables on his would-be-nemesis. This quirky and enjoyable tale puts a different spin on cooking methods and preparations, and reinforces various culinary phrases.

Recommended age: 4 years+



Rock Pool Secrets

Author: Narelle Oliver

ISBN: 978-1922179357

Published: 1/4/17

Publisher: Walker Books

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

At first glance there's nothing much to see. But the rock pools are full of secrets. Nestling between rocks ... Hiding in the seaweed ... What creatures will you find?

» OUR REVIEW

Tidal rock pools harbour an array of fascinating sea life, especially adapted to their changing environment. In this interesting picture book we discover some of the more common inhabitants and learn about their specific survival techniques. Special fold out sections reveal more information about each creature and their *modus operandi*. With large and colourful life-like illustrations and a wealth of knowledge to glean, this book is well researched and expertly rendered.

Recommended age: 4 to 9 years



The Sheepover

Author: John Churchman and Jennifer Churchman
ISBN: 978-0316273565
Published: 26/4/16
Publisher: Hachette

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

One cold winter night, Sweet Pea the orphan lamb becomes very sick. Everyone in the farmyard is worried about her! Under the watchful care of Farmer John, Laddie the sheepdog, and Dr. Alison the mobile veterinarian, she slowly recovers.

Dr. Alison tells Sweet Pea she can have a sleepover to celebrate as soon as she is well again. When the day finally comes, her closest friends Sunny, Prem, and Violet join her in the greenhouse for a fun and imaginative celebration. This charming story of caring and friendship by farm owners John and Jennifer Churchman, brought to life with John's entrancing photo-illustrations, will enchant readers young and old.

» OUR REVIEW

A charming tale about a sheep who is unwell and her farmyard friends. Based on real events from the author's farm, the story will captivate the listener as it's read aloud. Featuring a host of farm and woodland creatures who are also the stars of the photographic illustrations. The text is a simple story about Sweet Pea's illness, her friend's concern and a get well celebration.

Recommended age: 3 to 6 years



The Night Gardener

Author: Terry Fan and Eric Fan
ISBN: 978-1847809391
Published: 25/01/2017
Publisher: Quarto Group UK

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

One day, William discovers that the tree outside his window has been sculpted into a wise owl. In the following days, more topiaries appear, each one more beautiful than the last. Soon, William's grey little town is full of colour and life. And though the mysterious night gardener disappears as suddenly as he appeared, William and his town are changed forever. With breathtaking illustrations and spare, sweet text, this masterpiece about enjoying the beauty of nature is sure to become an instant classic...

» OUR REVIEW

There's a wonderful feel to this enchanting picture book. Such is the quality of the writing and illustrations, one is immediately captivated and left in spellbound wonder.

The story follows 'The Night Gardener' as he produces topiary creations through a small town. A young, orphaned boy is especially enamored of his work, as it brightens his humdrum existence. This is mirrored throughout the town, as people are brought together by the topiary and there's a huge influx of tourists, keen to see the amazing sculptures. The illustrations also change going from a gloomy grey

hue initially into full vibrant colour, reflecting the people's mood. The boy eventually spies The Gardener and helps him on his last masterpiece, after which he vanishes.

A wonderful, wonderful picture book which can't be recommended highly enough.

Recommended age: 4 to 8 years



Busting!

Author: Aaron Blabey
ISBN: 978-1743812389
Published: 1/3/17
Publisher: Scholastic

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Lou is BUSTING for the loo. But the loo has quite a queue. So what on earth is Lou to do?

» OUR REVIEW

You've gotta love Aaron Blabey! Who else could produce such a humorous picture book on such a base topic? Lou is absolutely busting for the loo, but there's a big queue and they won't let him jump ahead. Instead he has to find somewhere else, but that's not easy. Finally he spots a toilet and is able to finally relieve himself.

As always, the rhyming and illustrations are a delight. The text builds and builds as Lou gets more and more desperate which is also clear by his increasingly contorted expressions.

Sure to bring delight, particularly when read aloud. The punchline is classic Blabey!

Recommended age: 3 years +



Clementine Rose and the Wedding Wobbles

Author: Jacqueline Harvey

ISBN: 978-0857987907

Published: 3/4/17

Publisher: Random House

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Clementine Rose is fizzing with excitement. Her mother's marriage to Drew is just around the corner and she can't wait to be a flower girl!

Preparations for the special occasion are well underway at Penberthy House and it seems that even grumpy Aunt Violet has caught the wedding fever. But with the appearance of Sebastian Smote, wedding planner extraordinaire, Aunt Violet's festive spirit soon turns a bit feisty. Add to that an unexpected letter and a very curious house guest, and plans begin to unravel. Could the big day turn into a big disaster?

Clementine will need to be on her toes as love creates chaos every step of the way.

» OUR REVIEW

The delightful Clementine once again beguiles all the adults in her life, including a mysterious stranger from overseas. With the imminent wedding of her Mum and Drew, plus the screening of a documentary featuring Penberthy House, it's all hands on deck.

Aunt Violet's acting especially strange too, ever since a letter from Sweden arrived. There's

obviously some family secrets to unearth and Clemmie, in her innocent and no nonsense way, is quick to cut to the chase and see through all the subterfuge.

Another lovely tale revolving around Clementine Rose and the Penberthy household. Wedding planning mayhem is everywhere and the mysterious stranger's presence leads to Clementine's true identity being revealed which helps explain Aunt Violet's behaviour. Quite humorous and an enjoyable read.

Major themes: family, friendship, village life, wedding planning, documentary, ancestry

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 5 years +

Suitable class novel: NO

Good read rating: ★★★★★

Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Captain Jimmy Cook Discovers X Marks the Spot

Author: Jol Temple & Kate Temple

ISBN: 978-1760291945

Published: 29/3/17

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Captain Jimmy Cook has made a Top Secret Important Discovery. Even more important than any discovery that the other Captain Cook from the olden days ever made. A real dinosaur footprint! And everyone knows that

underneath a real dinosaur footprint will be a real dinosaur bone.

Jimmy has to keep the amazing discovery a big secret because he found it behind a toilet block [that's totally out-of-bounds]. That's not going to stop Jimmy and his crew! Once he digs up the dinosaur bone, he's going to be the most famous Captain James Cook in history and not even Ms Fennel will be mad with him. But even the greatest explorers have problems.

Jimmy's are these: 1) Everyone in the school now wants to help in The Dig, so it's just a matter of time before Ms Fennel puts a stop to the greatest discovery of all time and 2) a large smelly cat is sitting in his hole.

But luck is on his side. Jimmy's found a map of the school with a large X on it. And everyone knows what that means -- Treasure! Treasure! Captain Jimmy Cook is about to make the discovery of a lifetime.

» OUR REVIEW

A wonderfully zany and at times, down right funny read. Young Jimmy Cook's antics will have readers laughing out loud and rooting for his myriad schemes to succeed. There's a naive charm about him and a belief in the greater good. Consequently, his own actions may be short sighted, but they're usually part of a bigger picture. It's so easy to imagine this little third grader doing, thinking and saying all these things.

The story has, as its central theme, Jimmy's belief that there is treasure buried behind the toilet block. The side themes involve creating a robot for class and a litter clean up project. It's Jimmy's dogged pursuit of treasure which leads to the books funniest moment, when he literally hits pay dirt or something similar but very, very smelly.

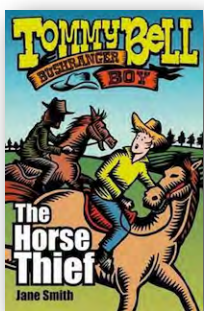
The first book in this series, *Captain Jimmy Discovers Third Grade*, is in the CBCA Awards for Younger Readers short list for 2017.

Major themes: school, treasure hunt, robot building, litter picking, dinosaurs, friends

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 6 to 10 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Horse Thief: Tommy Bell Bushranger Boy 2

Author: Jane Smith
ISBN: 978-1925520064
Published: 20/9/16
Publisher: Big Sky Publishing

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Tommy Bell is happy when the popular new kid at school wants him to join his gang. His new friend is trouble but he's not half as much trouble as the bushranger that Tommy meets when his magic hat takes him back to the gold rush days. Tommy finds himself in the middle of a horse robbery, a police chase and a prison escape!

» OUR REVIEW

Tommy and his magic hat continue their adventures in Colonial Australia whilst on a holiday in Victoria. At the Grampians, Tommy is whisked back to meet Frank Gardiner and is caught up in

deception, horse theft and even a prison break.

Tommy is learning that not all bushrangers were nice men and some were definitely not to be trusted. This is mirrored at school, when a new kid quickly becomes very popular. Tommy is initially keen to join his 'gang', but after his recent adventures is able to see right through him.

Another good read in this enjoyable series. With a blend of history, adventure and an expose of people's attitudes and character, it's got a lot going for it. The events that Tommy experiences with the bushrangers are historically accurate which adds authenticity.

Book 1 [*Shoot-out at the Rock*] is a Notable book in the Younger Readers category of the CBCA Awards [2017].

Major themes: school, history, vacation, bushrangers, Grampians, Colonial Australia, horse riding, deceit, theft, discernment

Please be aware: No concerns.



Recommended age: 7 to 10 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Mammoth Mistake, Starring Olive Black

Author: Alex Miles
ISBN: 978-1925475548
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Affirm Press

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Life can be hard when your name sounds like a pizza topping, but Olive Black is managing just fine. Like most Aussie kids she's balancing school, friends and family. Unlike most Aussie kids, Olive is a mega movie star.

Olive's latest movie has her character bringing a woolly mammoth back from time. But when Olive takes a chance to one-up her nemesis instead of being there for her BFF, she makes a real-life mammoth mistake of her own. Will she be able to make things right?

» OUR REVIEW

Ten-year-old Olive Black enjoys the celebrity life many little girls dream of: she's made it big in the world of movies and is a national star. But Olive's family have kept her feet firmly on the ground and she is also still just an ordinary schoolgirl, dealing with the best friend issues familiar to schoolgirls the world over.

Olive makes her real life Mammoth Mistake when she prioritises a TV interview and the chance to outdo her rival, Sofia La Boosh, over keeping a promise to support her best friend Rani. Poor Rani feels terribly let down by Olive and wonders if her friend really cares for anything other than herself and her acting career.

When Olive realises her mistake she employs all her acting skills to negotiate her way through an apology and is shocked when this doesn't work. Eventually, Olive realises that rehearsing lines isn't the answer and only when she bares her soul to Rani is her apology accepted. Olive learns that true friendship has to be real and that it is a priceless gift.

Mammoth Mistake is easy to read and deals with very relatable issues for young girls– friendships and their dramas, dreaming of bigger things and lots of dressing up!

Major themes: friends, dreams, ambition, saying sorry, forgiveness, family, love

Please be aware: 'O.M.G.' appears once on p42. No other issues.



Recommended age: 8 to 10 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★



Henrietta, the Greatest Go-Getter

Author: Martine Murray
ISBN: 978-1760112417
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Hello everybody, it's me, Henrietta P. Hoppenbeek the First [future Queen of the Wide Wide Long Cool Coast of the Lost Socks]. I have a baby brother, two white mice, a chocolate-coloured dog, a woolly mammoth, and two long green socks with toes. My best friend is Olive Higgie and we've got an EMERGENCY DILEMMA to attend to. We absolutely have to find a home for the Rietta because it's lost and sad and its spots are fading.

With an imagination like Henrietta's, adventures are closer than her front doorstep. Three books together in one! Henrietta there's no one better, Henrietta the great go-getter and Henrietta gets a letter.

» OUR REVIEW

This is a collection of three stories about Henrietta P. Hoppenbeek the first. Henrietta is a little girl with an incredible imagination and sense of fun who spins, dances and giggles her way through a life of explorification and secret plan hatching.

Henrietta's best friend Olive Higgie, or O.H. in code, helps Henrietta on imaginary expeditions to the Wide Wide Long Cool Coast of the Lost Socks – a domain over which Henrietta intends to be Queen. They meet and rescue an imaginary creature – a Rietta – who is in danger of fading away to nothing through loneliness, and help a fairy, Mabel, to learn to be herself instead of being someone she's not in order to impress a handsome elf.

The layout reflects the craziness of the content with text and illustrations scattered almost randomly throughout the book: Every page is different. The zaniness of Henrietta's imaginary wanderings are at times so bizarre that they are reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's nonsense fantasy. This does mean that it can be hard to follow and would be difficult to explain to younger children, especially as there is no real plot. Most of the imaginary adventures are such pure nonsense that they are harmless but in Henrietta's real world an accident breaks a hole in the cage of her hamsters, Flora and Dora. Flora escapes, never to be seen again, and Dora dies of loneliness. This sad event is a surprising break from the fantasy world, though it does link with the Rietta's loneliness.

Overall, Henrietta is a nonsensical fantasy ramble with some reflective moments.

Major themes: imagination, friendship, being true to yourself, loneliness, loss of pets

Please be aware: Dad comes home from work late on his birthday and 'he smelt like a

pub' [p.50]. Mum says 'Oh my Lord' [p.58]. Throughout the text Henrietta repeatedly says 'Oh my Lordy Lordy'.



Recommended age: 7 to 10 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★



Wombat Warriors

Author: Samantha Wheeler
ISBN: 978-0702259586
Published: 3/4/17
Publisher: UQP

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Mouse is not prepared for her last-minute stay at Aunt Evie's. How will she cope at a new school without her parents around? But before Mouse has even unpacked her suitcase, she makes a new friend – a wombat called Miss Pearl! Suddenly, being in a strange cottage doesn't seem so bad, especially when she can snuggle up with a wombat. Mouse soon learns that not everyone in the area loves wombats, including Aunt Evie's landlord, a sheep farmer who destroys them on sight. Can Mouse find her voice in time to keep her furry friends safe?

» OUR REVIEW

When Mouse's parents must take an unexpected trip to the UK following the death of her grandmother, she reluctantly goes to stay in the country with Aunt Evie.

Mouse is painfully shy, and adjusting to an aunt she hasn't seen for years is bad enough, let

alone having to attend school with a bunch of strangers. It's only when she meets Aunt Evie's secret friend, Miss Pearl (a wombat), that things start looking up. It isn't long before she is completely in love with wombats and a school project causes her to learn even more about them. When she discovers that the local farmers hate wombats, consider them destructive and won't hesitate to kill them (in South Australia they can apply for a free license to do so even though they are native animals), Mouse realises she must discover—and use—her voice if she is to bring about change.

It will take a plan, as well as recruiting other people and raising funds to really make a difference, but when you are passionate and determined, the Wombat Warriors just might be the result! A gentle, enjoyable story that also educates the reader about our amazing native wombats.

Major themes: family, shyness, wombats, friends, fundraising, advocating, teamwork, courage, life in the country

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 7 to 11 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Ghost Light: Alice Jones # 2

Author: Sarah Rubin
ISBN: 978-1910002872
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Chicken House

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

An old refurbished theatre, the Beryl, is re-opening. Days before opening night, the ghost light left on at night to appease the ghosts of actors is extinguished. Alice digs into the Beryl's past, sleuthing in a network of dark backstage corridors and cobwebby storage rooms. Gradually, she starts to uncover the hundred-year-old secret of the theatre: a stolen diamond. Is the Beryl haunted by a ghost or a living thief?

» OUR REVIEW

Alice Jones doesn't believe in ghosts, so when her thespian sister Della tells her the Beryl Theatre is haunted, she is determined to uncover the real culprit.

With the historic theatre under risk from a local developer, the pressure to raise the funds to keep her in community hands is increasing. It is imperative that *The Curse of the Casterfields*, a show that hasn't been played since 1927, is a success.

Then Alice gets whiff of the story of the Midnight Star, a fabulous diamond necklace that was stolen the last time *The Curse of the Casterfields* was played in the theatre. On that same night the lead actress was killed in a tragic

backstage fire. The necklace was never found.

Can Alice navigate the strange world of the theatre and save the Beryl before it is too late?

A fun read similar in style to Nancy Drew and other detective classics.

Favourite quote: *She gave me a smile so toothy, sharks would be jealous.*

Major themes: theatre, mystery, superstition, stolen jewellery, unscrupulous developers, graffiti, costume design, family, sibling relationships, friendship

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 8 to 12 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Pirate King: Spacejackers

Author: Huw Powell
ISBN: 978-1408847664
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

The galaxy is at war and Jake Cutler is at the heart of it. With his friends and allies captured, it's up to teenage space pirate Jake to go into battle and take down the corrupt Interstellar Government once and for all. But in order to win this battle, Jake must find his father and confront secrets from his own past.

Prepare for blast-off with the explosive third book in the Spacejacksers series - perfect for fans of Star Wars, pirates and space adventures of all shapes and sizes.

» OUR REVIEW

Hold on to your helmets because when Jake Cutler sets his mind to do something, you know you're in for an action packed ride.

In this culmination to a highly enjoyable series, Jake must forge an alliance with all the independent planets and declare war on the corrupt interstellar government. With the bare minimum of craft their courage sees them defeat the Interstellar Navy time after time until the ultimate battle above Earth. They are on the brink of victory when an old enemy mysteriously reappears and turns the tide. However, another unexpected twist assures victory and ushers in a new period of peace and democracy.

A wonderful, imaginative read with plenty of action. There's twists and turns and new friendships to forge. The scope of space and related details are expertly handled and believable. An enjoyable introduction to the sci-fi genre.

Major themes: space, corruption in government, abuse of power, freedom fighters, friendship, aliens, colonisation, war, battles, belief in a cause

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 9 to 13 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



May Tang: A New Australian

Author: Katrina Berkoff

ISBN: 978-1742990743

Published: 1/4/17

Publisher: Omnibus

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Born in the Year of the Snake, May Tang is like flowing water when she should have more fire. A dreamer, she will never be sensible and obedient like her elder sister Jie Jie or clever like her brother Peter, studying in Australia. But her parents are worried by rumoured events in China, and May finds herself on her way to a new life in Australia. It is so different that May wonders if she will ever be able to love this new country.

» OUR REVIEW

Following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and popular unrest, many mainland Chinese were offered residency in Australia, particularly students who were already studying here and their families. This is the story of one such family.

Peter, the son, is currently studying in Sydney, but his views put his family in Shanghai at risk. Consequently, his mother and younger sister get permission to emigrate. For 11-year-old May it's a bewildering experience, she doesn't really understand why they must leave, but she's excited by the opportunity.

Leaving all which is familiar behind, it's a real cultural shock arriving in Australia. Initially it's not easy,

especially as she's bullied at school, but eventually May makes friends, her mother gets a job and everything starts to seem normal and routine.

An excellent novel, which helps readers empathise with the emotional upheaval going on inside May. The story is well researched which lends credence and depth to the characters and situations. Highly recommended.

Major themes: Chinese emigration, life in China, Chinese customs and beliefs, politics, danger, new life, Australia, integration, homesickness, bullying, ESL, friendship, Asia

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 9 to 13 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Just Call Me Spaghetti-Hoop Boy

Author: Lara Williamson

ISBN: 978-1474921305

Published: 1/3/17

Publisher: Other

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

My name is Adam Butters. I live on planet Earth, I like eating spaghetti hoops and I've decided I'm going to be a SUPERHERO. Everyone loves superheroes, they solve problems and make people happy, and that's good because my mum needs cheering up. Also, I've found

out that before I was adopted my real mum called me ACE. So now I've just got to prove to the world that's what I am. One mission at a time ...

Hilarious, heart-warming and heart-breaking in equal measure, this is a story about the power in all of us to be extraordinary.

» OUR REVIEW

When 11-year-old Adam realises his parents have a secret, he adds 2 and 2 and comes up with 5.

When he overhears something that causes him to believe his adoptive mother is pregnant, he thinks that [given the lack of room in their small apartment], they must be going to move him on. Adam is afraid of not having a home and a family. He's afraid because he was abandoned before and he's afraid he will never find the missing part of him.

The only solution he can come up with is to find his birth mother, especially as his class are doing an assignment on family trees.

While he does eventually track her down, the reunion definitely doesn't go to plan and Adam is gutted. Even his birth name [ACE] doesn't mean what he thought. It's not a superhero name, it stands for Alec's Cavern of Everything, the place his mother bought 'spaghetti hoops' [her pregnancy craving].

Then he finds out his Grandad Fred was adopted, and his parents' love for Grandad Fred is part of the reason they wanted to adopt Adam – that and the fact his mother fell in love with him the moment she found him, abandoned by the local pool.

When the truth comes out, he discovers it wasn't a baby his parents were expecting – he misread the whispers. There is no way they would ever get rid of him. And with best friend Eric's family recently split apart, Adam learns that family doesn't always look like you think it should. It might even

look different to how others think it should, but family is the place where love lives, no matter who your parents are, or where they might live.

An enjoyable, heart warming story about love, belonging and the importance of family.

Favourite Quote: *Each tree represents a family. Each tree is a guiding light in the world. They all shine in their own way. And although the trees are separate they are connected by light and love and humanity. And perhaps sometimes it can feel like the trunk of a tree has split, but the tree will still flourish in the end. It can take a while for the damage to fade, but with love and water, green shoots will come again.* [p156].

Major themes: family, adoption, sibling relationships, belonging, superheroes, broken families, moving away, health concerns

Please be aware: OMG p11, 34, 68 [15-year-old Minnie]. No other concerns.



Recommended age: 8 to 12 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



How to Outsmart a Billion Robot Bees

Author: Paul Tobin
ISBN: 978-1408881804
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

It's Friday the 13th again, and for sixth grade genius Nate Bannister, that means doing three more not-so-smart things to keep life interesting. But he has bigger problems than his own experiments. His nemesis, the Red Death Tea Society, is threatening to unleash a swarm of angry bees on the city of Polt if Nate doesn't join their ranks. But then a new group of people with murky intentions shows up -- the League of Ostracized Fellows -- and they want Nate as their own, too. To top it all off, he's convinced there's a spy in his very own school.

Nate must once again team up with his new, resourceful, friend Delphine to save the day. They'll need the help of Nate's crazy gadgets, such as his talking car Betsy and super-powered pets Bosper the Scottish terrier and Sir William the gull, if they hope to see another Friday the 13th. Because they might be battling more than just sting-happy bees and villains with a penchant for tea this time around.

» OUR REVIEW

This second book in the fun *Genius Factor* series follows on from *How to Capture an Invisible Cat* in relating the antics of Nate, boy genius, and his sixth class school friend Delphine.

Once again they battle the Red Death Tea Society and its evil leader Maculte. However there's also the League of Ostracised Fellows to deal with, both of whom want Nate in their ranks. Nate has invented an infinite engine, and Maculte will stop at nothing to get it. Hijacking large swarms of bumble bees, he pursues our heroic duo and it will take all Nate's considerable creative abilities and Delphine's red headed obstinance to outsmart him.

A very engaging and humorous read. Both Nathan and Delphine's characters are memorable. Nate is the socially inept but inventive genius and Delphine is a level headed girl who cares for her awkward friend. The ongoing fight scenes are good fun and very tongue-in-cheek. Nobody gets killed but with a billion bees there are plenty getting stung! Nate's inventions add a further comedic dimension.

Major themes: genius, friendship, inventions, pursuit, robot bees, jealousy, protection, belief

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 9 to 13 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Secret Keepers

Author: Stewart Trenton Lee
ISBN: 978-1911077282
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Chicken House

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

When Reuben discovers an old pocket watch, he soon realises it holds an incredible power: it can turn you invisible for fifteen minutes. And the watch's power is even more extraordinary than he knows. Soon, he's on the run from a despot determined to possess it for himself.

» OUR REVIEW

Reuben lives in the poor area of town, known as Lower Downs, with his hard working mother who is doing her best to keep their heads above water and only just succeeding. His father died when Reuben was a baby.

With his mother working two jobs, Reuben spends a lot of time on his own. She would be horrified if she knew he spent it exploring the city and observing the activities of the 'Directions', groups of four men who each keep watch in a different direction. Amongst other things, they collect extortion money from the local shopkeepers and deliver it the Counsellor, who acts on behalf of 'the Smoke' – the ultimate big boss who no-one except the Counsellor has set eyes on.

She'd be even more horrified if she knew that Reuben was basically a human spider, with parkour like skills that allow him to climb almost any building.

During one of his expeditions he finds a beautifully crafted, unusual watch hidden on a high up ledge. It is a watch unlike any other (or so he thinks), especially when he discovers that it has the ability to make the wearer invisible. While the wearer is invisible they are also blind, and its use can only be sustained for a short period of time without exhaustion.

When Reuben follows the only clue he has and travels to the lighthouse at Point William, he discovers a far greater adventure than he could have hoped for. The lighthouse keeper's family have been keeping a secret for generations, and Reuben turns out to be the one they have been waiting for.

His efforts to find out more about the watch bring him to the attention of The Smoke, who has been searching for it for decades. But with the help of his newfound friends, Reuben could just be the one to stop the mysterious crime boss in his tracks and set the city – and the Directions – free.

A really intriguing and well written story with a somewhat complex plot. Given it is 500 or so pages long, it will be a good choice for stretching intermediate and advanced primary aged readers, or for early high school.

Major themes: poverty, corruption, family, parkour, adventure, family secrets, invisibility, friendship, trust, adventure, courage, good versus evil

Please be aware: Reuben lies to protect his mum. Jack 'borrows' (aka steals) a car after he has to abandon his car to stay a step ahead of the bad guys. No other concerns.



Recommended age: 10 to 14 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Castle in the Sea: Quest of the Sunfish 2

Author: Mardi McConnochie
ISBN: 978-1760290924
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Once more, Annalie, Will, Essie and Pod set out on the Sunfish to look for Spinner - their only clue a coded list Spinner left behind, naming four scientists who were once his colleagues on a top-secret project. When a terrible storm separates the crew and

almost wrecks the boat, Will and Essie must use all their courage and ingenuity to try and make their way back to the others.

Meanwhile, Pod and Annalie, travelling in the crippled Sunfish, are captured by pirates, who agree to fix the Sunfish - at a price. Not all of Spinner's former colleagues can be trusted. Worse still, their old nemesis Beckett is still on their trail. Can they follow the clues, track down the scientists, and find Spinner before Beckett does? The second breathtaking adventure in the Quest of the Sunfish series.

» OUR REVIEW

The Sunfish, with its young crew of twins Will and Annalie, Annalie's school friend Essie, rescued slave boy Pod and Graham [the talking parrot] sail into the Moon Islands in search of the twins' dad, Spinner. They are pursued by Mr Beckett, who is part of The Admiralty.

Spinner was a member of a research team who split up, each taking part of the research project with them. There are links to an invention that caused a weather catastrophe known as The Flood. Many countries are now below sea level. Poverty and piracy are widespread.

Their quest is filled with dangers, and while they do eventually make contact with Spinner, they are unable to meet. Their father wants them to go home, but whatever happens they are determined to keep going until they find him ... if only they can stay out of the Admiralties clutches—and the pirates of course!

Another great read in this seafaring series, with more to come.

Major themes: sea adventure, sailing, resourcefulness, friendship, pursuit, rising sea levels, scientific disasters

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 10 to 14 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Blue Cat

Author: Ursula Dubosarsky
ISBN: 978-1760292294
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Sydney, 1942. The war is coming to Australia - not only with the threat of bombardment, but also the arrival of refugees from Europe. Dreamy Columba's world is growing larger. She is drawn to Ellery, the little boy from far away, and, together with her highly practical best friend Hilda, the three children embark on an adventure through the harbour-side streets - a journey of discovery and terror, in pursuit of the mysterious blue cat ..

» OUR REVIEW

It's 1942 and Columba is trying to make sense of the war and its effect on her hometown of Sydney. There's everything from the government's incomprehensible instruction to set the clock forward an hour through to the fall of Paris and more. She may not understand much but she knows that what adults say and what is actually happening often don't match up—amongst other things, they said Paris would never fall.

There's a new boy at school whose quite different to anyone she's ever met. He and his father are Jewish refugees from 'You-rope'. Ellery's presence raises even more questions. Columba learns from his father that the stars in their sky are different, the seasons are around the wrong way and even the time is different. There's also the concept of different religious beliefs to try and understand.

Hearing the story of a little girl, also a Jewish refugee, whose mother stopped writing to her because she had died, Columba writes a letter to Ellery 'from his mother'.

When the stray blue cat who visits the old ladies next door goes missing, Hilda decides they should find it as there might be a reward [she is very determinedly raising funds for the war effort]. Hearing of a possible sighting of the cat at Luna Park, she drags Columba and Ellery into a hair-brained scheme to sneak into the park and find it.

Once there, Ellery is drawn to the rides. Columba catches sight of the blue cat and has a strange vision of Ellery and his family fleeing Germany. She is unable to find him at the park and [after an illness of some days] goes to his flat only to find Ellery and his father have gone. Based on something she heard, Hilda thinks they must have been sent to Holsworthy [although neither of the girls understand what/where Holsworthy is]. Columba later receives a letter from Ellery written to 'his mother' telling her he and his father are safe.

The book finishes with a poem about the dead having just gone on ahead to wait for us on 'that high hill in the sunshine'.

An intriguing story providing insight into life in Sydney during the war, as seen through the eyes of a child trying to cope with the sense of impending doom and the many changes in her world.

Images of a broad range of primary sources are scattered throughout, including advertisements, government security directives, articles and book excerpts.

Major themes: WWII Sydney, refugees, friendship, loss, changing world, growing up, danger, war

Please be aware: 1. Language: bloody x 2 [p48]. 2. Columba's precocious friend Hilda tells her the story of an attempted strangling—the woman escaped by hitting him over the head with her shopping [p41-2]. There are a few mentions of Hitler killing people and other war-related. Hilda's brother becomes a POW [p59-60]. Columba thinks they will all be killed but everyone is just pretending it won't happen [p61].



Recommended age: 10 to 14 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



William Wenton and the Luridium Thief

Author: Bobbie Peers
ISBN: 978-1406371703
Published: 6/4/17
Publisher: Walker Books

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Twelve-year-old code breaking genius William Wenton, is trying to make sense of his family's dramatic escape from their home

in London. But when his extraordinary talent for cracking codes is suddenly revealed, William must face the danger that has been lurking around him for years.

» OUR REVIEW

Since his grandfather disappeared eight years before, William's parents have insisted he never draws attention to himself. William thinks it must be something to do with the accident that left his father paralysed and wheelchair bound. They live incognito at a secret address in Norway, and do their best to live an ordinary life.

For some reason his dad also hates cryptography, which is a bit of an issue when all you can see are codes, and you feel compelled to solve them. It's an even bigger issue when the Impossible Puzzle comes to their town.

When a school excursion takes him to the very exhibit his father most wants him to stay away from, William promises to behave himself. It's a promise he genuinely wants to keep, but when the crowd nominates him, William solves it within moments—a feat many of the brightest minds in the world have been unable to do.

The resulting chain of events sees William back in England at the mysterious Institute for Post-Human Research, an organisation his grandfather co-founded. It turns out they've been looking for William for a long time, and the Impossible Puzzle was their way to find him.

It's at the institute that he first hears of luridium, a type of metal that can think for itself. He's shocked to discover that thanks to his grandfather's intervention after the accident that paralysed his father, he is just 51% human. The other 49% is luridium.

There's an even bigger problem. There's a man called Abraham Tulley whose after the luridium and

he's been looking for a very long time. Can William find his grandfather and escape Tulley's clutches before it is too late?

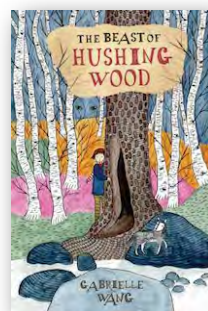
This engaging story has been translated from Norwegian and is filled with technology, science, cyphers and more. At the institute there are robots of every kind imaginable, including info-bots, trash-bots, philoso-bots and argu-bots! A great read that will make a very good movie.

Major themes: cryptography, robots, family secrets, code breaking, holograms, technology, science, carnivorous plants, cryogenics,

Please be aware: There's a brief reference to the bad guy, Abraham Tulley, strangling a group of men to cover up his original discovery of luridium [p110]. No other issues.



Recommended age: 9 to 14 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Beast of Hushing Wood

Author: Gabrielle Wang
ISBN: 978-0143309178
Published: 3/4/17
Publisher: Penguin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Ziggy Truegood lives in a tiny town deep in Hushing Wood, where strange things are happening. The townspeople are fighting, Ziggy feels like something is hunting her,

and her beloved woods have become dark and hostile. When exotic Raffi and his grandfather arrive in town, Ziggy finds herself strangely drawn to them. But are they there to save Ziggy, or are they the hunters? Thought-provoking and engaging, Hushing Wood is a lovely blend of action, fable and magic realism.

» OUR REVIEW

'Knitting is predictable and controllable when everything else is not,' so says Ziggy Truegood, the almost 12-year-old protagonist of this engaging fantasy adventure.

Ziggy lives in Dell Hollow, a sleepy village which lies in the shadow of Hushing Wood. The village folk choose to remain separate from the rest of the world and they are all terrified of Hushing Wood—all except Ziggy that is.

Ziggy's perfect world has become unpredictable now that her Dad, originally an outsider, has decided to move out, taking Ziggy's big brothers with him. But that is the least of Ziggy's worries. She is troubled by graphic dreams which she believes are a premonition that she will drown on her 12th birthday. The dreams include a frightening silver-haired creature with claws.

When a new boy, Raffi arrives in town with his grandfather and gypsy caravan, the locals are afraid of him, not least because he is foreign. Once Ziggy begins to spy on Raffi the story becomes clearly fantasy, with strange animals only Ziggy can see, and odd voices calling through the woods at night. It turns out that an evil force is trying to break the relationships in the town and is responsible for a whole lot of trouble.

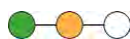
Along the way Raffi teaches Ziggy some important life lessons about how to deal with the mean things people say to you, and Ziggy's grandfather helps her learn to trust her heart. Raffi succinctly

sums up both the story world and life in our own world when he says *'learning to make good and true choices is the whole reason we were given life in the first place'* (p. 104-105).

The language flows with beautiful imagery at times and, despite the somewhat scariness of Ziggy's dreams and the unknown 'beast' in the woods, this turns out to be a heart-warming story of family love and the power that can restore relationships. A very engaging and well-written story with a satisfying end.

Major themes: family, separation, prejudice, old-age, pet love, and the importance of knowing good from evil

Please be aware: The drowning dream sequences are a little graphic: *'I gulp for air, sharp claws tear at my skin'* (p1), and *'then a silver, yellow-eyed beast pulls me down'* (p32) however, these are all explained at the end and are ultimately not so scary.



Recommended age: 10 to 13 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Emerald Secret: Crimson Poison #2

Author: Susan Moore
ISBN: 978-0857638267
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Nosy Crow

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Nat is perched on the prow of the Junko as it glides up the Thames one cold, drizzly night. London is to be her home for the next year, and it looks to be a strange and uninviting place after the bright lights and fast pace of Hong Kong.

Little does Nat know that she and her dragon-robot, Fizz, are at the start of their second adventure, one that will see them become lost in the high-tech world of one of her father's games and seeking out a long-lost Chinese sword.

Secrets that have been kept hidden for decades will be revealed and Nat will learn some startling things about her family, her future, and herself ...

» OUR REVIEW

This second book in the series is better than the first. The characters are bedded down, the technology better understood and the writing is stronger for it. Consequently it flows a lot better and is a more enjoyable read.

Natalie Walker, the sole heiress to a computer gaming fortune, arrives in London to attend her father's old school, which was a condition in his will. Having been raised in Hong Kong, London is an alien world, far from her friends. The new school Boxbury is no less daunting. On her first day she's invited for tea by the mysterious and possibly insane Baroness Shivers, who knew her father. Whilst initially cordial Natalie ends up fleeing the meeting, left with more questions than answers.

Having been asked about an ancient sword, she confides in Jamaka, her guardian. After his return from questioning the Baroness, he is found dead of a heart attack. Natalie is totally devastated. Gleaning clues from his laptop she contacts an old work colleague of her father. He introduces her to a next generation virtual reality game her father designed just for her and on which

he'd been working for years. Within the game she begins to find answers to questions she's not sure she's ready for ...

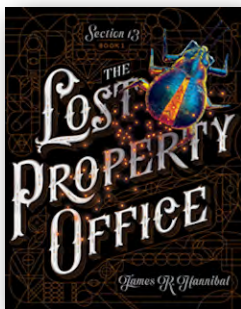
A very enjoyable and engrossing story with an unusual mix of Victorian and futuristic themes. It will be interesting to see where the next book leads.

Major themes: London, new school, heiress, magical words, death, quest, friendship, technology, ancient beliefs

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book..



Recommended age: 9 to 12 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Lost Property Office

Author: James R. Hannibal
ISBN: 978-1481482158
Published: 1/12/16
Publisher: Simon & Shuster

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Thirteen-year-old Jack Buckles is great at finding things. Not just a missing glove or the other sock, but things normal people have long given up on ever seeing again. If only he could find his father, who has disappeared in London without a trace. But Jack's father was not who he claimed to be. It turns out that he was a member of a secret society of detectives that has served the crown for centuries—and

membership into the Lost Property Office is Jack's inheritance.

Now the only way Jack will ever see his father again is if he finds what the nefarious Clockmaker is after: the Ember, which holds a secret that has been kept since the Great Fire of London.

Will Jack be able to find the Ember and save his father, or will his talent for finding things fall short?

» OUR REVIEW

This first book in a new fantasy series opens by introducing the villain, the Clockmaker and his mechanical beetles. Something has been set in place and it involves 13-year-old Jack Buckles.

Jack has a gift for finding things. He'd like to find his father who has gone missing, presumed dead. His mother goes out leaving Jack and his young sister alone. When they go downstairs to eat, 8-year-old Sadie thinks she sees their father and follows him. This begins a very curious journey that leads them to The Lost Property Office which was the first public branch established by the Trackers Ministry.

Here Jack meets Gwen, who is an apprentice clerk around Jack's age. Their contact with the Lost Property Office has been engineered by the Clockmaker who wants an ancient artefact he says was stolen from him by Jack's father. It's called the Ember. He tells Jack to find it and bring it to the Great Clock Tower at midnight if he wants to see his father alive again.

Jack sets out to find both the Ember and his father. On the way he uncovers his family secrets. He discovers that both his parents are Trackers, a forbidden situation. That may be the reason Jack 'sparked' even though he is only 13. 'Sparking' means he can access the memories in stone, gems, glass etc by touching them.

He and Gwen track the story of the Great Fire of London and the part the Ember played in it. It's up to them to save Jack's father and stop the Clockmaker from using the Ember to burn London again. While the plot format sounds familiar, this is a sound magical adventure tale with historical connections. Readers will look forward to the next book in the series.

Major themes: family, teamwork, generational giftings, synesthesia, Great Fire of London, adventure

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 10 to 13 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Darkmouth

Author: Shane Hegarty
ISBN: 978-0007545612
Published: 1/2/17
Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Legends (also known as terrifying, human-eating monsters) have invaded the town of Darkmouth and aim to conquer the world.

But don't panic! The last remaining Legend Hunter - Finn - will protect us. Finn: 12-years-old, loves animals, not a natural fighter, but tries really, really hard, and we all know good intentions are the best weapons against a hungry Minotaur, right? On second thoughts, panic. PANIC NOW!

» OUR REVIEW

This action-packed fantasy is set in Darkmouth, a town which doesn't encourage visitors. Its one claim-to-fame is that it is the last of the Blighted Villages.

Once upon a time creatures which have now been relegated to myth and legend shared the earth with humans but after a war which raged through the world's blighted villages for centuries, they are restricted to the Infested Side. In each Blighted Village there is a family of Legend Hunters trained to despatch any Legends (as these creatures are called) who might find their way through the gateways.

In Darkmouth 12-year-old Finn is about to step into his father Hugo's shoes as the next Legend Hunter. His mum Clara is the local dentist. Finn knows the theory but struggles with the application. He would rather be a vet. Early in the story, Finn encounters a Minotaur. The theory is that Finn will fire his Desiccator at it and the beast will be reduced to a solid hairy sphere of tennis ball dimensions which will then be stored in a bottle in the family library with thousands of others. Unfortunately Finn misses and hits a car. Hugo comes to his rescue.

A new girl Emmie and her father move to town. She is very interested in Finn and asks lots of questions. It is later revealed they are spying on Finn and Hugo. Hugo has been asked to join the Council of Twelve, the Legend Hunters' governing body famed for its complex and slow moving red tape, when Finn completes.

Steve and Emmie have been sent by the Council to check on the situation. Finn isn't used to having friends and finds the persistent friendship offered by Emmie (once the spying thing is sorted) a challenge.

The family has a long-time friend Ernest Glad, aka The Fixer. He grew up with Hugo and Clara and is

Clara's ex-boyfriend. Unfortunately, his envy of the role of Legend Hunter has soured him and he's working with the Legends to attack the world using an army of reanimated Legends from the bottles in the Library.

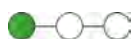
Hugo and Mr Glad have been working on a Reanimator. Finn also seeks more details about a prophecy which seems to involve him as well as information about his grandfather Niall Blacktongue whom no one talks about.

The townspeople are getting fed up with both monsters and Legend Hunters. The climax is reached when Glad distracts the Legend Hunters and their offspring while he captures Clara and prepares to release his army. Finn and Emmie return to the house in time. They all end up on the Infested Side where Finn sees his grandfather Niall. Hugo stays there to rescue him while the others and Finn return to find a map.

The next book in the series is out there somewhere. This is an exciting tale with a rich assortment of characters and a vein of tongue-in-cheek humour running through out.

Major themes: adventure, father-son relationships, inherited roles, friendship, world domination, finding your niche, humour

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 10 to 13 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Double Down: Lois Lane # 2

Author: Gwenda Bond
ISBN: 978-1782023692
Published: 1/6/17
Publisher: Other

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Lois Lane has settled in to her new school. She has friends, for maybe the first time in her life. She has a job that challenges her. And her friendship is growing with SmallvilleGuy, her online maybe-more-than-a-friend. But when her friend Maddy's twin collapses in a part of town she never should've been in, Lois finds herself embroiled in a dangerous mystery that brings her closer to the dirty underbelly of Metropolis.

» OUR REVIEW

Intrepid cub reporter Lois Lane is knee deep in a new mystery in this second book in the series.

Fellow reporter Maddy has a twin sister who needs their help, even if she is unwilling to be seen with them in public in case it impacts on her standing with the 'in crowd'.

Melody reveals that she volunteered to be a part of a scientific study, in exchange for money for concert tickets. Now, some two years down the track, the side effects she'd been warned to look out for are becoming all too real – so real that at times it seems like she is looking through someone else's eyes.

Lois uncovers an illegal cloning lab, but the mystery goes much further. James' father, the former

mayor, has just been released from prison but could it be that he was the innocent victim of a frame up by a local mobster boss?

At the same time, there's unusual things happening in Strange Skies, the virtual reality community where Lois and her online friend SmallvilleGuy hang out. Someone is trying to find out about the rumoured 'flying man' and they aren't afraid to use threats to try and flush him out. If that someone is connected to Lois's father [the General], life could become very interesting indeed!

Another fun read in this mashup of contemporary realism, science fiction and comic book lore.

Major themes: investigative reporting, mystery, science fiction, cloning, scientific ethics, conspiracy, gangsters, friendship, sibling relationships, family

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 11 to 15 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Silent Invasion

Author: James Bradley
ISBN: 978-1743549896
Published: 28/3/17
Publisher: Pan Macmillan

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

It's 2027 and the human race is dying. Plants, animals and humans have been infected by spores from

space and become part of a vast alien intelligence. When 16-year-old Callie discovers her little sister Gracie has been infected, she flees with Gracie to the Zone to avoid termination by the ruthless officers of Quarantine. What Callie finds in the Zone will alter her irrevocably, and send her on a journey to the stars and beyond.

» OUR REVIEW

When Callie's 5-year-old half sister Gracie shows signs of the Change, Callie is determined to save her. Their only option is to run. If they can make it to the Exclusion Zone beyond what was once known as the Queensland border, she's sure they can avoid Quarantine. It won't be an easy journey.

There is very little information about the north, just a trail of whispers to follow. First they have to get from Adelaide to Sydney. While stowing away on a truck, they meet Matt, who has his own reasons for leaving town.

After 18 hours in a truck together, Matt and Callie develop an uneasy alliance. As their trip continues, their respective secrets are slowly revealed, and Callie discovers Grace is not the only one infected by the Change.

Callie is captured by vigilantes and it is only the intervention of Quarantine officers that set her free—from those men anyway. Now that they finally have her, Quarantine aren't about to let her go. She discovers the Changed really are nothing more to them than the subjects in a scientific study, no matter who they were before. The suspicions Matt shared with her are also confirmed—all their efforts to keep the Changed separate in order to protect everyone else from infection are in vain. The spores are everywhere and the government knows it.

When she manages to escape, Callie discovers not everyone is against them. The kindness of a truck driver and his wife who lost

their daughter to the Change sees her eventually reunited with Matt and Grace, so the long trek to the rumoured safety of the North can continue. Not all of them will make it through the Transitional, and what they find on the other side of the wall is something far more astonishing than Callie could have imagined.

The first of a trilogy, this science fiction tale is clearly set in Australia [a welcome change], and is a well paced, enjoyable read.

Major themes: alien organisms, spores, science fiction, biology, apocalyptic, family, sibling relationships, science, scientists, secrets, ethics, escape

Please be aware: 1. Language: shit x 2 [p98, 152], Jesus [p182]. 2. An infected dog is tormented with casual but intentional cruelty [p171-4], non graphic violence, mildly graphic descriptions of an injury [p210-11]. 3. Grace and Matt develop a physical relationship, but it happens 'off the page' and is only very briefly alluded to. She takes off his t-shirt and kisses him, he takes off her t-shirt [non descriptive] and 'our bodies skin to skin we fell into one another. And afterwards, when it was over, we lay beside each other ...' [p242-3], 'there were times when we kissed ... I could hardly bare to be touched; other times when we lay alongside each other, our bodies intertwined, I found myself wondering where I ended and he began' [p248-9], 'I kissed him ... until we could kiss no more and he pressed me to his chest and I listened to his heart beating' [p265]. That is the extent of the sexual content and there are no further descriptions.



Recommended age: 13 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Hunted

Author: Meagan Spooner

ISBN: 978-0062677358

Published: 1/4/17

Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Beauty knows the Beast's forest in her bones—and in her blood. She knows that the forest holds secrets and that her father is the only hunter who's ever come close to discovering them. But Yeva's grown up far from her father's old lodge, raised to be part of the city's highest caste of aristocrats. Still, she's never forgotten the feel of a bow in her hands, and she's spent a lifetime longing for the freedom of the hunt.

So when her father loses his fortune and moves Yeva and her sisters back to the outskirts of town, Yeva is secretly relieved. Out in the wilderness, there's no pressure to make idle chatter with vapid baronesses, or to submit to marrying a wealthy gentleman. But Yeva's father's misfortune may have cost him his mind, and when he goes missing in the woods, Yeva sets her sights on one prey: the creature he'd been obsessively tracking just before his disappearance.

Deaf to her sisters' protests, Yeva hunts this strange Beast back into his own territory—a cursed valley, a ruined castle, and a world of creatures that Yeva's heard about only in fairy tales. A world that can bring her ruin—or salvation.

Who will survive: the Beauty, or the Beast?

» OUR REVIEW

This reimagined fairy tale combines elements of Beauty and the Beast with the traditional Russian story Tsarevitch Ivan, the Firebird and the Gray Wolf.

Yeva has struggled with her role as the privileged daughter of a wealthy man, especially as it means she can no longer hunt. The adventures of her childhood are behind her, and she must do the proper thing if she is to marry. It's not exactly something she looks forward to.

When her father's fortune is lost, her family has no option but to return to their modest hunting lodge. Her father spends his days hunting in the woods, but he is not the man he once was. When he doesn't come home, Yeva goes after him—and finds the Beast.

When she wakes up in a dungeon, she thinks the voice she hears is that of a friend—perhaps a fellow prisoner. In reality, of course, it is the Beast ...

Discovering he is really her captor, she tries to kill him and fails. It is only when she realizes he is cursed that she is able to see both his good and not-so-good aspects. Ultimately of course (as in all good fairytales) the curse is broken and his humanity restored. The relationship between them develops and it is one of common interests, an affinity for nature, and a 'meeting of the minds' rather than focusing on physical passion.

A well written and engaging tale that is a worthwhile addition to the fairytale genre. The Russian style setting is very evocative.

Major themes: fairy tales, folk tales, traditional stories, family, Beauty and the Beast, hunting, independence, courage, curse, selflessness, restoration, romance

Please be aware: There are no real concerns with this book.

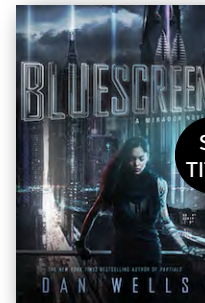


Recommended age: 13 years +

Suitable class novel: NO

Good read rating: ★★★★★

Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Bluescreen

Author: Dan Wells

ISBN: 978-0062347886

Published: 1/4/17

Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Los Angeles in 2050 is a city of open doors, as long as you have the right connections. That connection is a djinni—a smart device implanted right in a person's head. In a world where virtually everyone is online twenty-four hours a day, this connection is like oxygen—and a world like that presents plenty of opportunities for someone who knows how to manipulate it.

Marisa Carneseca is one of those people. She might spend her days in Mirador, but she lives on the net—going to school, playing games, hanging out, or doing things of more questionable legality with her friends Sahara and Anja. And it's Anja who first gets her hands on Bluescreen—a virtual drug that plugs right into a person's djinni and delivers a massive, non-chemical, completely safe high.

But in this city, when something sounds too good to be true, it usually is, and Mari and her friends soon find themselves in the middle of a conspiracy that is much bigger than they ever suspected.

» OUR REVIEW

It's the year 2050 in Los Angeles, and like many other teens Mari Carmeseca and her friends spend 24 hours a day plugged into the internet via their djinni (brain implant).

As a gifted coder with high level hacking skills and a robotic arm, Mari is more than comfortable with technology and the world of gaming. Then she witnesses a bad reaction to the new digital drug Bluescreen. When her 12-year-old sister Pati comes home from school with the tech thrill in her hands, Mari is determined to stop it at its source.

With the help of her friends and the somewhat shady Saif, she tracks the drug across Los Angeles. It's a dangerous search but not as dangerous as Bluescreen—with the number of cases rising and evidence of external mind control, time is ticking away if they are to stop the users suffering a permanent brain-crash.

A fast paced read in the cyberpunk sub-genre of science fiction, with enough tech to satisfy even the most avid aficionado. The diverse cast adds a multicultural flavour [albeit US focused].

Major themes: technology, cyberpunk, science fiction, computer viruses, digital drugs, extortion, quest, mind control, family

Please be aware: 1. Mildly graphic violence/shoot out scenes. 2. Language: frigging x 1 (p99), bastard x 5 (p67, 111, 246), bitch x 2 (p250). Major themes:



Recommended age: 13 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★



Blood of Wonderland: Queen of Hearts 2

Author: Colleen Oakes
ISBN: 978-0008175429
Published: 1/3/17
Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Her vicious father who she always feared has framed her for a brutal murder and turned the kingdom against her. Now hiding in the mysterious Twisted Wood with only her war steed at her side, Dinah is faced with a choice – to leave Wonderland forever or stay and fight for the throne.

A chance encounter with a long-lost enemy of the kingdom brings Dinah more allies than she ever could have imagined. But before battle, Dinah must confront truths about her heart and her destiny – no matter how dark those secrets may be.

Revolution is rising in Wonderland. Dinah's war has begun.

» OUR REVIEW

Dinah's situation is precarious at best. She may have escaped the palace, but the danger hasn't passed. When the king pursues her into the Twisted Wood she only survives because Sir Gorrann, a Spade supposedly in the service of the king, helps her. When he leads her into the hands of the Yurkei, arch-enemies of Wonderland, she is shocked to find out he plans to enlist their help to take back the throne.

Then she discovers Cheshire—the master manipulator—has been pulling the strings all along. It is Cheshire who 'encouraged' Sir Gorrann to help her, and it is Cheshire who is insistent she must take the throne from her father and fake half sister Vittoire.

It makes no sense—until Cheshire gives her the greatest shock of all. Everything she thought she knew is turned on her head, and she must learn to trust him if she is ever to be restored to the throne and revenge the death of her brother.

When everyone supporting you only does so because they want something, taking back the throne might be possible, but actually keeping it could be another case entirely.

This second book in the Wonderland series continues the story of Dinah and her transformation from loving child to the fear inducing Queen of Hearts. It's another great read in an intriguing series.

Major themes: escape, danger, betrayal, political machinations, family secrets, manipulation, allies, unrequited love, Alice in Wonderland, rejection

Please be aware: 1. Infrequent mildly graphic violence. 2. Dinah and Wardley passionately kiss (p154-6) but Wardley rejects her. She is filled with rage. 3. Language: bastard x 2, bloody x 1.



Recommended age: 12 to 16 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Draekora

Author: Lynette Noni
ISBN: 978-1921997686
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

With Aven Dalmarta now hiding in the shadows of Meya, Alex is desperate to save Jordan and keep the Rebel Prince from taking more lives.

Training day and night to master the enhanced immortal blood in her veins, Alex undertakes a dangerous Meyarin warrior trial that separates her from those she loves and leaves her stranded in a place where nothing is as it should be.

As friends become enemies and enemies become friends, Alex must decide who to trust as powerful new allies—and adversaries—push her towards a future of either light or darkness. One way or another, the world will change.

» OUR REVIEW

In this third book in the series, the author goes back in time to explain the actions and attitudes of the characters in the previous books.

The story starts with Alex, our protagonist and her friends taking steps to free Jordan, another friend who has been Claimed [his will taken over] by Aven, the evil prince of Meya. The direction changes when they find themselves imprisoned, then rescued by Zain, general of royal guard and meeting the royal family, King Astope, the cold

hostile Queen Niida, Prince Roka and his beloved Kyia.

The Meyarin are immortals. Alex must hone her skills and learn to fight like a Meyarin if she is to battle Aven and save the world from his clutches. She faces a test - she will be left in the forest without resources and must find her way home. She almost accomplishes this when she meets a panic-stricken dragon who has been sucked through the abrassa [void] and captured by Aven. Alex rescues him. The dragon is really a Draekon named Xiraxus from Draekora, islands in the sky above Meya. Xiraxus bonds with Alex so that she survives the journey back through the void. This means their thoughts and emotions are linked.

Alex meets Lady Mystique, an ancient wise woman, and she explains Alex will spend her time in the City of Meya until Xiraxus is strong enough to take her back through the void to her own time.

Alex is thousands of years in the past, and while the people are the same they are also very different. Queen Niida is friendly, Roka and Kyia can't stand each other, Aven is kind and friendly and falls for Alex. Aven's friend Niyx, who is imprisoned in Alex's real time world for slaughtering a group of mortals, helps Alex train. Alex learns how to Claim and Unclaim, a forbidden practice in both worlds.

However, when Niyx is attached by a sarnaph and almost dies, Alex Claims him to save his life. She later releases him but he refuses to break the link and accept his release. She realises he didn't kill the mortals so arranges his prison release when she returns to her own time.

Under Aven's growing power, Jordan kills King Astope. Niyx takes the blame and brings Jordan to Alex for releases. Alex's gift of her powerful will and the link stop Niyx from being Claimed by Aven. He's going to be her mole as Alex

gathers her resources for a final showdown with Aven.

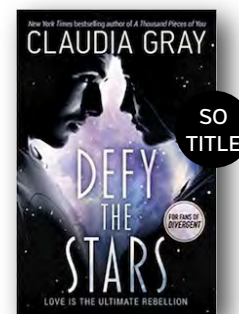
This may seem like a complicated story but the author tells it well and has her characters summarise at least once to bring the reader up to date. A great read.

Major themes: cause and effect, soul bonds, power, friends and enemies, background information.

Please be aware: There are no concerns with this book.



Recommended age: 12 to 17 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Defy the Stars

Author: Claudia Gray
ISBN: 978-1471406362
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Hotkey Books

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Noemi is a young and fearless soldier of Genesis, a colony planet of a dying Earth. But the citizens of Genesis are rising up - they know that Earth's settlers will only destroy this planet the way they destroyed their own. And so a terrible war has begun.

When Noemi meets Abel, one of Earth's robotic mech warriors, she realizes that Abel himself may provide the key to Genesis' salvation. Abel is bound by his programming to obey her - even though her plan could result in his destruction.

But Abel is no ordinary mech. He's a unique prototype, one with greater intelligence, skill and strength than any other. More than that, he has begun to develop emotions, a personality and even dreams.

Noemi begins to realise that if Abel is less than human, he is more than a machine. If she destroys him, is it murder? And can a cold-blooded murder be redeemed by the protection of a world?

Stranded together in space, they go on a whirlwind adventure through Earth's various colony worlds, alongside the countless Vagabonds who have given up planetary life altogether and sail forever between the stars. Each step brings them closer - both to each other and to the terrible decision Noemi will have to make about her world's fate, and Abel's.

» OUR REVIEW

Noemi Vidal is a determined, quick tempered, 17-year-old soldier committed to giving her life to save her planet, Genesis, from invasion by their Earth enemies.

Once a life-sustaining planet, the careless human custodians of Earth have left it a shell of its former glory. Thanks to the construction of gates between galaxies, they've also found and systematically consumed other planets, just as they did their original home. The only exception is the Genesis colony, which is committed to sustainable living, even at the expense of technology.

Abel Mansfield is the 'A' model in a line of electronic creations known as "mechs". The A-Z mechs are grown from human flesh around a metallic scaffolding, thanks to the genius of cyberneticist, Professor Burton Mansfield. This includes the swarms of robotic warriors sent to attack the resistant Genesis in an attempt to claim control of the planet and its inhabitants.

But Abel is different. He is the only 'A' ever made. Abel's programming renders him a genius. His DNA is not synthetic like other mechs, it came directly from his creator, Mansfield. Uniquely human qualities make him capable of intuition, emotion, humour, and everything else a human can feel—except for free will. Abel knows he has been created for a specific purpose, he just doesn't know what that purpose is. And he's been stuck for 30 years in the space craft, Daedalus, in the Genesis system; abandoned by his own creator and all the other humans in Mansfield's scientific exploration vessel.

When a practise-run for a scheduled suicide mission, code named the Masada Run, sees Noemi's squadron caught in a surprise Earth attack, her only friend, Esther, is mortally wounded. To save Esther, she directs their ships to the abandoned Daedalus nearby. She discovers Abel shortly after. When it's apparent Abel must submit to her as the commanding human, she determines she can use him to defeat Earth once and for all, without the loss of lives through the looming Masada Run.

But as they race time to collect what they need to complete her mission, Noemi begins to question Abel's 'machine' status. Eventually she has to face the reality he has a soul—and this changes everything.

Defy the Stars is a compelling race against time, building consistently toward a heart-rending climax that sees Abel trapped by his programming, against his will. The world-building is believable and seamless as Abel and Noemi travel between galaxies to other planets.

The story feels nearly allegorical in terms of the creator-creation relationship between Mansfield and Abel, along with the concept of sacrifice, freewill and sin—except upon their reunion, Mansfield ultimately portrays to Abel the

epitome of human selfishness, whereas Noemi depicts the power of grace, love and sacrifice for the life of another.

Through their journey, Abel realises he's somehow grown to love Noemi. This leads to an imperfect, yet appropriate resolution, with lingering hope and the hint of a possible reunion ...one day ...

Major themes: Loss, relationships [friendship, family, romance], adoption, loyalty, self-sacrifice, faith, diversity, environmental conservation, war, terrorism, value of life, morality, compassion

Please be aware: 1. When they are in urgent need of money, Abel pragmatically suggests he could become a prostitute. He just sees it as a transaction [he is a robot and has already been programmed with the necessary information, as all mechs are] but Noemi is horrified. A stranger overhears them and offers work in her warehouse instead, much to Noemi's relief [p116-118]. 2. There are a few references throughout to how commoditized sex is in their society [eg. they see ads for dancing girls, holiday promotions that suggest more might be available etc.etc.]. Nothing graphic. 3. Abel offers Noemi sex [something he views just as a physical service], but she declines and explains that amongst people of her faith, sex is something you keep for committed relationships [p260-263]. 4. Discussion about faith [p129-130]. 5. Passionate kissing [p404-405].



Recommended age: 14 years +
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Letters to the Lost

Author: Brigid Kemmerer
ISBN: 978-1408883525
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Juliet Young has always written letters to her mother, a world famous photojournalist - even after her mother's death, she leaves letters at her grave. It's the only thing that helps Juliet cope.

Declan Murphy is the sort of guy you wouldn't want to cross. In the midst of his court-ordered community service doing landscaping at the local cemetery, he is holding inside ghosts of his own past. When Declan finds a haunting letter left beside a grave, he can't resist the urge to write back.

Soon, he is sharing his pain with a perfect stranger and somehow he feels like he might be helping her too. Except they're not strangers, and when real life interferes with their secret life of letters, sparks will fly as Juliet and Declan discover truths that might tear them apart.

» OUR REVIEW

This is a deeply moving novel and one that will encourage readers to develop profound empathy towards its characters. The author uses her two main characters to progress the story as they alternately narrate the action.

Characters Juliet and Declan share a common bond of grieving the loss of a family member and are both dealing with feelings of guilt, responsibility, anger and self-blame. Their grief unites them and

they begin to write anonymous letters, and eventually emails, to each other to express their innermost thoughts and feelings in an uninhabited way.

Although Juliet and Declan attend the same high school, they don't know each other and certainly don't move in the same circles. The letters they write fill in the background of their situations as well as their present day challenges, including domestic violence, verbal abuse and unstable family relationships. Their private letters are confessional in nature and forms a vital part of the healing process, especially as trust develops between them.

Juliet and Declan spur each other on into doing something unexpected as a way to move forward from their self-imposed displacement from the real world. It's inevitable and with some relief that Declan and Juliet learn the true identity of the other which then gives another dimension to their relationship that is now exposed and unobstructed. *Letters to the Lost* is a redemptive novel containing serious issues of grief; how to cope with grief and move forward with one's life.

Major themes: grief, self-blame, guilt, anger, trust, family relationships, family dysfunction: alcoholism, domestic violence, verbal abuse

Please be aware: Declan's criminal past is revealed (he got drunk and crashed his dad's truck) p3. Declan admits he tried to commit suicide p262.



Recommended age: 14 to 18 years
Suitable class novel: YES
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Charisma

Author: Jeanne Ryan
ISBN: 978-1471163937
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Simon & Schuster

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

How far would you go to change yourself from the inside out? Aislyn is the kind of shy that makes her choke up in class and avoid parties. And it means talking to her crush, Jack, is a total non-starter. So when she's offered a dose of charisma, an underground gene therapy drug guaranteed to make her shine, she jumps at the chance for an internal makeover.

The effects are instant. She's charming, vivacious, and popular. But strangely, so are some other kids she knows. The media goes into a frenzy when the therapy turns contagious, and then deadly, and the doctor who gave it to them disappears. Aislyn must choose between reversing the treatment and losing her new personality, or risking her life for a shot at charisma.

» OUR REVIEW

Cripplingly shy Aislyn Hollings yearns to be heard, especially when it comes to gene therapy. It is a passion of hers, as she believes it can help heal her little brother, Sammy, from his cystic fibrosis. After failing to get an important scholarship because she was too tongue-tied to plead her case properly, she agrees to be involved in the secret test of a new gene therapy designed to make the subject more outgoing.

The test goes horribly wrong and soon lives are on the line. Aislyn has to try and beat the symptoms of the treatment in a race against time to find a cure.

Charisma starts off slowly, only coming into its pace at about a third of the way through, but certainly tells an interesting tale, raising a lot of questions about gene alteration.

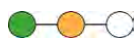
It presents cases for both sides. There's the potential for disaster shown in Aislyn's situation, contrasting with the promise of a cure for illnesses like her brothers. The dangers of racing forward too quickly with cures before proper checks and balances are in place are also made clear.

Charisma is fairly well written and should entertain YA readers who don't mind doing a bit of thinking when it comes to their novels. It provides scope for discussions about ethics and morality in science, the medical field and the media.

Major themes: family relationships, lies, deception, the desire to be popular at any cost, gene therapy, ethics, media, attitudes towards individuals suffering from dangerous illnesses, paranoia, prejudice

Please be aware: Aislyn and her friends drink alcohol at parties, although they are underage. It's clear that some of Aislyn's friends are having sexual relationships however there are no descriptions. Aislyn and her friend Shane are victims of a brutal kidnapping where there is a suggestion that she might be raped [she is not], then vials of blood are taken from them by force. A number of Aislyn's friends, who also take the drug, go into comas and some of them die. Aislyn breaks into someone's house to try and find evidence. She also ties up and steals from a gene therapist. This gene therapist sent a fake suicide

video to the media to try and avoid responsibility for her actions.



Recommended age: 13 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Just Like the Movies

Author: Kelly Fiore
ISBN: 978-1619633568
Published: 1/3/17
Publisher: Bloomsbury

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Pretty, popular Marijke Monti and over-achieving nerd-girl Lily Spencer have little in common - except that neither feels successful when it comes to love. Marijke can't get her boyfriend to say 'I love you' and Lily can't get a boyfriend at all.

When the girls end up at a late night showing of *Titanic*, sniffing along with the sinking ship, they realize that their love lives could—and should—be better. Which sparks an idea: Why can't life be like a movie? Why can't they create perfect romantic situations?

Now they have a budding friendship and a plan—to act out grand gestures and get the guys of their dreams. It seems like fun at first, but reality turns out to be much more complicated, and they didn't take into account that finding true love usually requires finding yourself first.

» OUR REVIEW

The front cover of *Just Like the Movies* is set to attract young readers with the display of a couple involved in a dip and a deep kiss! This book has the makings of chick lit with a US high school setting involving characters that are in the final stages of their senior year and, as such, are mixed up in Prom proposals, State level athletics meets, filling in college applications, shopping for Prom dresses, and sustaining lasting relationships with boyfriends, or at least trying to acquire one!

What's ingenious about the novel is that author Kelly Fiore has taken two girls from opposite spectrums of the popularity scale and has created a special mutual bond between them as they work together to achieve the same goal: to make the boys they've fallen for love them back.

Marijke and Lily alternate the narration from chapter to chapter to advance the story so we gain an equivalent understanding of both perspectives.

Their project, which involves recreating scenes from a variety of famous romantic comedy films, is intended to encourage amorous feelings in their respective love interests.

There are many references to these particular films throughout the novel and they range from classic films, to iconic chick films from the 1980's through to present

Young readers would need to be familiar with films such as *Footloose*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Sixteen Candles* to fully realise the significance of the films' content to the girls' project ideas. Other references to more recent or well-known films include *Pitch Perfect*, *Titanic* and *Never been Kissed*.

An important message resonating throughout the novel highlights the importance of not basing critical life choices [ie where to go

to college) around your current boyfriend or girlfriend.

Major themes: love, relationships, dysfunctional families/marital separation, goal-setting and achievement, resilience, acquiring self-worth and personal ambition.

Please be aware: Some kissing.



Recommended age: 13 to 17 years
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



The Secret Science of Magic

Author: Melissa Keil
ISBN: 978-1760127763
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Hardie Grant

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Sophia is smart, like genius-calculator-brain smart. But there are some things no amount of genius can prepare you for, and the messiness of real life is one of them.

When everything she knows is falling apart, how can she crack the puzzle of what to do with her life? Joshua spends his time honing magic tricks and planning how to win Sophia's heart. But when your best trick is making schoolwork disappear, how do you possibly romance a genius? In life and love, timing is everything.

From Melissa Keil, the award-winning author of *Life in Outer Space* and *The Incredible*

Adventures of Cinnamon Girl, comes this captivating novel about two extraordinary teens, and the unsolvable problem of life after high school.

» OUR REVIEW

Sophia Reyhart is a mathematical genius of Sri Lankan heritage who feels pressured to be extraordinary, but like any Year 12 student, is confused about what path to take. She finds the interpersonal stuff of life particularly challenging and has survived thus far with the dedicated support of best friend Elsie. But there is a gap between her and Elsie now that just keeps getting wider, and Sophia can't work out why.

Sophia is also obsessed with the Russian mathematician Grigori Perelman and in her search for answers, is determined to find out if he is happy – if the career path he took has turned out to be as satisfying as he hoped. It's a question he never answers.

She may feel like a freak, but if anyone can understand Sophia, Joshua can. His younger sister Gillian is very much like her, 'Gilly is just a hell of a lot smarter than most people, and it's kinda like this weapon she doesn't know how to wield'. [p168].

Joshua works at Houdini's Apprentice, a magic shop. He has spent five years with Sophia's 'fascinating presence in his peripheral vision'. Not obsessed, just aware of her, but unwilling or unable to do anything about it – until the moment when he is.

An enjoyable story with a gentle unforced romance told in different chapters from either Sophia or Joshua's point of view. Joshua's use of his amazing magic tricks creates special, sweet moments. He values (and supports) her friendship with Elsie and allows Sophia the space she needs to cope with her social anxieties. Both Elsie and Joshua see past the genius, to the girl Sophia really is.

A great read that is likely to appear in the CBCA awards in 2018.

Favourite quote: *How useful would it be to know before you set out on a journey, if the destination was going to be worth the effort.* [p105].

Major themes: genius, prodigy, maths, social anxiety, romance, magic, prestidigitation, sibling relationships, friendship, future, leaving school, cultural diversity

Please be aware: . Language: shit x 31, Christ x 11, Jesus x 7, friggin' x 1, bugger x 3, bastard x 1, dick/head x 6, bloody x 7, frequent use of 'balls', 'donkey balls', 'sucks balls' etc. 2. Kissing [p191-3, 301].



Recommended age: 14 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Goodbye Days

Author: Jeff Zentner
ISBN: 978-1783445516
Published: 18/4/17
Publisher: Random House

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Can a text message destroy your life? Carver Briggs never thought a simple text would cause a fatal crash, killing his three best friends, Mars, Eli, and Blake. Now Carver can't stop blaming himself for the accident and even worse, there could be a criminal investigation into the deaths.

Then Blake's grandmother asks Carver to remember her grandson

with a 'goodbye day' together. Carver has his misgivings, but he starts to help the families of his lost friends grieve with their own memorial days, along with Eli's bereaved girlfriend Jesmyn. But not everyone is willing to forgive.

Carver's own despair and guilt threatens to pull him under into panic and anxiety as he faces punishment for his terrible mistake. Can the goodbye days really help?

» OUR REVIEW

Goodbye Days is an honest, tender and extremely moving novel that tells the story of Carver Briggs as he learns to cope with the aftermath of a fatal car accident that killed his three best friends: Mars, Eli and Blake. Carver blames himself for their deaths and his fears and grief are compounded by his sense of guilt. To add to his problems, he faces a criminal investigation into his involvement in their deaths.

This novel displays deep emotional and psychological integrity that will profoundly affect readers.

The novel begins as 17-year-old Carver is attending Blake's funeral. It is here that he makes contact with Jesmyn, Eli's girlfriend and they connect and become friends through their shared grief. Carver was not in the car that killed Mars, Eli and Blake as he was working at his part-time job at the secondhand book and record shop. He was waiting for his friends to pick him up and because they were late he texted Mars to see where they were. This caused Mars to lapse in concentration because he started to text back and they collided with a truck. The three were killed instantly.

Nana Betsy is one of the few outside his family who doesn't blame Carver for the accident. Nana Betsy shows a high level of understanding for Blake's grief and situation.

During Blake's Goodbye Day, they do things that he enjoyed to do, like eating his favourite foods and fishing.

An additional worry for Carver and his family is that Mars' father initiates negligent homicide charges. It turns out that Mars had a poor relationship with his father and Carver is able to help him through a Goodbye Day. Ultimately the father and the District Attorney don't proceed with the charges.

Eli's family, minus Adair, also invite Carver to a Goodbye Day for Eli which helps them come to terms with their loss.

This is a character driven novel with emotional depth. There is great diversity of characters, Mars is Afro American, Eli is Mexican, Jesmyn is Filipino and has synaesthesia, Blake and the therapist Carver sees are gay and Blake's parents are drug addicted. This seems a lot of issues but it is all introduced quite subtly.

The major theme of this novel is learning about life through happy memories of love and the painful memories of grief. Through the Goodbye Days Carver finds out things he didn't know about his friends and he is able to share things he knows with the family members of his friends. This adds to his understanding of what life is all about with a poignancy and grace.

The author shows that grief and happiness can intermix to create new and real memories. Carver's journey is portrayed elegantly, brutally, and honestly. He describes it as "the sad and lonely feeling like the beach in November".

Goodbye Days is an acutely heart breaking but ultimately life affirming reflection on grief and forgiveness. By exploring friendship, grief and loss a new hope is reached at the end which gives teenage readers a positive insight into life.

Major themes: death, grief, forgiveness, bereavement, hope, social issues, siblings, guilt, fear, car accidents, texting, panic attacks, homosexuality, mental illness, friendships, loss, relationships

Please be aware: 1. Language: shit x 47, dick x 6, f**k x 3 (p48, 99, 221), Jesus/Lord x 3 (p188, 216, 222). 2. Mild crudities, eg. 'wet willy' (p71, 162), 'spank it to get back to sleep' (p99), 'wolf-semen shake' (p128), 'boners' (p252). 3. Alex dumped Adair a week after she 'lost her virginity to him' (p129). Carver gets an erection at an inappropriate moment (p178, 238). Blake comes out to Carver after they've been making gay jokes (p198-200).



Recommended age: 14 years+
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Wait For Me

Author: Caroline Leech
ISBN: 978-0008213398
Published: 1/4/17
Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Can their love survive a war? A breathtaking WW2 romance for fans of *Code Name Verity* and *Between Shades of Grey*.

It's 1945, and Lorna Anderson's life on her father's farm in Scotland consists of endless chores, rationing and praying for an Allied

victory. So when Paul Vogel, a German prisoner of war, is assigned as the new farmhand, Lorna is appalled. How can she possibly work alongside the enemy when her own brothers are risking their lives for the country? But as Lorna reluctantly spends time with Paul, the more she sees the boy behind the soldier.

Soon Lorna is battling her own warring heart. Loving Paul could mean losing her family and the life she's always known. But with tensions rising all around them, Lorna must decide how much she's willing to sacrifice – before the end of the war determines their fate once and for all.

» OUR REVIEW

It's World War II and 17-year-old Lorna works on her father's farm in Scotland while her brothers fight on the front lines. When a German prisoner of war is assigned to their work detail, she isn't exactly impressed. After all, Paul is the enemy. He is also horribly disfigured down one half of his face.

Forced to interact with him, Lorna eventually begins to see the boy behind the soldier with the burns on his face. She discovers his losses (his father is dead and his mother and sister were in Dresden which has been severely bombed by the allies) and his humanity. As their friendship develops, the risks also become clear. In a community reeling from its own losses, Lorna is painfully aware of the ramifications.

If Lorna is to deal with her family's reactions, she must first face her own guilt. When the war comes to an end, her father's willingness to stand up for Paul in the face of the villager's animosity provides an opportunity for an act of kindness and forgiveness from the one woman who has the greatest reason to hate the Germans if she chooses.

An enjoyable read for fans of historical fiction and/or romance.

Major themes: World War II, Scotland, romance, friendship, loss, grief, prejudice, family, unplanned pregnancy

Please be aware: 1. Language: shit x 1, bitch x 2, bastard, x 1, Christ x 2 [p5, 177], bloody x 23. 2. Land Girl Nellie is 'dating' an American soldier from the nearby base. When she falls pregnant, she discovers he is married. 3. Nellie takes Lorna to a dance at the base. She is shocked to realise the men she's arranged for them to meet are in their late 20s. Despite her making it clear she didn't want alcohol, Eddie spikes her drinks. She ends up sick. He then starts groping her [p142-143] but she knees him in the groin and escapes. 4. Best friend Iris is seeing the local minister's son, William. He's a horrible creature who tries to kiss Lorna behind Iris's back. 5. Kissing [p191-2, 207-8, 318-9 and elsewhere].



Recommended age: 15 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★



Reign of Shadows

Author: Sophie Jordan
ISBN: 978-0062377654
Published: 1/3/17
Publisher: Harper Collins

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Destiny and darkness collide in this romantic, sweeping new fantasy series from New York Times bestselling author Sophie Jordan.

Seventeen years ago, an eclipse cloaked the kingdom of Relhok in perpetual darkness. In the chaos, an evil chancellor murdered the King and Queen and seized their throne. Luna, Relhok's lost princess, has been hiding in a tower ever since.

Luna's survival depends on the world believing she is dead. But that doesn't stop Luna from wanting more. When she meets Fowler, a mysterious archer braving the woods outside her tower, Luna is drawn to him despite the risk. When the tower is attacked, Luna and Fowler escape together. But this world of darkness is more treacherous than Luna ever realized.

With every threat stacked against them, Luna and Fowler find solace in each other. But with secrets still unspoken between them, falling in love might be their most dangerous journey yet.

» OUR REVIEW

On the day a princess is born, the kingdom of Relhok is struck by an eclipse. It has stayed in darkness for the 17 years since. The king and queen died that same day, and their daughter's survival is a closely guarded secret.

In the years since then, Luna has lived a restricted life with her guardians Sivo and Perla, whose one goal is to keep her safe. She longs to experience more than her cloistered life in the tower but is never allowed to go outside alone.

Then one night she sneaks out, and finds a 13-year-old boy caught in one of Sivo's traps. If she doesn't help him and his travelling companions, they'll end up victims of the 'dark dwellers'. To her guardians dismay, she leads the boy Madoc, his sister Dagne, and

their travelling companion Fowler back to the tower.

To save Madoc, Fowler must source a particular herb and Luna sneaks out with him. In their absence the king's men surround the tower and for some unknown reason, they kill Dagne. While the others are safe so far, it won't be long before their commander remembers why Sivo's face is familiar to him. He worked at the palace when the commander was a boy. The only hope of keeping Luna safe is if she leaves. Against his better judgement, Fowler promises to take her with him.

It's a dangerous journey, made even more so by the bounty the king has offered for the death of every girl between the ages of 15 and 20. When Luna realises she is the reason for the bounty, she is determined to return to the city and face the mad king. He also happens to be her parents' murderer ... and Fowler's father ...

Set in a medieval style fantasy world where the people live in constant danger, this first book in the series is told in dual points of view. Initially very reluctant to allow Luna to travel with him, Fowler gradually sheds his gruff, cynical exterior. By the end of the book he has proclaimed his love for her, and demonstrated his willingness to give his life for hers. An enjoyable read.

Major themes: Rapunzel, romance, blindness, danger, corruption, fantasy, quest, self sacrifice, courage

Please be aware: This story takes some inspiration from the fairy tale Rapunzel. As such, there is a brief mention that the tower they lived in used to be inhabited by a witch [p7-8]. There are dangers from the 'dark dwellers' who kill humans. Fowler kills a dweller [p23-24]. Fowler realises Luna is blind when she walks in on him getting changed and doesn't react to his nakedness [p35-36]. Soldiers kill

Dagne [p86]. Fowler is captured by crazies [bat fever sufferers], p123-131. Some mild sexual tension [eg. p137-8, 165-7]. They find an injured man who has barely survived a fight with a dark dweller. Luna comforts him as he dies [p144-5]. Fight scenes p157-160, 224-5. Kissing p196-8. Passionate kissing but they are interrupted before things can reach what seemed like an inevitable conclusion [p229-233].



Recommended age: 14 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★



Margot & Me

Author: Juno Dawson
ISBN: 978-1471406089
Published: 29/3/17
Publisher: Bonnier

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Fliss' mum needs peace and quiet to recuperate from a long illness, so they both move to the countryside to live with Margot, Fliss's stern and bullying grandmother. Life on the farm is tough and life at school is even tougher, so when Fliss unearths Margot's wartime diary, she sees an opportunity to get her own back. But Fliss soon discovers Margot's life during the evacuation was full of adventure, mystery and even passion. What's more, she learns a terrible secret that could tear her whole family apart.

» OUR REVIEW

It's 1998 and Fliss's mum is in recovery from a second course of chemotherapy. Fliss has looked after her for the past two years so she doesn't understand why they have to move to her grandmother's home in Wales. Leaving her London home and friends behind, she must adjust to a new school with unfamiliar protocols as well as bullying. Her grandmother, Margot, is a stern woman who Fliss finds difficult to relate to. That begins to change when she uncovers Margot's wartime diary.

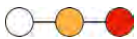
As she reads about her grandmother's experiences as a teenage evacuee during the war, Fliss begins to understand why Margot is the way she is.

Margot & Me is an engrossing multi-level story that has been written with delightful wit and humour. Introduced to a family mystery early in this novel, the reader gradually uncovers a long-held secret that turns everything on its head.

Major themes: family, love, loss, forgiveness, relationship dynamics, bullying, difference, adapting to a new school/town, infidelity, historical fiction, romance, resilience, strength

Please be aware: 1. Language: shit x 13, f@#k x 5, bitch, bloody, Jesus. 2. On meeting Danny, Fliss immediately knows he is gay [p59]. They have a brief discussion about it [p98-9]. He tells the girls he has met someone online and they warn him to be careful [p185-6]. 3. Fliss discovers the school bully, Megan, making out with two boys in a dark cave – no description beyond the fact that she saw the boy's naked backsides [p130]. Megan later threatens her [p135, 176]. Fliss bursts into tears and is comforted by the librarian. This exacerbates the crush she has on him. He comforts her again later in the book when he finds out her mum has terminal cancer. When

Fliss leans in and kisses him, he is horrified and clearly tells her it is not on [p286]. 3. Back in 1941, the mayor's son forcibly kisses Margot. A Canadian airman, Rick, intervenes. They later develop a relationship and her first sexual experience is with him [not described], p221-224. He later tells her [by letter] that he is engaged to a girl back in Canada and won't be coming back. When she discovers she is pregnant, her only option is to put the child up for adoption, particularly as her father is an Admiral and her parents are determined to hide her 'shame'. 4. Margot and Rick stumble across Andrew in the barn with another man. There are no descriptions but the reason they were there is clear [p236-240]. When Andrew later gets into trouble with the army due to his homosexuality, Margot agreed to marry him. He is Fliss's biological grandfather. Due to the circumstances, they both had affairs while they were married [p326-330].



Recommended age: 14 to 17 years
Suitable class novel: MAYBE
Good read rating: ★★☆☆
Literary value rating: ★★☆☆



Don't Fail Me Now

Author: Una LaMarche
ISBN: 978-1595148186
Published: 1/3/17
Publisher: Penguin

» PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION

Michelle and her little siblings Cass and Denny are African-American and living on the poverty line in urban Baltimore, struggling to keep it together with their mom in jail and only Michelle's part-time job at the Taco Bell to sustain them.

Leah and her stepbrother Tim are white and middle class from suburban Maryland, with few worries beyond winning lacrosse games and getting college applications in on time. Michelle and Leah only have one thing in common- Buck Devereaux, the biological father who abandoned them when they were little. After news trickles back to them that Buck is dying, they make the uneasy decision to drive across country to his hospice in California.

Leah hopes for closure; Michelle just wants to give him a piece of her mind. Five people in a failing, old station wagon, living off free samples at food courts across America, and the most pressing question on Michelle's mind is- Who will break down first? Herself or the car?

All the signs tell her they won't make it. But Michelle has heard that her whole life, and it's never stopped her before.

Una LaMarche triumphs once again with this rare and compassionate look at how racial and social privilege affects one family in crisis in both subtle and astonishing ways.

» OUR REVIEW

This powerfully moving novel takes readers on an emotional ride as its characters embark on an epic physical journey across the breadth USA. They are each seeking some sort of redemption from their estranged, dying father.

Author Una LaMarche has shown an acute understanding of her characters and their situations and problems. She writes about the details of their lives with an

unreserved emotion, thus making it easy for readers to emphasise with them.

The central character, 17-year-old Michelle, has an extremely difficult life. She has to deal with a jail-bound drug addicted mother, has the sole responsibility of caring for her two younger siblings, and is working to keep the family financially afloat while also completing high school.

The novel contrasts privilege and disadvantage. Characters representing both social and racial spectrums converge as they bravely face their joined mission.

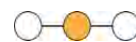
Bit by bit the barriers break down as their personal stories are divulged and trust and friendships are formed.

This novel has impressive literary merit and is to be admired for its clever use of similes and metaphors to create vivid images in the reader's mind.

Don't Fail Me Now delivers a clear message of empowerment, determination, resilience, redemption and hope for a better future.

Major themes: racial and social economic differences, personal transformation, coming of age, family dysfunction, drug addiction, bullying, diabetes, suicide

Please be aware: Language: shit x 29, bitch x 13, dick x 7, f@#k x 5]. Cass attempts suicide [p203].



Recommended age: 16 years +
Suitable class novel: NO
Good read rating: ★★★★★
Literary value rating: ★★★★★

Great websites and apps

Teen Reading in the Digital Era

Deakin University's research project site

teenreading.net

Fact Checking Day

Teaching resources for educating students on identifying fake news and related issues.

factcheckingday.com

STEM 2026

A Vision for Innovation in STEM Education

<http://tinyurl.com/k8njnf3>

Audio Podcasts - Sydney Writers' Festival

100 podcasts from previous years of the festival.

www.swf.org.au/audio-podcasts

Sydney Writers' Festival YouTube channel

Selected sessions from the past four years.

tinyurl.com/luwwran

Common Sense Education

An excellent collection of teaching resources on Digital Citizenship and other tech issues.

<http://tinyurl.com/mfwbjrh>

Festivals and literary events

SwanCon

13 – 17 April, 2017

Perth, WA

2017.swancon.com.au

Jane Austen Festival

21 – 23 April, 2017

Canberra, ACT

janeaustenfestival.com

Supanova

21 – 23 April, 2017 [QLD]

28 – 30 April, 2017 [VIC]

supanova.com.au

Shakespeare on the River

April 22 – May 7, 2017

Stratford, VIC

stratfordshakespeare.com.au

South West Bush Poets' Festival

30 April, 2017

Busselton, WA

tinyurl.com/ltn9z83

NT Writers Festival

18–21 May, 2017

Alice Springs, NT

ntwriters.com.au/festival

KidLitVic

20 May, 2017

Melbourne, VIC

kidlitvic.com

Conferences and seminars

29 April, 2017

Christians in Teaching 2017

Sydney, NSW

tinyurl.com/hjgdlqv

29 – 30 April, 2017

Spirit of Learning Conference

Brisbane, QLD

tinyurl.com/j9495la

1 – 3 May, 2017

Bullying & Cyber Safety in Education

Sydney, NSW

tinyurl.com/gwsvv5x

3 – 5 May, 2017

Early Literacy National Conference

Katoomba, NSW

tinyurl.com/zq3n2hu

6 – 9 May, 2017

Round Table on

Information Access for

People with Print Disabilities

Perth, WA

printdisability.org/conference

Quote of the Month

“To build up a library is to create a life. It is never just a random collection of books.”

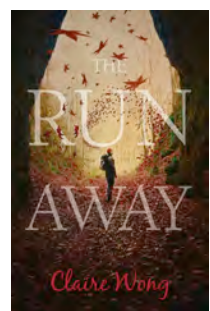
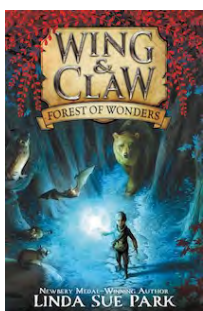
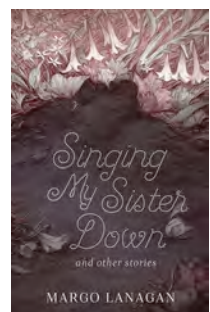
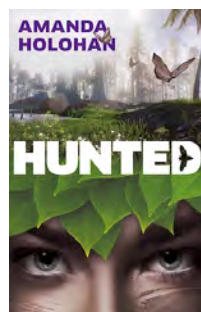
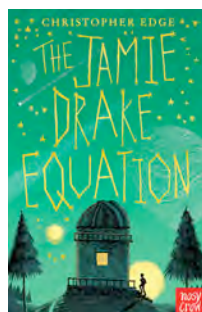
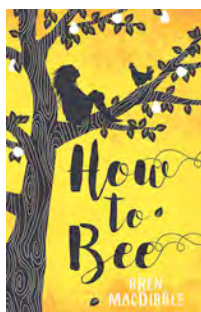
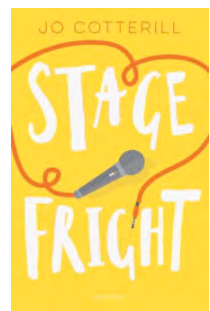
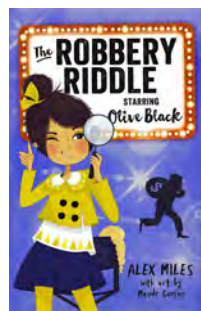
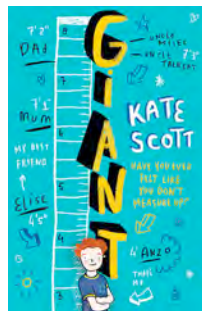
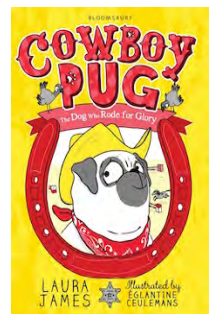
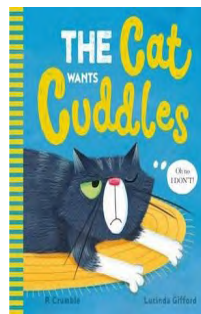
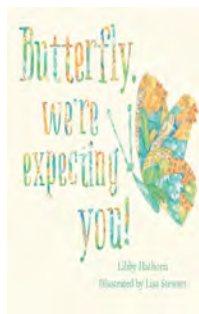
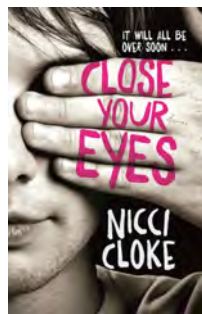
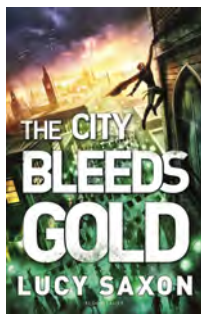
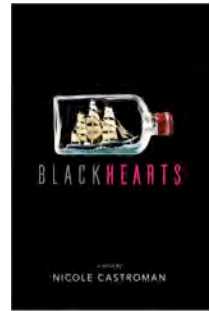
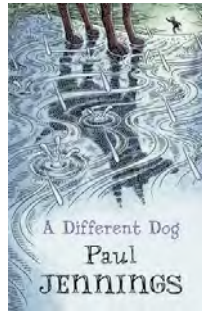
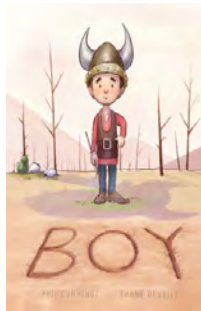
–Carlos María Domínguez

Do you have a quote, website, conference or other news you'd like to share? Please email mag@aptschoolresources.com.au

This issues titles in alphabetical order

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