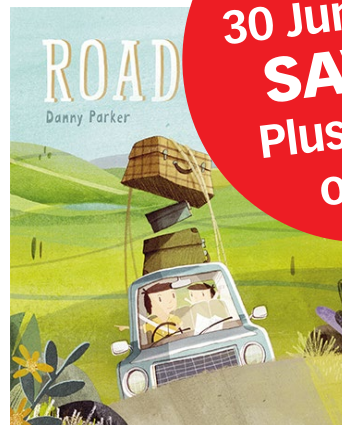
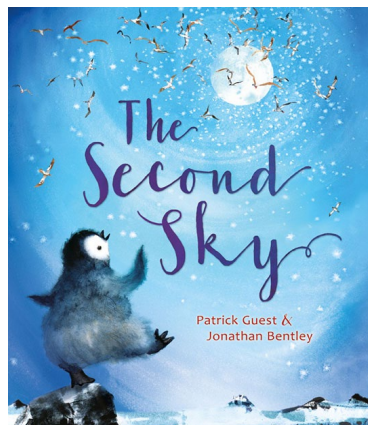
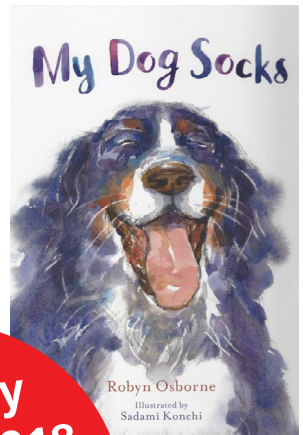
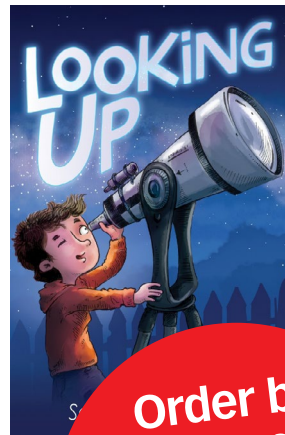
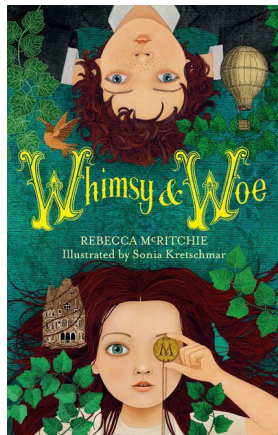
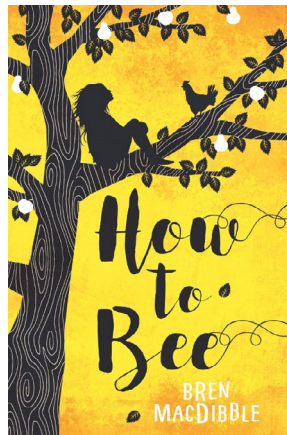
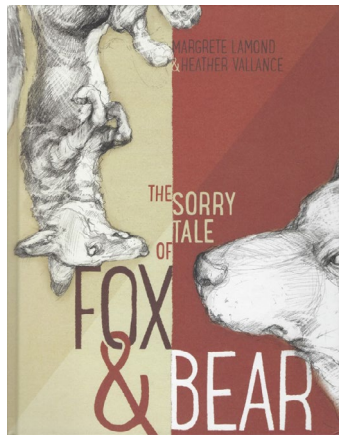
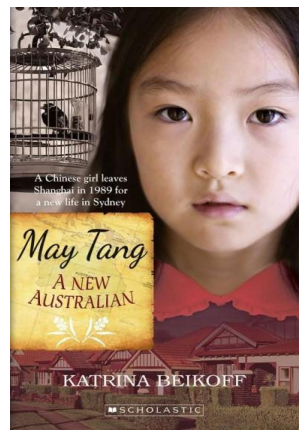
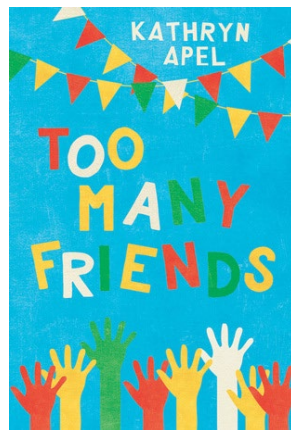
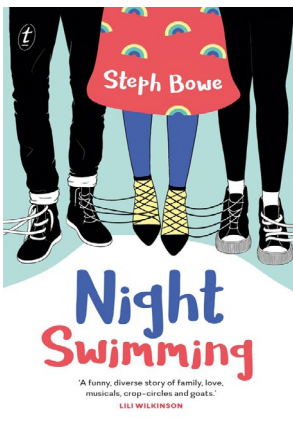
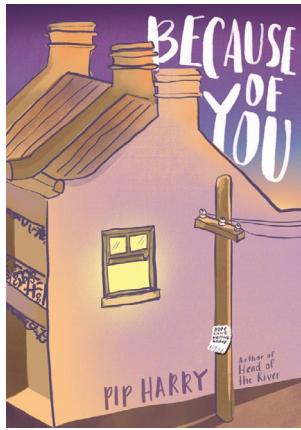
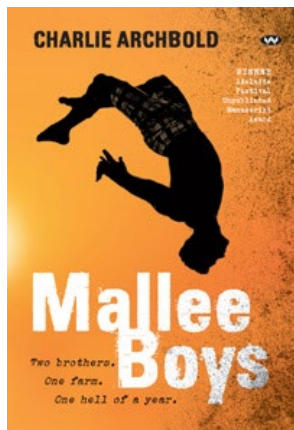


# THE Book Curator

THE LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE TO BOOKS FOR KIDS & TEENS



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THE CBCA AWARDS 2018 SHORT LIST & NOTABLES

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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ISSN 2204-5708

## WELCOME

# EDITORIAL



It is a bumper year for the Children's Book Council of Australia [CBCA] Book of the Year Awards, with an incredible 170 titles across the categories.

Helping kids develop a lifelong love of reading is a passion of ours, so we hope these detailed reviews will assist you to match your students with books that will fuel their hunger for stories.

We also want to save you time with title discovery.

In this special edition of The Book Curator, you can explore all the CBCA titles [not just the short lists] and make informed decisions about what to buy for your library collection.

When you choose to buy your CBCA Awards titles from The Book Curator, you'll receive a complimentary copy of Book Week Ideas & Activities 2018 (RRP 39.95) when you spend over \$275 [at our specially discounted prices]. It's our way of saying thank you for helping support our service.

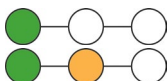
Dive in, enjoy and we will see you on the other side!

ROWENA BERESFORD

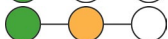
PS. If you have any comments on The Book Curator or suggestions on what we could improve or include in future issues, please call 02 8985 9435 or email your feedback to [mag@aptschoolresources.com.au](mailto:mag@aptschoolresources.com.au)

## Understanding traffic light ratings

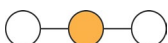
The traffic lights are a grading system to assist schools with conservative collection policies to easily identify which reviews they should read more closely.



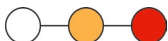
There are no concerns with this book.



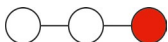
There are likely very mild concerns which we consider unlikely to be an issue for the age group, but you should check them out just in case.



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.



A high level of concerns which are likely to make this book 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 [mag@aptschoolresources.com.au](mailto:mag@aptschoolresources.com.au). Your feedback on the traffic light rating system is very welcome.

**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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## EARLY CHILDHOOD SHORT LIST



### Boy

**Author:** Phil Cummings  
**Illustrator:** Shane Devries  
**ISBN:** 978-1760277055  
**Published:** 1/05/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The king's battles with the dragon were always mighty and loud ... CLING CLANG CLONG! ROAR! Boy lived in a silent world and couldn't hear the fighting. But Boy could see the fear around him ... and how everyone would be much happier without it.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

This rewarding and worthwhile offering explores concepts of misunderstanding, perception, fear of loss and blindly following orders. Though heavy sounding, it's not. Instead it's very simply told, exuding the hallmarks of a good picture book. The story is concise, the illustrations descriptive and thought provoking. Best of all, the hero is deaf and mute and it's his silence which makes it all the more powerful.

The tale unfolds as the King and his brave knights are once again battling a fiery dragon. Into the fray wanders Boy, oblivious to what is going on around him. Stopping the battle, he asks why they are fighting. The answers reveal how easy it is to misread situations and what the consequence can be. Highly recommended.

**Recommended Age:** 2 to 6 years



### Hark It's Me, Ruby Lee!

**Author:** Lisa Shanahan  
**Illustrator:** Binny  
**ISBN:** 978-0734416551  
**Published:** 25/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Hachette

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Ruby Lee is a little girl with a very big imagination. Every week Ruby's teacher, Mrs Majestic-Jones, asks special people to do special jobs in her class. Ruby would do anything to be the messenger, as she's the best in her class at announcing. But will her wild imagination get in the way? A delightful story about an adorable and irrepressible heroine from CBCA award-winning author Lisa Shanahan.

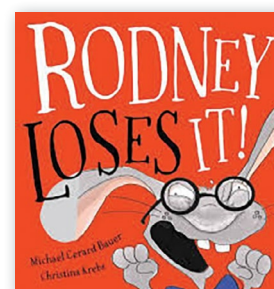
#### >> OUR REVIEW

We all have our strong suits and although Ruby Lee longs to be chosen as class messenger (and believes she would be excellent at it) in reality her strengths lie elsewhere. It's not that she can't be trusted, it's just that her very active imagination creates interesting scenarios along the way that distract her from her task! Forget about losing notes, Ruby even manages to lose her best friend (thankfully he turns up again).

However, when a bird flies into the classroom, Ruby is the only one to keep a cool head. Pulling a crust from her pocket she stays very still until the pigeon gently alights on her arm and she can carry him from the room. As a consequence, she is permanently appointed as the Special Emergency Officer, which makes her very happy.

A fun look at strengths and how some excel at particular jobs. Very colourful and fun illustrations accompany an enjoyable and humorous story.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



### Rodney Loses It!

**Author:** Michael Gerard Bauer  
**Illustrator:** Chrissie Krebs  
**ISBN:** 978-1742991900  
**Published:** 1/09/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Rodney was a rabbit who loved nothing more than drawing. He never found it tiresome, tedious or boring. But then one day, disaster struck, the one thing Rodney feared, while working at his drawing desk his pen just ... DISAPPEARED! A truly hysterical search for a missing pen, by award-winning author Michael Gerard Bauer.

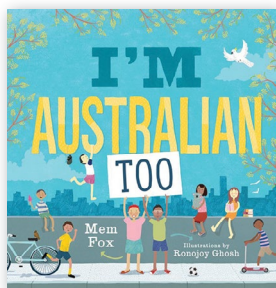
#### >> OUR REVIEW

Rodney the rabbit is a forgetful and hilariously melodramatic character that will leave young readers in hysterics. When sitting at his desk looking forward to another day of doodling, he is devastated to realise his favourite pen is nowhere to be found. Rodney is so attached to his favourite pen he even named it: Penny Pen. Rodney's chaotic search for the elusive pen culminates in a comical tantrum when he simply cannot find his beloved Penny.

Observant children will laugh and shout in exasperation as they try to direct Rodney to his pen, which is hiding in plain sight. With a rhyme scheme similar to the bouncy, fast-paced feel of the popular

Aaron Blabey books, and a laugh-at-yourself message in the vein of Pierre Collet-Derby's *Barnaby Never Forgets*, *Rodney Loses It* pokes gentle fun at the big reactions children sometimes have when something doesn't quite go their way.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## I'm Australian Too

**Author:** Mem Fox

**Illustrator:** Ronojoy Ghosh

**ISBN:** 978-1760276218

**Published:** 1/03/2017

**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

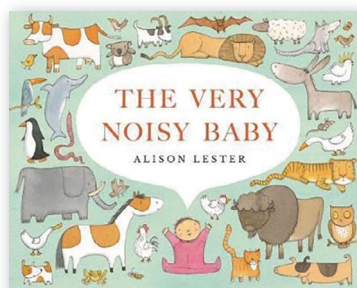
I'm Australian! How about you? Many people from many places have come across the seas, to make Australia their home. How Australian is that?

### >> OUR REVIEW

Australia's multicultural diversity and history is celebrated in this excellent picture book by Mem Fox. With acknowledgement to the traditional owners, through Anglo European settlement onto more recent refugee intakes, it shows we're all blessed to live under the Southern Cross. Our multicultural society is the envy of the world and it is good to see that celebrated in a children's book.

The text is very straightforward with a simple four line rhyme, but with the accompanying illustrations easily gets the message across.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## The Very Noisy Baby

**Author/Illustrator:** Alison Lester

**ISBN:** 978-1925475616

**Published:** 1/05/2017

**Publisher:** Affirm Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Here is the story of a very noisy baby. She could bellow like a buffalo & roar like a lion and howl like a wolf for a very long time. The baby loves to make all kinds of sounds. She's really very loud. But when some animals in the town go missing, can the very noisy baby help?

### >> OUR REVIEW

The zoo keeper has lost her tiger, and when she hears a growl she follows the sound to a pink little house on the edge of town. What she discovers is not a tiger, but a baby making the sound. When two pony club girls who are searching for a missing horse hear a neigh, they follow it to the pink house, but also realise it is just a baby. The same happens to Professor Twitchy who is looking for an owl, Farmer Frances who is searching for her cow and Mr McAlpine who can't find his cockatoo. This is one very noisy little human.

To find the lost animals, they take the baby outside. She growls, neighs, hoots, moos and squawks and all the missing animals appear. A delightful story about how one very noisy baby unites people from all walks of life and helps to save the day!

With its beautifully bright and delicate illustrations, a subtle rhyme and a rhythm that propels the story forward, this would be a wonderful story to read out loud. This book is also a Notable in Picture Books.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## The Second Sky

**Author:** Patrick Guest

**Illustrator:** Jonathan Bentley

**ISBN:** 978-1760127985

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The first thing Gilbert sees when he hatches from his egg is the sky. It is love at first sight and from that moment on Gilbert longs to fly like other birds. But penguins don't fly, they waddle, and so begins Gilbert's quest to find his place in the world. Great things happen when you reach for the sky.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This story about Gilbert, a baby penguin who desperately wants to fly, contains a message about effort and faith, and encourages readers to do what they love. Though he experiences many setbacks, and his family tell him to give up, Gilbert persists in trying to achieve his seemingly impossible dream. His success may not look how he imagined it to, but it does bring him joy.

This hopeful narrative is designed with playful fonts that emphasise and isolate specific words to enhance their meaning. Coupled with dreamily illustrated scenes, this beautiful picture book will have children cheering for the fluffy little protagonist.

This title is also on the Picture Books Notable list.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## EARLY CHILDHOOD NOTABLES



### 1, 2, Pirate Stew

**Author/Illustrator:** Kylie Howarth

**ISBN:** 978-1760403201

**Published:** 1/03/2017

**Publisher:** Bonnier

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

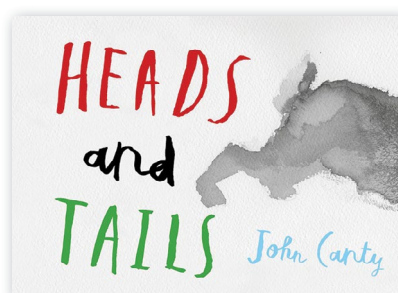
1, 2, Round up the crew. 3, 4, Now grab an oar. Take one large cardboard box, two imaginative kids, add a splash of pirate pets and you have a recipe for adventure! Count along from 1 to 22 to discover the secret of the missing treasure and some very special pirate stew.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

This fun book invites kids to count along from one to 22, as the sibling characters play a game of pirates in their backyard. The book is a wonderful introduction to numeracy for younger readers and a story about imaginative play. The use of rhyme and repetition, paired with fun illustrations to echo the spontaneity of the kids' adventure, makes for a great read aloud for parents and early childhood educators.

Children will enjoy watching the characters' game unfold as they encounter setbacks and surprises on their search for treasure—eventually involving their mummy, daddy, chooks and family dog—and may even be inspired to embark on their own backyard treasure hunt.

**Recommended Age:** 2 to 5 years



### Heads and Tails

**Author/Illustrator:** John Canty

**ISBN:** 978-0994384126

**Published:** 1/11/2017

**Publisher:** Berbay Publishing

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Leveraging the natural and universal fascination that children have with animals, the book utilises hints and recognition to build a sense of anticipation on each page, that is resolved on the following page when the identity of the animal is discovered.

Young readers are engaged in the process of deduction by drawing on visual prompts and clues such as where an animal may live, what the animal may look like and sounds the animal makes. The effect is that each page presents an engaging yet accessible mini mystery for the child to solve. Accordingly, the young reader's inevitable participation in the process of discovery ensures the book's enjoyment.

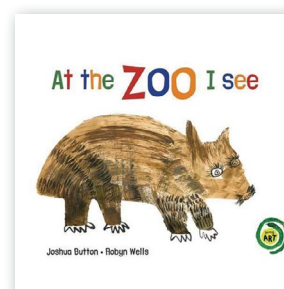
#### >> OUR REVIEW

*Heads and Tails* is a gorgeously illustrated game of What Am I? Each page features the water-coloured 'behind' of an animal, accompanied by a few descriptions to give the reader a chance to guess the animal. Following these clues, a sentence begins, 'I am a...', then the page is turned to reveal the head of the animal, overlaid with detailed nineteenth-century illustrations of the correct animal.

Watch out, though! There are a couple of tricks hiding within the pages for the observant child to find delight in. Canty makes use of

colourful text and careful breaks in repetition to create a beautiful, satisfying picture book. This title is also on the Picture Books Notable list.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 8 years



### At the Zoo I See

**Author:** Joshua Button

**Illustrator:** Robyn Wells

**ISBN:** 978-1925360455

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Magabala Books

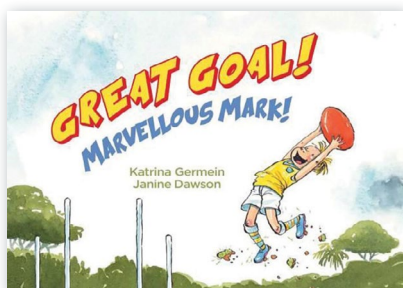
#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

This delightful book for early childhood will enthrall young children and their older readers. The vibrant illustrations are accompanied by a soft lyrical text and together they introduce some of the diverse native and exotic animals to be found in Australian zoos. The 'doleful lion', the 'pacing jaguar', the 'trumpeting elephant' and the cheeky cassowary are just some of the zoo animals that will tug at the heartstrings in this fabulous animal parade.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

This book is filled with vibrant, playful illustrations. Each page features a different animal, and Button's energetic style of painting gives them a joyful sense of character and movement. The animals are accompanied by sometimes surprising descriptions, letting us know what the animals are doing, or what they are like. Sure to add a descriptive word or two to a toddler's vocabulary, *At the Zoo I See*, is part of the Young Art board book series, by young Indigenous Australian artists.

**Recommended Age:** 1 to 3 years



## Great Goal! Marvellous Mark!

**Author:** Katrina Germein  
**Illustrator:** Janine Dawson  
**ISBN:** 978-1925272666  
**Published:** 1/06/2017  
**Publisher:** Hybrid Publishers

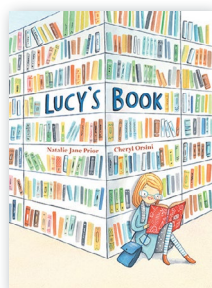
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Get ready for a great game of footy. There's plenty of action and masses of mud. Who will kick the first goal? Who will take the best mark? And will the yellow team win? A zippy, colourful, wet and muddy children's weekend footy game that relates to all budding AFL champions & their families.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This story is as energetic as the Australian Rules Football game it portrays. Coupled with colourful cartoons and language that skips from one page to the next, this book offers a bright and action-packed narration of an exciting game of AFL, played in the pouring rain. This unique alphabet book emphasises a single letter of the alphabet on each page as the reader is propelled through a riveting game of footy. United by their love of the game, children of all shapes, sizes and colours work together, celebrating their individual skills, to try and win the game. Not only will this engaging book familiarise children with the alphabet, it is sure to teach them about the lingo of Australia's national sport.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 5 years



## Lucy's Book

**Author:** Natalie Jane Prior  
**Illustrator:** Cheryl Orsini  
**ISBN:** 978-0734416605  
**Published:** 28/02/2017  
**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

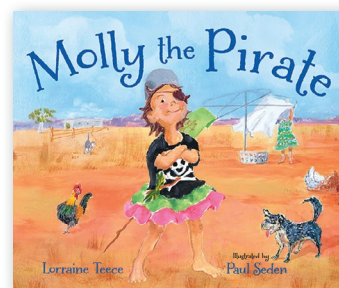
Lucy's mum takes her to the library every Saturday. Lucy loves to read, but there is one special book that she borrows over and over again. The book is shared between friends, dropped in the ocean, flown to China and even made into a banana sandwich. But what will happen when everyone's favourite book goes missing?

### >> OUR REVIEW

This Brisbane author clearly understands the power that a good book can have! A wonderful story about the power a favourite book holds, and the joy of sharing it with your friends. Once Lucy's favourite book is opened, no one can put it down and just as intriguingly, all of them have different reactions to it. Eventually the book becomes so worn out that it's removed from the library and by then is out of publication, too.

Lucy can't find a copy anywhere, but happily she eventually spies it at a book sale and is quick to buy it. Now it's available for her and her friends to enjoy all over again! A lovely story, well told and infused with the passion which only a true bibliophile can possess. Rather than portraying the librarian in a stereotypical twin set, she is modelled after the fashionable Megan Daley of Children's Book Daily fame, which is a nice touch!

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 8 years



## Molly the Pirate

**Author:** Lorraine Teece  
**Illustrator:** Paul Seden  
**ISBN:** 978-1925360660  
**Published:** 1/11/2017  
**Publisher:** Magabala Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Molly the Pirate is a swashbuckling tale that will delight anyone who ever wanted to be a pirate. Young Molly's imagination knows no bounds when she transforms her Australian backyard into an adventure playground on the high seas.

Molly conjures up a pirate ship on her inland horizon and takes her loyal cat and dog along for the ride as she rows across the choppy ocean to the unsuspecting pirates. On board, she meets a feisty crew of salty buccaneers who look suspiciously like her own farmyard chickens. They are no match for Molly's daring exploits as she walks the plank, dances jolly jigs, scrambles up the rigging (or is that a clothesline?) and steers the ship like a true seafaring adventurer.

Paul Seden's witty illustrations pop off the page. His visual storytelling is a stand-out and children will love searching for objects from Molly's real world that take on a hilarious new purpose in this jaunty pirate story.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Highlighting the incredible adventures that you can have in your own backyard with a little imagination, this spirited tale follows Molly, a young girl living in the Australian outback, who dreams of being a pirate. Armed with a pirate

hat, an eye patch and a sword, Molly is ready to explore. Her wild seas are auburn sands and the crew might be made up of chickens, but this doesn't stop Molly from walking the plank, having sword fights and steering the ship.

The illustrator's joyful images build a momentum mirrored by Molly's great enthusiasm for achieving her dream. Filled with bright blues and oranges, her world is sure to engage little eyes as they listen intently to her buccaneer escapades.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Hello To You, Moon

**Author:** Sally Morgan

**Illustrator:** S. Day & B. Maroney

**ISBN:** 978-1760125462

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

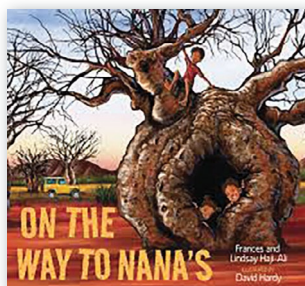
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Not all creatures are night animals, but all creatures respond to the moon. Beautiful counting verse and luminous artwork bring to life the mystery and wonder of moonlight's effect on us all.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Ten diverse animals are used in this simple counting book, matched to ten different actions and the sounds associated with them. It also presents the stages of the night from dawn to dusk, representing all its different colours. A well constructed book with appealing verse and diverse vocabulary.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## On the Way to Nana's

**Author:** Frances & Lindsay Haji-Ali

**Illustrator:** David Hardy

**ISBN:** 978-1925360301

**Published:** 1/06/2017

**Publisher:** Magabala Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Frances and Lindsay Haji-Ali take us counting backwards from FIFTEEN to ONE on this spectacular journey in the far north of WA. When Frances and Lindsay lived with their family in Broome, they often set out to visit Nana in the tiny outback town of Wyndham over 1,000km north. These road trips took them across the magnificent Kimberley landscape and inspired this counting story.

*On the Way to Nana's* is a stand-out counting book. Counting backwards from fifteen to one is a challenging concept for children to grasp. Each double page spread includes numbers and words and will enthrall readers, parents and educators as they find and count the objects on each page. From bulbous boabs and wild brumbies to weary travellers, flying magpie geese and flowing waterfalls, David Hardy's striking illustrations capture the awe and excitement of this special family adventure.

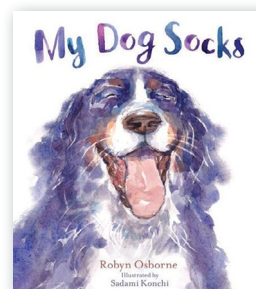
### >> OUR REVIEW

*On the Way to Nana's* follows a family of eight on the long road to Nana's house, across the Kimberly. One small girl wonders what she will see on the way. Beginning with 15 colourful flowers and ending with one excited Nana, we count backwards through the impressive sights iconic to that 1,000km stretch of the far north west of Australia.

The authors create a predictable path for the story to follow by repeating the phrases, 'I'm on the way to Nanna's house. What will I see?' and 'the long road in front of me'. This encourages young readers to follow along with the story as it is read aloud.

The book opens to a two-page spread of a mud map to Nanna's house, great for introducing children to the place names in that part of the country. Hardy's digital illustrations have the look of oil pastel, capture the bold landscape, domestic and wild animals, architecture, transport and characters of the region.

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 8 years



## My Dog Socks

**Author:** Robyn Osborne

**Illustrator:** Sadami Konchi

**ISBN:** 978-1925272826

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** FordStreet Publishers

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

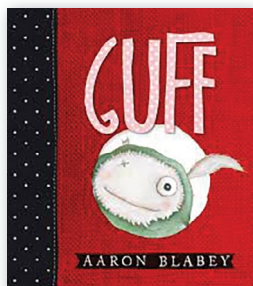
Join Socks in his secret world, where imagination rules and the everyday becomes extraordinary. While most people think Socks is just an ordinary dog, through a child's eyes he becomes an enchanted character of many disguises; a chameleon who changes with his environment. One day he's a contented cow rolling in grass, the next a sleek seal basking on rocks, or even a terrible tiger, sprinting from hunters and searching for prey. Regardless of his many guises however, Socks offers a dog's unconditional love and loyalty, for 'when he is by my side, he is my best friend'.



## >> OUR REVIEW

This beautifully illustrated story, filled with autumn leaves, mud and surf, is about the bond between a boy and his dog, Socks, who he explains is no ordinary dog. With the help of his lively imagination, the boy shows us how Socks can become any number of animals depending on the games they're playing together and the places they visit. At the beach, Socks becomes a daring dolphin. In the garden, Socks turns into a mischievous magpie. With each transformation, young readers will see the boy playing gleefully with Socks, and the dog's shadow changing to echo the animal in the boy's imagination.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Guff

**Author/Illustrator:** Aaron Blabey  
**ISBN:** 978-0670077175  
**Published:** 31/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Penguin

## >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*This is my Guff. He's really nice. I've known him since I was little. And I still know him even now I'm big... A funny and delightful picture book for anyone who's ever had a little fabric friend. From the award-winning and bestselling author, Aaron Blabey.*

## >> OUR REVIEW

A young child's attachment to her favourite soft toy is captured in this lightly humorous tale. A little different to Aaron Blabey's usual fare, this book is well conceived as you'd expect and proves yet again that Blabey is a master at seeing humour in the mundane. The mother's facial

expressions are a hoot. This title is also on the Picture Books Notable list.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## Me and You

**Author:** Deborah Kelly  
**Illustrator:** Karen Blair  
**ISBN:** 978-0670079247  
**Published:** 27/02/2017  
**Publisher:** Penguin

## >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

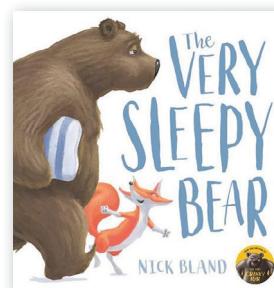
A delightful rhyming picture book that celebrates all the special relationships and fun-filled activities in a child's life, their special bonds with parents, grandparents, cousins, neighbours and pets, as well as all the wonderful fun-filled days they enjoy together- from beach and baking days, to cycling and footy-kicking or simply lazy days. This is a joyous, accessible picture book perfect for sharing with children.

## >> OUR REVIEW

A magical picture book exploring all the fun filled things a child can experience with the most important people in their lives. Be it making cupcakes with nan, playing soccer with her older brother, tickling her friend or playing dress up with her parents. It's a celebration of what it means to be a small child growing up in a loving and caring environment.

There's a fun and vocabulary rich rhyming verse and some great, exuberant illustrations. This is a very enjoyable, well crafted book that will work well as a read aloud story too.

**Recommended Age:** 2 to 7 years



## The Very Sleepy Bear

**Author/Illustrator:** Nick Bland  
**ISBN:** 978-1743812549  
**Published:** 1/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

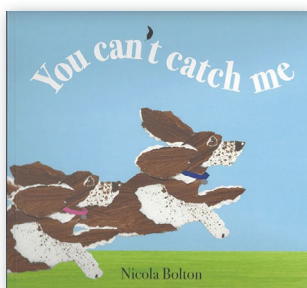
## >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*On a Jingle Jangle Mountain, as the snow fell on the rocks, a sleepy bear was being followed by a very sneaky fox. But Bear was in a hurry, he was running very late Winter had arrived and it was time to hibernate! The Very Cranky Bear is back and he has a mischievous fox to contend with...*

## >> OUR REVIEW

This clever, humorous story features the same character from *The Very Cranky Bear* who is now feeling very tired and ready to hibernate. A sneaky fox is keeping the very sleepy bear from his much needed slumber. While the fox tries his best to entice the bear into trying out bigger and better caves for his winter of hibernation, the reader begins to wonder whether the fox really has the bear's best interests at heart. Using rhythm, repetition, rhyme and carefully placed pauses to build young readers' anticipation, children will learn to distrust the sneaky fox and want to help the bear avoid being tricked out of his comfortable cave for a mediocre alternative. Despite the cunning creature's best efforts, our protagonist remains unfazed—comically so—and children will leave the story with a sense of satisfaction as the very sleepy bear has the last laugh.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 6 years



## You Can't Catch Me

**Author/Illustrator:** Nicola Bolton

**ISBN:** 978-0646977553

**Published:** 1/01/2017

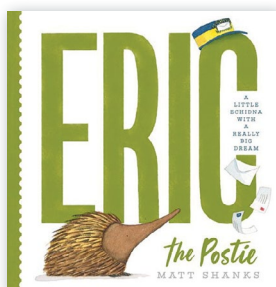
**Publisher:** Other

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

This delightful, rhythmic story is full of fun and energy. Two dogs spend their day chasing Blackbird while she darts from tree to tree collecting mulberries for her babies three. Will they catch her?

### THIS TITLE HASN'T BEEN REVIEWED

**Recommended Age:** 1 to 4 years



## Eric the Postie

**Author/Illustrator:** Matt Shanks

**ISBN:** 978-1743811931

**Published:** 1/07/2017

**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Eric had a dream ... he knew he could be the best postman ever. There was one big obstacle—he didn't have any mail to deliver. Eric is not going to let that stop him... An adorable, heart-warming story about chasing your big dreams, no matter how little you are.

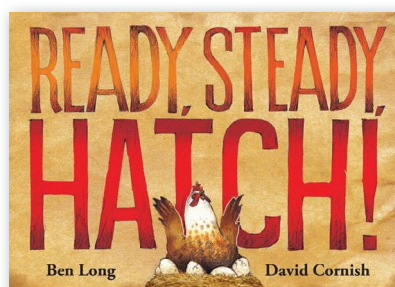
### >> OUR REVIEW

Eric is an echidna with a really big dream. While he lives in a family

of famous echidnas, Eric wants to be a part of something different. Eric dreams to be a postman. Unfortunately the post office does not accept animals as their staff. To pursue his dream Eric needs to find a way to be accepted, so proceeds to intercept the mail. The postman notices that while people are mailing letters and receiving them for a while he is not the one delivering them.

Eric is found out to be intercepting the mail and delivering it. The people love Eric and his mail delivery so more letters are sent. Eric seems to be accepted as a postman, despite being an echidna.

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 7 years



## Ready, Steady, Hatch!

**Author:** Ben Long

**Illustrator:** David Cornish

**ISBN:** 978-1925272536

**Published:** 1/05/2017

**Publisher:** Ford Street Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Round and bright, and creamy white, amid the pumpkin patch, a clutch of eggs was sprouting legs. Ready, steady, hatch! Ten chicks are excited to discover the world outside their eggshells, but the smallest is soon separated from the rest. Where can she be? A rollicking adventure about curiosity, camaraderie and, above all, having a play along the way!

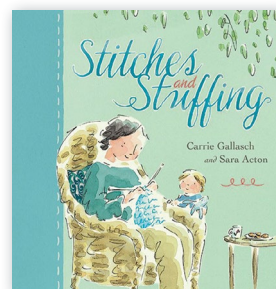
### >> OUR REVIEW

This playful story celebrates the birth of ten exuberant chicks from a clutch of creamy white eggs in a pumpkin patch. To the beat of a rollicking

rhyme, the ten chicks set off to find their mother hen, however one inquisitive chick is waylaid. When the mother hen only counts nine heads, she gathers together her brood and leads them in a hunt for their missing sister.

A fast-paced, funny tale filled with musicality, *Ready, Steady, Hatch!* is about being curious of the world around us. The comedic character of the chicks and visible pleasure they find from their antics is sure to pique the interest of early readers. The momentum of the story matched with lively illustrations makes this book perfect to read aloud.

**Recommended Age:** 2 to 5 years



## Stitches & Stuffing

**Author:** Carrie Gallasch

**Illustrator:** Sara Acton

**ISBN:** 978-1760127787

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

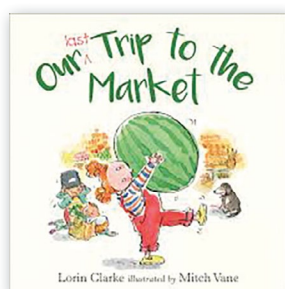
Adeline's beloved Bunnybear goes with her everywhere, but one night he is damaged by the dog. Nanna sews Bunnybear back together, but this new Bunnybear is stiff and strange and Adeline puts him on a shelf and leaves him there. Then Nanna goes away, and Adeline realises it is not just stitches and stuffing that holds Bunnybear together ... it is love.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Adeline and her favourite soft toy Bunnybear have always been inseparable. They especially like spending time at Nanna's. On one

such trip, Bunnybear gets left on the beach and Adeline has to go to bed without him for the first time ever. This marks a change in her life and though parts of him are retrieved the next day and Nanna recreates him, he's not the same in Adeline's eyes. It is only after Nanna has to go away (while this is left wide open it could infer a long hospital stay or death), that Adeline returns to Bunnybear and realises Nanna remade him just the way he should be. An endearing tale highlighting the importance of stable, loving relationships to young children and how these can change due to unforeseen circumstances.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Our Last Trip to the Market

**Author:** Lorin Clarke

**Illustrator:** Mitch Vane

**ISBN:** 978-1925266962

**Published:** 29/03/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

A glorious exploration of family and fun - for everyone who has ever taken a mob of unruly kids to a crowded place! What a fabulous morning to go to the market. That busker is dressed as a clown! And there's fruit and a baker. There are people on bikes. Annabelle, please put that down... This boisterous family excursion is full of warmth, humour and delicious mischief.

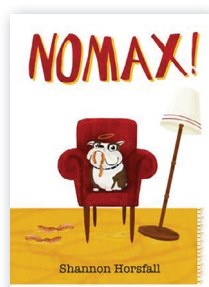
### >> OUR REVIEW

Amidst the colours, sights and sounds of the market, getting the shopping done with six children in tow is akin to 'herding cats'. As she

juggles the shopping, mum tries to keep an eye on everyone and keep them moving in the right direction. She eventually breathes a sign of relief when they're all safely back in the car (oblivious to the chaos and somewhat disgruntled stallholders they left in their wake).

An amusing look at a family excursion told through humorous rhyming verse and delightful illustrations. Many parents and teachers will be able to relate to the antics involved!

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 5 years



## NoMax!

**Author/Illustrator:**

Shannon Horsfall

**ISBN:** 978-1460753927

**Published:** 22/05/2017

**Publisher:** Harper Collins

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Max is a dog who lives life to the full, which is why his master is so often calling out to him, 'No Max!' From the author of WAS NOT ME, comes another very funny book about life as Max the dog sees it.

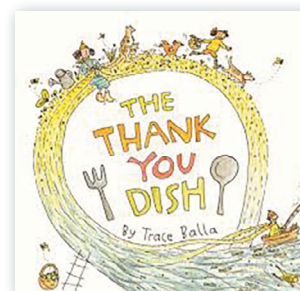
### >> OUR REVIEW

This is a delightful tale about a little dog trying to help his dad with anything he can, including unwrapping the morning paper, finding his slippers and gardening. Every time he tries to help, dad calls out NOMAX! Unaware of the mess that he causes and thinking that his dad is enjoying all his help, the well-meaning puppy cannot understand why the name on his bowl is not his name... it says only "Max".

The cleverly collaged illustrations

incorporate cartoons, photos and sketches. With its cheeky protagonist, catchy rhymes and steady rhythm, this would be a wonderful book to read aloud to early readers to encourage curiosity and play.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## The Thank You Dish

**Author/Illustrator:** Trace Balla

**ISBN:** 978-1760292355

**Published:** 29/03/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*It's dinnertime at Grace's place... 'Thank you, alpaca,' says Grace... 'Alpaca?' asks Mama. 'Why would you thank an alpaca?...' A playful mealtime conversation becomes a joyful act of giving thanks. From the multi-award-winning creator of Rivertime, Rockhopping and Shine...*

### >> OUR REVIEW

Knowing where our food comes from is of increasing importance to many people. This straightforward and endearing picture book reflects that, as Grace gives thanks for her meal by naming everyone involved in growing the food and all the connections along the way, such as the road workers for fixing the path so Grace and her mum could ride their bikes to Suki's stall to buy corn, the kangaroos for not eating the carrots, the alpaca for providing the wool that was knitted into a scarf to keep Uncle Fred warm while he caught the fish, and of course her mum for cooking the meal. A simple look at the many things we have to be thankful for, as well as a sweet introduction to the food chain.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +





## The Scared Book

**Author:** Debra Tidball  
**Illustrator:** Kim Siew  
**ISBN:** 978-0734417497  
**Published:** 29/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

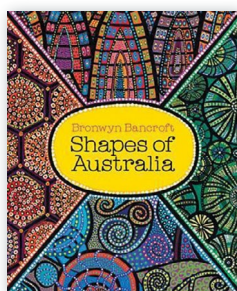
It's story time, but this book has bad news. As soon as it realises there are monsters in it, it's too scared to tell you the rest of the story! Can you help it feel better? It needs you to rub away its goosebumps, blow away the giant butterflies in its tummy, and fan away the yucky smell the monsters have left behind. A fun and quirky interactive story, with distinctive and stylish illustrations from an innovative young illustrator and muralist.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This narrator is scared of the monsters in its own book! Their nerves are depicted as a tingle down their spine, goosebumps, butterflies... and so it goes on. Enlisting the help of the reader on each page, the narrator tries to get rid of the monsters.

This clever picture book, filled with colourful and engaging illustrations, turns story time into an interactive event. Readers must scratch, blow, flick and shake to dispel the monsters from the book and, in turn, they become an integral part of the story. *The Scared Book* visually and behaviourally depicts what it is to feel frightened and perhaps even shows children what they can do to leave behind their own monsters.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Shapes of Australia

**Author/Illustrator:** Bronwyn Bancroft  
**ISBN:** 978-1760129286  
**Published:** 1/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

From boulders to bee hives, from mountains to coral, explore the shapes that form our land.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A colourful exploration of the Australian landscape using evocative indigenous design. Each double page spread is dedicated to one aspect, with a short description. Various shapes are also used which are mentioned or alluded to in the description. An intriguing introduction to indigenous art.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Busting!

**Author/Illustrator:** Aaron Blabey  
**ISBN:** 978-1743812389  
**Published:** 1/03/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

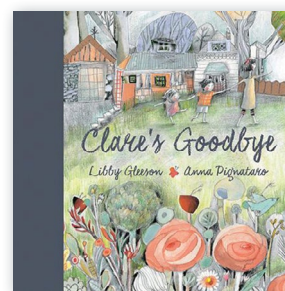
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

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 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 +



## Clare's Goodbye

**Author:** Libby Gleeson  
**Illustrator:** Anna Pignataro  
**ISBN:** 978-1760127527  
**Published:** 1/03/2017  
**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

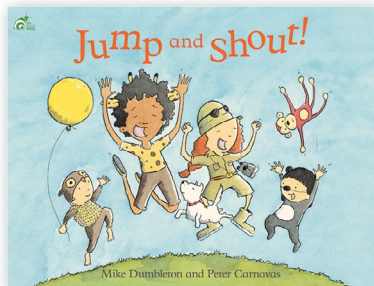
We all have our own way of saying goodbye. A poignant story about letting go, with evocative illustrations by acclaimed illustrator Anna Pignataro.

### >> OUR REVIEW

An endearing tale about how children respond to upheaval and change. Clare's family are moving home and whilst her older siblings are keen to say 'goodbye' to treasured places, she appears morose and indifferent. However, when she vanishes and they eventually find her dancing in her old bedroom, it's apparent

that she does care, but expresses it in a different way. A charming picture book which nicely reflects the experience of moving house. This title is also on the Picture Books Notable list.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## Jump and Shout

**Author:** Mike Dumbleton

**Illustrator:** Peter Carnavas

**ISBN:** 978-0648086819

**Published:** 6/11/2017

**Publisher:** Raising Literacy Aust

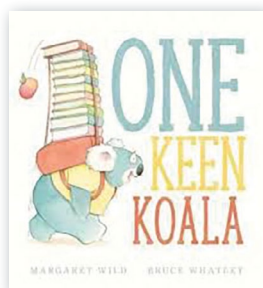
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

We're going out! Jump and shout ... clap and cheer on this rollicking adventure with a lively family. Join them as they swing, skip and tumble through the neighbourhood on a joyful day out. A fun rhyming story full of actions, sounds and movement. Are you ready? ... Let's go!

### >> OUR REVIEW

A family of energetic children visit the local park with their mum. Happy to be outside, their myriad activities are captured on the page as they climb, swing run and tumble around. Finally worn out, they trudge wearily home and head to bed. A delightfully rollicking picture book packed with actions, colour and total enjoyment. The simple rhyming text is complemented by the excellent illustrations, with the actions easy to copy in class or at home.

**Recommended Age:** 1 to 5 years



## One Keen Koala

**Author:** Margaret Wild

**Illustrator:** Bruce Whatley

**ISBN:** 978-1743629291

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

One keen koala and all the animal friends are ready for school! Count along in this beautiful introduction to the fun of school from two of Australia's favourite award-winning picture book creators.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A counting picture book featuring Australian animals that has a fun rhyming verse and excellent illustrations from a great author/illustrator team. There are quite a few books like this on the market, but it's a good one to purchase if you have a gap in your collection.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 5 years



## Busy Little Creatures

**Author/Illustrator:** Fiona Bowden

**ISBN:** 978-0648115601

**Published:** 1/11/2017

**Publisher:** Raising Literacy Aust

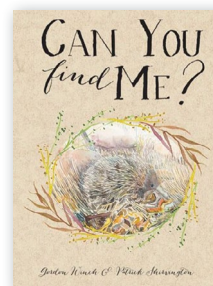
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

An engaging book full of busy little creatures sure to delight and fascinate both children and adults. A fun way to explore movement, colours, patterns, sizes and numbers whilst supporting your child's learning and encouraging outdoor play and adventure.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Young children are usually fascinated by creepy crawlies, so this counting picture book using various insects should grab their attention. Each creature is shown in large detail on one page, and on the facing page a number of them are depicted moving around. Appropriate colours are also used, i.e. red for ladybirds and grey for slaters, so there are plenty of learning opportunities packed into this well-presented and thought out offering.

**Recommended Age:** 1 to 4 years



## Can You Find Me?

**Author:** Gordon Winch

**Illustrator:** Patrick Shirvington

**ISBN:** 978-1925059793

**Published:** 1/09/2017

**Publisher:** New Frontier

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

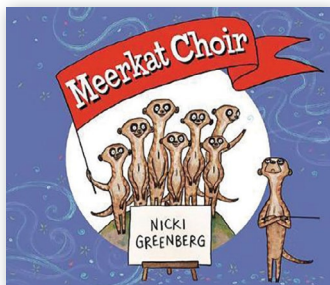
Search for an echidna, a powerful owl, a frog and many more animals hidden on every page. Pat Shirvington's striking illustrations hide each one of the animals just enough for the guessing to begin.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Many well known Australian creatures rely on camouflage to survive. In this well crafted picture book, young children are introduced to some of

their camouflage techniques, the habitat they live in and the ways in which they have adapted to live where they do. The illustrations depict each creature concealed within their favoured environment, and the reader is invited to find them. The text is deliberately repetitive to reinforce the vocabulary and questions asked. This title is also in the Crichton Award for New Illustrators short list.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Meerkat Choir

**Author/Illustrator:** Nicki Greenberg  
**ISBN:** 978-1760290795  
**Published:** 27/09/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The meerkat choirmaster will only allow meerkats in his choir. But singing is fun and all the other animals want to join in too. A wonderfully funny picture book about the folly of excluding others from your group.

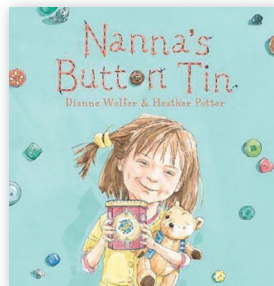
### >> OUR REVIEW

His exclusive choir is strictly for meerkats, so when a myriad of other animals ask to join, the choir master is seriously annoyed. However when the choir proves to be hopeless, he gives up in disgust.

Meanwhile the ex-choir members follow the sound of beautiful singing and discover that all the animals who were turned away from the Meerkat Choir have formed their own choir. On asking to join they are told that there are no meerkats in their choir... so of course they are welcome! A nice

little play on words and a lovely story about the joy of welcoming others, the fun of joining in and the blight of exclusion.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Nanna's Button Tin

**Author:** Wolfer Dianne  
**Illustrator:** Heather Potter  
**ISBN:** 978-1922077677  
**Published:** 1/06/2017  
**Publisher:** Walker Books

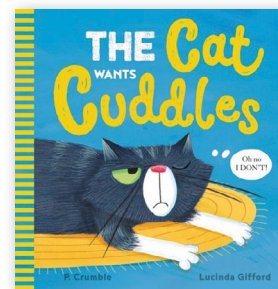
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Nanna's button tin is very special. It has buttons of all shapes and sizes and they all have a different story to tell. But today, one button in particular is needed. A button for teddy. A beautiful story about memories and the stories that shape a family.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A six-year-old and her Nanna search for the perfect button to mend her teddy bear. They tip the contents of the button tin onto the lounge room floor and spread them out. As they look, Nanna tells the girl stories about particular buttons that catch their eyes, and what makes those buttons special. This book, softly illustrated with gouache, captures the warm, safe, special relationship between children and grandparents. Children are introduced to the sentimentality of small, treasured objects. A great starting point for conversations about family keepsakes, this is ultimately a book about love.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 6 years



## The Cat Wants Cuddles

**Author:** P. Crumble  
**Illustrator:** Lucinda Gifford  
**ISBN:** 978-1743811412  
**Published:** 1/05/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

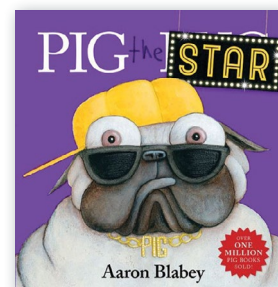
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Kevin doesn't want a pat. He doesn't want a tickle. And he definitely does NOT want a cuddle. There's absolutely no way this hilarious cat is going to change his mind about that. Or will he?

### >> OUR REVIEW

Anyone who does or has owned a cat will instantly relate to the contrary nature exhibited by Kevin. The lengths he goes to avoid being cuddles is so relatable and his cranky, self-centred nature so typical. Naturally, as soon as the dog gets some attention he wants to get some too, on his terms of course! A wonderful study on the nature of cats, told with humour and with insightful illustrations.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## Pig The Star

**Author/Illustrator:** Aaron Blabey  
**ISBN:** 978-1743812754  
**Published:** 1/09/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic



### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Pig just LOVES attention. In fact, he's a great, big SHOW-OFF. But when ANOTHER star appears at the photo shoot, Pig doesn't like it. No, Pig doesn't like it at ALL...

### >> OUR REVIEW

No introductions needed really, as we are probably all firm fans of Aaron Blabey, Pig and Trevor. In this instalment, Pig and Trevor are having their photos taken. Naturally the lights and cameras are having a negative impact on Pig, who starts to hog the limelight. His gross behaviour is rewarded in kind, when a stage prop falls on him, giving his long-suffering friend Trevor the opportunity to shine.

Another great rhyming verse and accompanied by the usual absurdly funny illustrations. A fun activity would be to try picking all the celebrities and historical characters Pig and Trevor are dressed up as!

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## Olivia's Voice

**Author:** Mike Lucas

**Illustrator:** Jennifer Harrison

**ISBN:** 978-1925227192

**Published:** 1/03/2017

**Publisher:** Midnight Sun Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Listen. Silence. Love, words, friendship and colour need no sound. My name is Olivia and this is my world.*

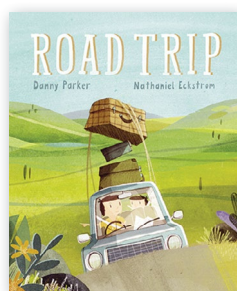
### >> OUR REVIEW

Olivia is a young girl whose ordinary school day we follow from morning

until night. Through Olivia's eyes, the reader experiences vibrant sensations without sound. We discover what it is like for Olivia to interact with her family, friends and teacher without hearing, because Olivia is deaf. This is not a story about resilience or overcoming disability. Rather, it is the celebration of an ordinary life, and a portrait of a girl who is perfectly comfortable in her body and world.

The breathtaking illustrations are beguiling in the way they could almost be photographs, if not for their dreamlike quality. Paired with gentle, lyrical prose, this picture book as a whole is vivid, deep and filled with light; an experience that will surely have readers wanting to open it again and again.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 8 years



## Road Trip

**Author:** Danny Parker

**Illustrator:** Nathaniel Eckstrom

**ISBN:** 978-1760127404

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

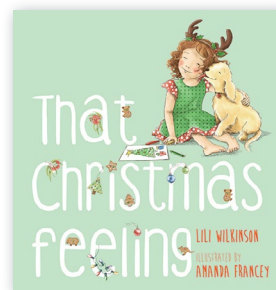
The only thing worse than a long and boring road trip is driving with someone who loves long and boring road trips. Even when that someone is your dad. A hilarious story about a child who becomes increasingly exasperated by his father's inclination to take it slow. But when will we get there? It's just a disaster, couldn't we go just a little bit faster?

### >> OUR REVIEW

A delightful picture book with a fun

rhyming verse depicting a young boy's frustration with how long the journey is taking. He just wants to know when they'll arrive and all the standard replies of 'soon' and 'not long now' just don't cut it. Of course it doesn't help that he can't tell the time. His clever father then explains the concept of time in language he'll understand—a phone call with Gran, a play date, a concert etc. To wrap it up, the journey has taken an hour, time that quickly passed while they chatted! Quite endearing with some amusing and charming illustrations.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## That Christmas Feeling

**Author:** Lili Wilkinson

**Illustrator:** Amanda Francey

**ISBN:** 978-1760294960

**Published:** 27/09/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

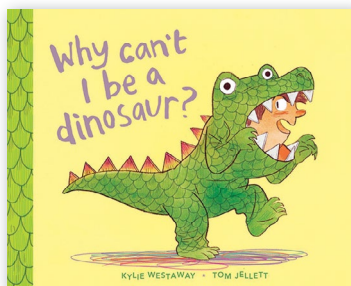
Dottie is waiting for the Christmas feeling to arrive - that fizzy, excited feeling, where everything is a bit magical. But this year, Dottie, her brother, Jem, and their dog, Shortbread, are staying with Grandma and Grandpa. Grandma and Grandpa are trying hard, but Christmas just isn't the same... A gorgeous, heart-warming story about misplacing the Christmas spirit, and finding it again.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Staying with Grandma and Grandpa isn't the same as having Christmas at home. There's no tree to decorate, no pudding to make no carol singing in the park. Worst of all Mummy and Daddy aren't there. Consequently, Dottie isn't feeling very festive, even

though her brother is trying to be upbeat. When her parents arrive with her new baby sister, Dottie realises that the most precious aspect of Christmas is family. This is a lovely, evocative tale with a valuable and timeless message.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Why Can't I Be A Dinosaur?

**Author:** Kylie Westaway

**Illustrator:** Tom Jellett

**ISBN:** 978-1760294724

**Published:** 23/08/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

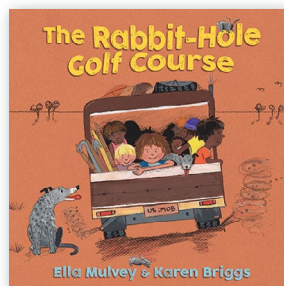
'Today. Is. Dinosaur. Day!' I roared. 'Today is Aunt Daisy's wedding,' said Mum. 'And Nellie, you're the flower girl, remember?' 'But I can't be a flower girl today,' I said. 'I'm a dinosaur.' 'Mum, Dad and baby Riley are all busy getting ready for Aunt Daisy's wedding and no one has time to listen to Nellie. But Nellie can't wear her flower girl dress today. Today, she's a dinosaur. Luckily Nellie might just have a brilliant idea... *Why Can't I be a Dinosaur?* is a warm family story about determination and ingenuity - and a wedding with a difference.

### >> OUR REVIEW

The accomplished duo of Kylie Westaway and Tom Jellett have created this relatable story. Nellie has decided that it's Dinosaur Day and insists on wearing her dinosaur costume. Everyone else knows it's Aunt Daisy's wedding day and Nellie is the flower girl. The harder her parents try to get her to change, the

more stubborn she becomes. In the end Daisy hits on a solution which, in her eyes, is a great compromise. A fun picture book with a recognisable dialogue ideal for reading aloud.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## The Rabbit-Hole Golf Course

**Author:** Ella Mulvey

**Illustrator:** Karen Briggs

**ISBN:** 978-1925266290

**Published:** 28/06/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In the big old ute, on the long red road, in the desert of my home, we all set off for the rabbit-hole golf course. It's the best place around here to find rabbits. We sit by the holes, we dig, we wait... Thump tick, thump tick, thump tick. Where are all the rabbits? A warm and funny Australian story.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This very Australian story follows a group of indigenous and non-indigenous children as they embark on the hunt to catch a pet rabbit. Their hunt is filled with things to enjoy - a kangaroo, honey from the honey ants, witchetty grubs (maku) cooked on a fire and digging holes in the red dust. That night with their families they drink billy tea and eat damper around the fire. While there are no rabbits to be found during the day, once they're all asleep it's an entirely different matter! A fun and informative read.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Two Rainbows

**Author:** Sophie Masson

**Illustrator:** Michael McMahon

**ISBN:** 978-1760127794

**Published:** 1/07/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

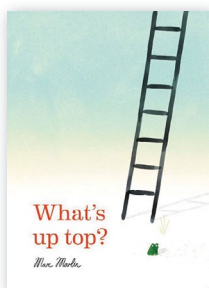
All the colours of the rainbow are explored against the striking backdrop of two different worlds. A stunning exploration of colour by internationally acclaimed author Sophie Masson and emerging illustrator Michael McMahon.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This lovely picture book contrasts the colours of a rainbow from the perspective of a child who used to live on a farm but now lives in the city. The colours in the country are nearly all natural, whereas those in the city are usually man made. In the city, red is the postbox down the road. On our farm, red was the tractor working in the field and a robin hopping on a branch. Even the rainbows appear different with the only constant being the storm clouds.

The simple, evocative text has a wonderful harmony to it, with the accompanying illustrations beautifully mirroring their sentiment while drawing the reader in with food for thought. Highly recommended.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## What's Up Top?

**Author:** Marc Martin

**Illustrator:** Marc Martin

**ISBN:** 978-0143783886

**Published:** 28/08/2017

**Publisher:** Penguin

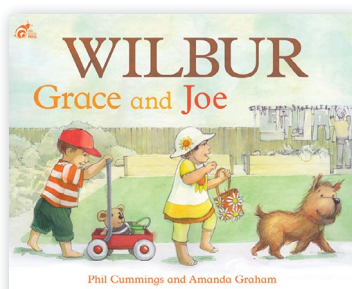
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

What's at the top of the ladder? Is it a hat? Is it a cat? Is it a snail on a whale? Simple, playful and absurdist, this new picture book by Marc Martin is about imagination and creativity.

### >> OUR REVIEW

The joyous rhyming text encourages children to use their imagination and creativity in this enjoyable and offbeat picture book. A penguin poses a question about what is at the top of a ladder. He can't climb it to see, so can only speculate, leaving it up to the reader to fill him in. There's some interesting takes on how we perceive things by their shape or outline, e. g. a hat or a cat, or a dog as opposed to a 'frog on a log'. It's an idea which could be pursued further in class, offering a humorously absurd beginning to what could be a worthwhile discussion. This title is also on the Picture Books Notable list.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Wilbur, Grace & Joe

**Author:** Phil Cummings

**Illustrator:** Amanda Graham

**ISBN:** 978-0648086826

**Published:** 1/11/2017

**Publisher:** Raising Literacy Aust

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

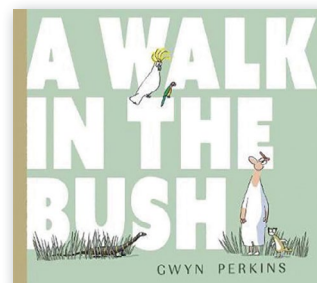
A heart-warming story following the tale of Wilbur, Grace and Joe. Join Wilbur, a fun loving family pet as he shares the joy of Grace and Joe's first years. He worries when they fall, he rejoices with their first steps ... and faithfully joins in all their adventures.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This heart-warming tale follows a family as they welcome twins into their world. Wilbur the family dog is especially vigilant and caring of the new additions, being present every step of the way. We see them grow, take their first steps, play dress up and explore the great outdoors, all under Wilbur's watch. A lovely rhyming verse accompanies the joyful illustrations which beautifully depict happy family life. The character of Wilbur is a delight to behold as well.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +

## PICTURE BOOKS SHORT LIST



## A Walk in the Bush

**Author/Illustrator:** Gwyn Perkins

**ISBN:** 978-1925475531

**Published:** 3/07/2017

**Publisher:** Affirm Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Little Iggy doesn't want to leave the house, but Grandad insists they always have fun together. What follows is a wonderful journey in the great Australian outdoors with singing birds, wallaby surprises, secret caterpillar messages and oodles of grandad humour. Here is a story about the wonders of nature, the funny side of life and spending time with the ones we love.

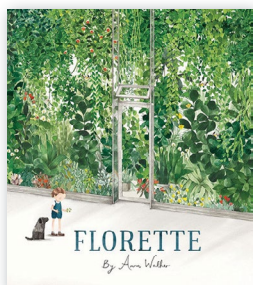
### >> OUR REVIEW

Set amongst Australia's unique landscape and filled with a cast of Australian animals, readers follow Iggy and Grandad as they go on an adventure. As they journey through the bush, there are moments of great excitement and times for quiet reflection. Whatever they are doing, Iggy and Grandad just want to be together. Before Iggy and Grandad go outside, the illustrations are small and bare. However once they begin to walk through the Australian outback, the cartoon style drawings become brighter, bigger and more detailed. They see cockatoos, kookaburras, wallabies and more! The soft pastel colours capture the tenderness, warmth and familiarity that characterises the relationship between children and grandparents.



Written by a grandfather for his grandchild, this book radiates with familial love.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## Florette

**Author/Illustrator:** Anna Walker

**ISBN:** 978-0670079414

**Published:** 27/02/2017

**Publisher:** Penguin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

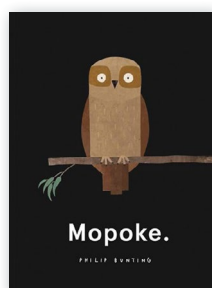
When Mae has to move house from the country to the city, she feels lonely and sad - until she discovers a beautiful place full of green in the centre of Paris. What she finds there sparks something special and beautiful that will make her feel much more at home.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This beautiful book is just as insightful and thought provoking as the author's previous [*Mr Huff*]. It looks at upheaval and moving home as well as feelings of loneliness and sadness for things lost. All sorts of emotions course through Mae when her family move from a rural property to the city. Here she's surrounded by buildings and ordered parks, gone is her cherished wilderness, full of butterflies and birds. Spying a solitary bird, she follows it to a wondrous shop full of plants. Here she carefully pulls up a seedling growing out front. Taking it home, it's the instigator for a transformation of her apartment block, as other children start growing plants. Eventually her once barren courtyard is transformed into a beautiful walled garden and Mae is content.

A beautiful book which is sure to become a firm favourite. Mae's adjustment to her new life will resonate with children, especially the constant stream of unpacking. Also adapting to new surroundings and finding meaning and solace within them. Highly recommended.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Mopoke

**Author/Illustrator:** Philip Bunting

**ISBN:** 978-1742991658

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Omnibus

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

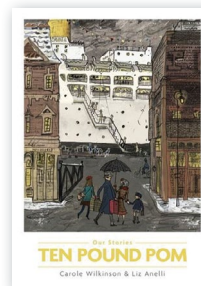
This is a Mopoke. Mopoke loves peace and quiet. He is about to find out that you can't always get what you want. Visually brilliant, and hysterically funny, Philips pictures tell a thousand words, with the support of some very sparse, but hilarious, text. This is a book destined to become a classic.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Off beat picture books always appeal and this offering is definitely that. While the first page introduces the mopoke [the nickname for the common Australian owl, the Southern Boobook], it quickly becomes a play on words, with each one cleverly illustrated using sparse images on a black background. There's a highpoke, a lowpoke, a poshpoke, a poor poke, a mo'poke [complete with moustache], a 'fropoke [complete with afro] etc. It's great fun, with a silly rhyming verse and some wonderful illustrations. If you're looking for something different and very funny, look no further.

This title is also in the Crichton Award for New Illustrators short list.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Ten Pound Pom

**Author:** Carole Wilkinson

**Illustrator:** Liz Anelli

**ISBN:** 978-1925381214

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Walker Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In the 1950s and 60s Australia welcomed thousands of British immigrants as part of the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme. *Ten Pound Pom* is the true story of award-winning author Carole Wilkinson's immigration to Australia.

### >> OUR REVIEW

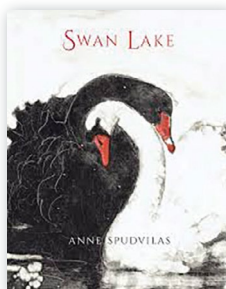
A didactic story about a young girl whose family decides to migrate from England to Australia. Initially, the protagonist does not want to leave her grandparents and friends in Britain. During the voyage across the world's vast oceans, she visits new places and is exposed to new things, including Coca Cola and showers.

Once she makes a friend and the seas become less rough, she becomes less reserved and engages in life on the boat, *Arcadia*, and enjoys Scrabble, pop music and food. When the boat finally docks in Adelaide, the girl spots her cousins standing in the crowd. They all live together in her cousin's three-bedroom bungalow until her parent's buy their own house near the beach. The protagonist quickly learns about Australian animals and embraces a life girt by sea.

The collaged illustrations combine

watercolour, pastels, ink sketches and cartoons to depict the girl's emotional journey as she embarks on this adventure of unfamiliarity and discovery. The creators do a great job at capturing both the melancholy and uncertainty that she feels at the beginning, juxtaposed with the happiness she feels once settled in Australia. For interested readers, there is also a section at the end of the book that provides a non-fiction account of the "Ten Pound Poms", as well as a fact sheet about *Arcadia*, the boat that brought so many of them to Australia.

**Recommended Age:** 9 years +



## Swan Lake

**Author/Illustrator:** Anne Spudvilas  
**ISBN:** 978-1743318454  
**Published:** 25/10/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

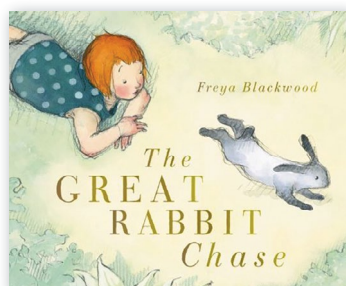
The iconic ballet *Swan Lake*, the tragic love story of a princess transformed into a swan by an evil sorcerer, has been revered for more than a century. In this atmospheric adaptation, Anne Spudvilas re-imagines the classic tale of passion, betrayal and heartbreak in the dramatic riverscape of the Murray-Darling.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A brief overview of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* provides the background for some simply stunning and mesmerising artwork. The three acts are succinctly described giving the reader the gist of the ballet but it's the illustrations which are the stand-out. Primarily drawn in black and white, they powerfully evoke key aspects of

the story. Definitely worthwhile as an introduction to this famous ballet.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years+



## The Great Rabbit Chase

**Author/Illustrator:** Freya Blackwood  
**ISBN:** 978-1743811641  
**Published:** 1/09/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Gumboots is a beautiful pet rabbit, but he likes to escape. A story that celebrates what it means to live in a community and a reminder that life is full of surprises.

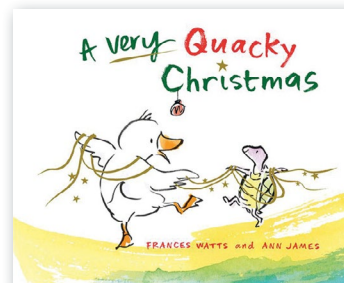
### >> OUR REVIEW

This is the first book both written and illustrated by Freya Blackwood, who is well known for her beautiful work on stories written by other Australian authors. When a mother returns unexpectedly with a rabbit, her young daughter is ecstatic. However Gumboots is constantly escaping and one day leads them on a chase across town. Neighbours, the lollypop man and a kindly gent all lend a hand, but Gumboots vanishes in the park. Taking the opportunity, they all enjoy the change of scenery and unexpected break from life.

Then Gumboots appears, family in tow! A beautifully orchestrated picture book with the underlying message of taking time out from our busy lives to enjoy the simpler things.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +

## PICTURE BOOKS NOTABLES



## A Very Quacky Christmas

**Author:** Frances Watts  
**Illustrator:** Ann James  
**ISBN:** 978-0733329623  
**Published:** 23/10/2017  
**Publisher:** ABC Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Samantha Duck is getting ready for Christmas. 'I'm going to give presents to animals all over the world!' Her friend Sebastian tells her not to bother. 'Christmas is not for animals,' he says. But with the help of her farmyard friends, Samantha sets out to prove that Christmas is for everyone. A joyous tale of giving and sharing from two award-winning Australian creators.

### >> OUR REVIEW

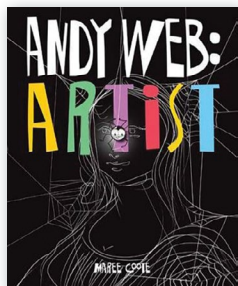
When Sebastian, a tortoise, finds Samantha, a duck, adorning reeds and trees with Christmas decorations, he tells her that Christmas is not for animals. Samantha is not easily dissuaded, and with her enthusiasm, persuades Sebastian to join her in preparing handmade Christmas gifts.

With the help of her fellow farmyard animal friends, Samantha plans to deliver gifts to all the animals in the world, even though Sebastian is convinced it cannot be done. How will Samantha succeed in her kind wish to bring Christmas to everyone?

The ink and watercolour illustrations make the book feel sunny and

light-hearted. If you are after a story that emphasises the value of giving and sharing, the importance of supporting your friends, and the true spirit of Christmas, this book will make a nice addition to your holiday-themed reading.

**Recommended Age:** 2 to 5 years



## Andy Web: Artist

**Author/Illustrator:** Maree Coote

**ISBN:** 978-0992491758

**Published:** 1/01/2017

**Publisher:** Melbournestyle Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Andy Web studied Art at the National Gallery. It was his dream to exhibit there one day. This delightful book tells the story of Andy Web, a tiny, talented spider who loves to draw and is determined to make it big. But there is one creative skill he cannot master... colour! How will he ever achieve his dream? Join Andy, the original artist-in-residence, as he gets up close and personal with the great masters to learn all he can about art.

This charming tale of creative fulfillment through passion and ingenuity is centred around the journey of a loveable character. Delivered with humour and unique illustrations, it offers a gentle introduction to Art Practice and Art Appreciation.

### >> OUR REVIEW

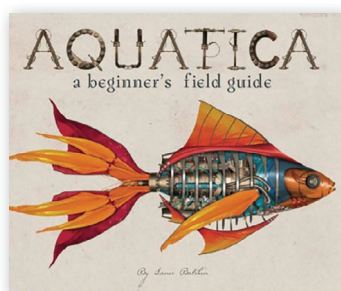
A companion book to *Robyn Boid: Architect* [see page ??], these two picture books feature an industrious main character. Robyn the bird and Andy the spider each happily receive

an artistic education because of the location of their homes. While Andy's web is located in an art gallery, Robyn's nest is stationed right above the architectural class of a university. The characters are inspired by what they're learning, and determine to pursue careers in architecture and fine arts. Each embark on a journey of trial and error as they set about learning their chosen craft.

From Andy, readers will learn about famous artists and artistic movements, including Leonardo Di-Vinci, Picasso, and Van Gogh, as well as about light, colour and personal taste. Coote's picture books will introduce creative-minded children to the concepts of learning from the work of others, practicing to hone your talents, and thinking outside the box.

These books present a career in the arts as a worthy aspiration, and encourage children to pursue their own interests with curiosity and enthusiasm. Featuring an index and a set of teacher's notes in the back, these picture books make for useful additions to the school library or a teacher's personal resources.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## Aquatica: A Beginner's Guide

**Author/Illustrator:** Lance Balchin

**ISBN:** 978-1760404147

**Published:** 1/04/2017

**Publisher:** Bonnier

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Welcome to future Earth. Despite repeated warnings, the environment has become polluted to such an

extent that many areas of the globe have become uninhabitable and wildlife is now extinct. From the ashes, a new style of 'wildlife' is created. Wildlife that will not remain harnessed by humankind.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A complex, exciting and thought-provoking read, this dystopian picture book is set in the year 2250, when humans are forced to share their polluted planet with a new animal order. More than 50 years prior, environmental collapse resulted in the extinction of all animal species. Humans developed man-made species to replace the animals. These mechanical species merged with rogue military drones and quickly evolved beyond human control into 'mechanica'.

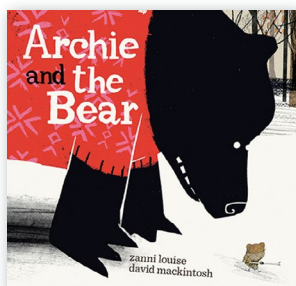
Now these species are developing a shared consciousness, and are seen by some as a major threat to human civilisation. 15-year-old researcher Liberty has studied the mechanica, and believes they are the key to restoring the earth's environment. Humans are on the brink of declaring war against the mechanica, and Liberty sets out across the Asian Oceans to intervene, taking field notes as she goes on the water dwelling subspecies of mechanica: the 'aquatica'.

*Aquatica* is the follow-up to Balchin's highly successful picture book, *Mechanica*. His distinctive illustrations at first glance appear to be anatomical depictions of animals, but upon closer inspection are extraordinarily inventive species of 'aquatica'--such as the 'deep penguin' and the 'golden fire fish'--formed using collaged images of mechanical objects. Balchin's style lends the book a naturalist/steampunk hybrid feel. The scientific commentary accompanying each species will engage the imagination of primary school children, and expose them to information-based reference books through fiction. Of profound educational and cautionary value, this speculative fiction story



warns against the environmental and social impacts of industrialisation and nuclear proliferation, as well as the likely tensions associated with Artificial Intelligence.

**Recommended Age:** 7 years +



## Archie and the Bear

**Author:** Zanni Louise

**Illustrator:** David Mackintosh

**ISBN:** 978-1760127510

**Published:** 1/05/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Archie has something to say, but no one is listening. So Archie leaves home ... and discovers someone else with something to say. And because they both know how that feels, they both listen. This is a quirky story about being who you are (even when you're not).

### >> OUR REVIEW

Archie is determined to be a bear, and resents being seen as a boy in a bear outfit. When he storms off to the woods in disgust he meets a bear dressed as a boy. Although he's clearly not a boy, Archie doesn't want to hurt his feelings. A close friendship ensues, with Archie teaching the bear 'bear things' and the bear teaching Archie 'boy things'. When the bear starts to feel the cold, Archie hands over his bear suit. When Archie feels the cold, the bear takes him home and gives him a warm blanket and a spot in front of the fire. Perhaps boys and bears have more similarities than they realised! At its heart this quirky story is about friendship, being yourself and accepting others.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Big Fella Rain

**Author:** Beryl Webber

**Illustrator:** Fern Martins

**ISBN:** 978-1925360639

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Magabala Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Big Fella Rain* is a celebration of northern Australia as animals, birds, trees and a parched earth await the first rain. It is almost as if country stands still as the sparse yet evocative text pays homage to the transition from dry season to wet season in a country that is like no other place in the world. Fern Martins illustrations seamlessly portray the dramatic skies, the thirsty animals and tiny creatures whose very existence rely on the monsoonal changes. Her exquisite rendering of the big landscape against the subtle shifts in the environment have a timeless quality that will capture the hearts of all readers.

### >> OUR REVIEW

What happens when a mighty storm descends on a land that has run dry? The cracked earth and thirsty reeds absorb the water and the land transforms itself. Some animals search for higher ground and a dry place to rest, while others play and sing in the wet. The illustrations in this book are particularly engaging, with watercolours used to decorate the landscape with fresh shimmering rain drops, and some of the animals being painted using the small dots and fine lines reminiscent of traditional indigenous Australian art.

With educational value to young readers learning about Australian geography, animals, weather or the

environment, this picture book would make an excellent addition to any school library.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Danny Blue's Really Excellent Dream

**Author/Illustrator:** Max Landrak

**ISBN:** 978-0734417589

**Published:** 26/09/2017

**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

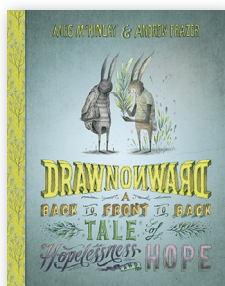
A story about a curious and inventive boy that will make kids think about how each of us sees the world. Danny Blue lives in a world where everything is blue. And while there are many different shades and hues, everything is essentially the same. But then one night Danny sees something in a dream that is unlike anything else. He tried to describe it, but no one can understand what he means, and so he decides to create the thing he saw in his Really Excellent Dream (or R. E. D. ). A wonderfully illustrated, off beat story about invention, dreams and thinking outside the box.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Danny's whole world is blue. He eats blueberries, sits on a blue chair, plays a blues guitar. He even dreams in shades of blue, until one night a new colour appears that is, well ... not blue. Danny struggles to explain what he has seen to his father and their society who have only ever known a world of blue. Instead, he shows them. Initially, people are uncertain and unwelcoming of the new colour. But before long, they come to accept that the colour is beautiful because

it different. Told through subtle, yet didactic images, Danny's story is a book about leaving comfort zones behind and learning to accept new and diverse ideas.

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 8 years



## Drawn Onward

**Author:** Meg McKinlay

**Illustrator:** Andrew Frazer

**ISBN:** 978-1925164848

**Published:** 2/10/2017

**Publisher:** Fremantle Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The text is a palindrome- in the first half reading as a dire denunciation, and in the second, reversed, is a call to hope. It graphically and cleverly illustrates that the very same situation can be viewed quite differently depending on perspective. From the glass half empty- 'There is no light on the horizon and it is foolish to think you can change anything at all'- to the glass half full- 'you can change anything at all. It is foolish to think there is no light on the horizon.'

### >> OUR REVIEW

This interesting picture book is a palindrome from front to back and back again. It focuses on perspective and the effect of our viewpoint on our actions. This is a powerful work which calls for deeper discussion on a range of issues, including self worth, attitude, hope and despair. The effective use of typography and illustrations complement the text well.

**Recommended Age:** 7 to 14 years



## Fish

**Author/Illustrator:**

Jane Stadermann

**ISBN:** 978-0994467812

**Published:** 1/01/2017

**Publisher:** Other

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

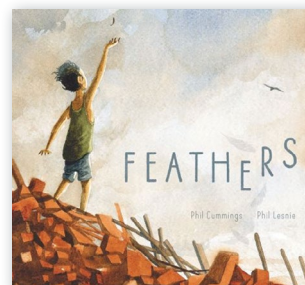
Through a myriad of pages of water and surf, we follow Little Penguin who is looking for dinner. Delightful illustrations engage the reader as the author gently asks about Little Penguin's movements. Quintessentially Australian with its surf, surfer, fish, shark and fairy penguin, this endearing tale will delight. To top it off, this little book is handmade from scratch to finish in Australia from recycled materials. [size 10.5 x 14.8mm].

### >> OUR REVIEW

A cute story about a fairy penguin who follows a surfer out to sea because he has a large fish printed on the bottom of his surfboard. Once there a large shark shadows the boy, but only the penguin sees it. Fearing that he could be the shark's next meal, the penguin ends up on the surfboard as they head back to the safety of the beach. A simple, endearing tale about unintentional mistakes. The penguin mistakenly assumed that the fish on the surfboard was a real fish. The boy probably thought the fish print was 'cool', but the shark mistakenly thought it was food. This book is an interesting inclusion in the CBCA Awards, as it is not a traditionally printed book. Each copy is handmade with recycled materials and hand bound by the author/illustrator, making it a very

practical example of different forms of publishing, bookmaking and storytelling for students.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## Feathers

**Author:** Phil Cummings

**Illustrator:** Phil Lesnie

**ISBN:** 978-1760157357

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Scholastic

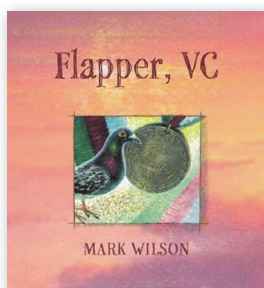
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The sandpiper stretched its wings in the chilling breeze. It knew it was time to leave ... so it took flight. Follow the feathers as they fall along this exquisite journey of heartache, hope and home.

### >> OUR REVIEW

*Feathers* is a tale of empathy and persistence, told through one bird's long flight home. One morning, a sandpiper starts its journey home from the beach. It travels across countries, across places torn by natural disaster, across snow-capped mountains, across war zones and refugees, and through storms, all the while leaving little feathers to be found by delighted recipients. These feathers represent somewhere far away, somewhere better, for all of these people, except for little Mia, who lives near the bird's home. She knows that she's lucky and treasures the feather she catches. *Feathers* has wonderful watercolour pictures painted by Phil Lesnie, which capture the depth and hope within the story.

**Recommended Age:** 5 to 8 years



## Flapper, VC

**Author/Illustrator:** Mark Wilson

**ISBN:** 978-0734416759

**Published:** 31/01/2017

**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

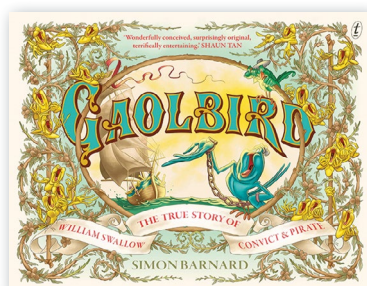
FLAPPER, VC is based on the true story of an Australian carrier pigeon during World War II. Raised and trained in Australia, Flapper is sent off to war in the Pacific. While on patrol deep in the jungle, Flapper's unit find themselves surrounded by enemy troops. With no other means of communication, the men's only hope of survival is Flapper, who has to evade enemy snipers and machine guns to get a message through to save the patrol. Flapper was awarded the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross for his actions that day, and his medal is proudly displayed at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. This memorable tale, illustrated with Mark Wilson's beautifully crafted and evocative artwork, is a moving story of animals in war.

### >> OUR REVIEW

*Flapper, VC* is the latest in Wilson's series of children's picture books about the roles of animals in Australian wars. This creative non-fiction story focuses on the experience of a famous Australian carrier pigeon, Flapper, who through his successful and dangerous mission on Manus Island during WWII, was instrumental in saving the lives of Australian troops. The story is told simply, and illustrated with a mix of black and white sketches based on archival photographs, and colour paintings. The story draws attention to the sacrificial role played

by many animals during WWII, and the respected relationships between these animals and their handlers. The book ends with a fact sheet on carrier pigeons and their role in WWII, and would be useful as a starting point for a class discussion on the subject of Australian WWII history.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## Gaolbird

**Author/Illustrator:** Simon Barnard

**ISBN:** 978-1925498172

**Published:** 31/07/2017

**Publisher:** Text Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

It's 23 October 1821 and convict William Swallow stands on the deck of the Malabar for muster. He is wearing a canary yellow convict uniform and his legs are chained. He's just completed the 121-day sea voyage from London to Hobart Town, but his wild and audacious adventures have barely begun. He'll soon ditch the convict uniform and the chains, take part in a mutiny, become a pirate captain and fool the world in what just might be the most outrageous and unbelievable true story in Australia's convict history.

### >> OUR REVIEW

As the old saying goes 'fact is often stranger than fiction'. That is certainly true in the case of convict William Swallow. His escapades are brilliantly recounted in this truly wonderful, visually stunning and historically accurate account. The author has masterfully pieced all the elements of the story together in a way that young children will enjoy, but also learn from. The cartoon style

illustrations are hugely amusing, but also contain a lot of historical detail. Swallow deserves to be as well known as Ned Kelly. He was obviously a total rogue with the gift of the gab, as well as a brilliant escape artist. Highly recommended for its phenomenal presentation and also to give a different viewpoint on convict-era Australia.

**Recommended Age:** 6 years +



## Giants, Trolls, Witches, Beasts: Ten Tales from the Deep, Dark Woods

**Author/Illustrator:** Craig Phillips

**ISBN:** 978-1760113261

**Published:** 26/04/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

A cobbler girl tricks the Wawel Dragon, after all the king's knights fail... The Polar Bear King loses his skin... Momotaro, born from a peach, defies the ogres everyone else is too scared to face... Snow White and Rose Red make friends with a bear... From Poland to Iceland, Japan to Germany, these ten fairytales from across the globe retold as comics will have you enthralled.

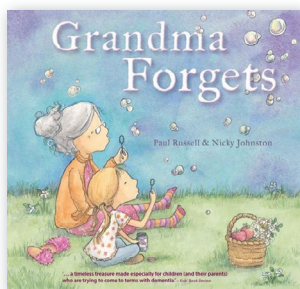
### >> OUR REVIEW

A wonderful collection of 10 fairytales from around the world, brought to life with a touch of humour and excellent illustrations. While some are familiar, and some not-so, all have an engaging story with the often innocent victim-to-be turning the tales on their persecutor. An enjoyable retelling of some classic



tales, greatly enhanced by the graphic novel/comic book style presentation [183 pages]. Highly recommended.

**Recommended Age:** 8 to 12 years



## Grandma Forgets

**Author:** Paul Russell

**Illustrator:** Nicky Johnston

**ISBN:** 978-1925335477

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Exisle

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

When your grandmother can't remember your name it should be sad, but maybe it is just an opportunity to tell her more often how much you love her. *Grandma Forgets* is the heart-warming story of a family bound by love as they cope with their grandma's dementia. Over the years, the little girl has built up a treasure trove of memories of time spent with Grandma: sausages for Sunday lunch, driving in her sky-blue car to the beach, climbing her apple trees while she baked a delicious apple pie, and her comforting hugs during wild storms. But now, Grandma can't remember those memories.

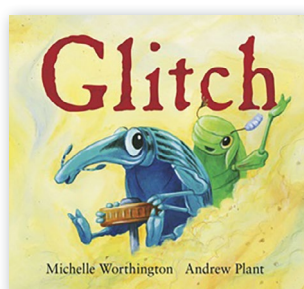
She makes up new rules for old games and often hides Dad's keys. Sometimes Dad is sad because he has to hold onto the memories for both him and his mother now, but fortunately his daughter is only too happy to help him make new memories to share. This is a warm, hopeful story about a family who sometimes needs to remind their grandmother a little more often than they used to about how much they

care. She might not remember any of their names but she will always know how much she is loved.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Of the many Australian picture books about grandmothers published in 2017, this one stands out for both its poignancy and humour. The narrator is a young girl who tells us about her Grandmother, who doesn't remember who she is. That's ok, the girl tells us, because she and her family have lots of memories of grandma. The girl visits her Grandma in her new home 'with people who remember for her'. It's very different to Grandma's big old home with the garden and the apple tree. Through the girl's memories, readers can see that lots of things are different now, and that the girl is learning new ways of enjoying time with her grandma. *Grandma Forgets* is a beautiful and uplifting picture book exploring themes of changing family relationships when a grandparent has dementia, the importance of memories, and the special bond shared between grandmothers and their grandchildren.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 8 years



## Glitch

**Author:** Michelle Worthington

**Illustrator:** Andrew Plant

**ISBN:** 978-1925272710

**Published:** 3/07/2017

**Publisher:** Ford Street Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

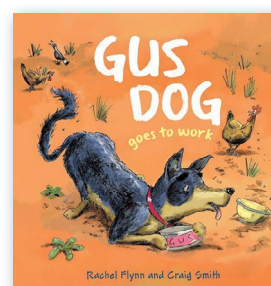
Glitch spends his life searching through mountains of mouldy mess at the dump. He wants to make the fastest billycart ever. This year, he will

be competing in the Big Race! But will his twitch stop him from winning?

### >> OUR REVIEW

Whilst Glitch is a genius builder of billycarts (and amazing upcycler), his twitchiness has so far stopped he and his best friend June from winning the billycart race. When June is unable to drive, she insists Glitch must take her place in the driver's seat. He is very concerned he will let her down once again, but with her kind but firm encouragement eventually gives it a go. Things go much better than he expected and they even make second place! More importantly, he has a great time with his friend June by his side. An encouraging story about 'having a go' and the power of friendship.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 5 years



## Gus Dog Goes to Work

**Author:** Rachel Flynn

**Illustrator:** Craig Smith

**ISBN:** 978-1921504884

**Published:** 30/01/2017

**Publisher:** Working Title Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Every day Gus Dog goes to work in the back of the Ute with his owner, Tom the shearer. But one morning Gus wakes up to find Tom and the Ute gone. So Gus Dog decides to go to work on his own. *Gus Dog Goes to Work* is the warm and comical story of a not-so-usual day in the life of a sheep dog, by a top author/illustrator team.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A very Aussie offering following an

unusual day in the life of Gus Dog as he spends time looking for his owner, rather than at work. Usually Gus Dog's owner, Tom, greets and feeds him in the morning. Then a morning comes when Tom is nowhere to be seen. Consequently, Gus Dog sets off for work on his own, but finds all manner of distractions along the way. There's scenarios aplenty and anyone who has owned a dog will relate to many of them. This is a fun, witty book which takes on the pace of its country setting. The use of Australian vernacular is particularly amusing and will appeal to its intended audience. The illustrations are top notch and beautifully depict the Australian bush and rural living.

**Recommended Age:** 2 to 6 years



## Jerome's Gift

**Author/Illustrator:** Trent Denham

**ISBN:** 978-0648018506

**Published:** 1/01/2017

**Publisher:** Other

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Over mountain and valley and stream he must go, Across perilous sea, to a place where they know, Of a kindly old Uncle who might lend some aid. The council agreed that a plan must be made. This most dangerous duty was all up to him, To provide precious food for his withering kin.*

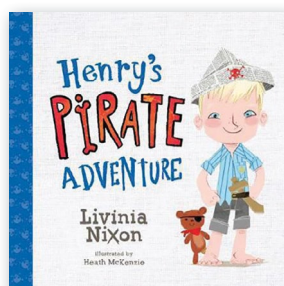
*Jerome's Gift* is local Melbourne Artist's debut masterwork, a unique and exquisitely illustrated adventure story that shows us the power of creative problem solving in times of despair. A feast of quality artwork and storytelling, this is a work of beauty, profound detail, and elegant subtlety

that will reward you with every successive reading.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This distinctive picture book tells the story of Jerome, a boy embarking on a heroic quest to bring food to his dying village, in the form of an epic poem. Set in a fantastical medieval world, depicted through rich, Tolkienesque illustrations, the narrative follows Jerome's trials and successes as he works his way towards his goal. The book comes with a gold-embossed linen cover and protective jacket that doubles as a fold-out poster. This is a great book for re-introducing children to folktales, lyric and poetry in a modern, accessible form, and as a conversation starter for themes of perseverance in times of frustration and hopelessness. *Jerome's Gift* is equally pleasing read aloud, as it is devoured alone.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## Henry's Pirate Adventure

**Author:** Livinia Nixon

**Illustrator:** Heath McKenzie

**ISBN:** 978-1760454425

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Lake Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

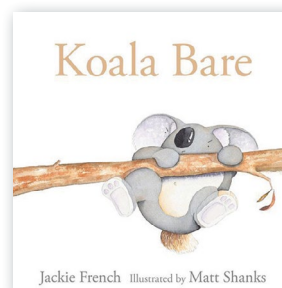
Follow Henry and his wondrous imagination as he builds a ship fit for a pirate. Written by Channel 9 TV presenter Livinia Nixon and illustrated by Heath McKenzie.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Henry takes readers on a fearsome and rollicking adventure upon the mighty seven seas (or is it perhaps

the backyard pool?) aboard his magnificent pirate ship, crafted from plastic water bottles with the help of his dad's handy work and his mum's encouragement. He must show bravery in the face of adversity and overcome a new challenge on every page, from a raging storm to a sea monster, in order to make it back to the shore in time for lunch. This is a fun and exciting little tale that teaches children the power (and exhaustion!) of an active imagination.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Koala Bare

**Author:** Jackie French

**Illustrator:** Matt Shanks

**ISBN:** 978-1460751619

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Harper Collins

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

For too long koalas have been called 'bears'. Some bears wear pants and live in cottages in the woods... but this koala is out to prove to the world that he is BARE! And that never, ever ever can a koala be a bear... From the internationally renowned author of the bestselling *Diary of a Wombat* comes a hilariously funny picture book that Jackie French has created with talented new illustrator Matt Shanks.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A wonderfully cheeky and very Australian offering about a koala who's cheesed off about being called a bear. The humorous rhyming verse incorporates all the common misconceptions about bears and koalas, making it plain to see why he is so peeved! It's a

joyous tale accompanied by some excellent illustrations. Whilst koala may be a little naughty at times, in the picture book world it is totally understandable!

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Merry Everything

**Author:** Tania McCartney

**Illustrator:** Jess Racklyeft

**ISBN:** 978-1922081704

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Windy Hollow

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

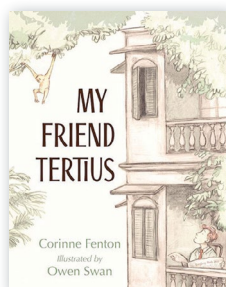
It's Christmas Eve and the world is buzzing with busy. With baubles to hang, shimmer to drape and scrumptious treats to prepare, enjoy this peek inside the festive homes of animals all over the world. From deer baking gingerbread to elephants gobbling candy canes and ducks snapping crackers, join these adorable creatures as they celebrate the togetherness that is Christmas.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This story is written in snappy prose that rolls off the tongue and dances through the air, making it a sheer delight to read aloud. The upbeat tempo of the text matches the excitement and glee the characters—and all children who love the holidays—feel as Christmas Day nears and then arrives. The illustrations depict a medley of adorable animal families enjoying different festivities all over the globe, relaying a lovely sentiment about the special, giving and familial nature for this time of year. With a gorgeous message about how Christmas brings everyone in the world a little

bit closer, this book would make a splendid addition to any child's holiday reading list.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## My Friend Tertius

**Author:** Corinne Fenton

**Illustrator:** Owen Swan

**ISBN:** 978-1760113827

**Published:** 22/02/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

One question kept echoing in my mind - if I had to leave, what would I do with Tertius? This is the true story of two lives brought together by chance. Arthur Cooper, working in intelligence for the British Government in pre-war Hong Kong, rescues a small gibbon and names him Tertius. Together they escape to a safe place - but is it for always?

### >> OUR REVIEW

A wonderful true story, which is as much about the relationship of a British government official with a young gibbon, as it is about the culture of pre second World War Austral-Asia. Whilst stationed in Hong Kong, a young British intelligence officer buys a baby gibbon at a local market. Naming it Tertius, he takes him home and gives him the run of the house and garden. A strong bond soon forms and the pair are inseparable. Ordered to Singapore, they continue to live the high life, but war soon comes knocking. Hastily evacuated they board a ship to Australia, where Tertius is a hit with the children.

Arriving in Fremantle, Arthur has to

smuggle his friend ashore, but after long train trips to Melbourne the authorities finally catch up with the duo. The outlook is bleak for Tertius, however a compromise is made and he goes to live at Melbourne Zoo, where a zoo keeper's wife takes a liking to him. A fascinating read which shows the strong bond that can be formed between human and animal. The story is well told, with plenty of historically accurate information. The obvious love which Arthur and Tertius have for each other is heart warming.

**Recommended Age:** 5 to 8 years



## Millie Loves Ants

**Author:** Jackie French

**Illustrator:** Sue deGennaro

**ISBN:** 978-1460751787

**Published:** 1/04/2017

**Publisher:** Harper Collins

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

From the award-winning talented duo who created *THE HAIRY-NOSED WOMBATS FIND A NEW HOME*. '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.

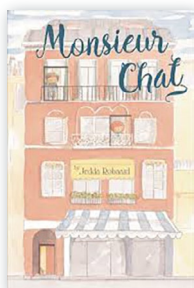
### >> OUR REVIEW

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.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Monsieur Chat

**Author/Illustrator:** Jemma Robaard

**ISBN:** 978-1760405007

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Bonnier

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

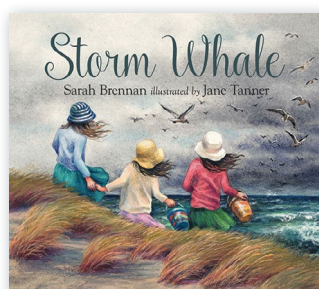
Once there were two very lonely people who lived in a very old apartment block, in a very busy city. Although they had lived there a very long time, they'd never met. Their names were Josephine and Pierre and each spent their days wistful and alone until Monsieur Chat arrived! Each feels less lonely with him around, but when he disappears a desperate search unites them and changes their lives forever.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This book is stunning, both aesthetically and narratively. With deceptive simplicity, it explores the thoughtful themes of loneliness, kindness, friendship and caring for others. It is a heart-warming and serendipitous story about a pair of individuals who find a sense of belonging together after having lived so close, yet so displaced, from one another all along. A subtle play on words, Monsieur Chat translates from French to 'Mr Cat'. And he is not only a feline, but the reason conversation sparks between two people in need of someone with whom to share their love. Readers will certainly appreciate

this book's delightful illustrations, as several have delicate fold-out components—such as window shutters and doors—which reveal more of the story.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Storm Whale

**Author:** Sarah Brennan

**Illustrator:** Jane Tanner

**ISBN:** 978-1760293642

**Published:** 24/05/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Bleak was the day and the wind whipped down when I and my sisters walked to town...* So begins the story of three sisters who find a whale stranded on a windswept beach and try to save it. With a powerful, poetic text, wonderful to read aloud, and illustrations full of life and movement, *Storm Whale* celebrates the majesty and vulnerability of nature and our place in it.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A wonderful collaboration makes this picture book a real stand-out. The moving and powerful story is told equally through the hypnotically masterful rhyming verse and the phenomenal illustrations. The detail in the vocabulary provides a beautifully rich reading and listening experience and is equally matched by the vivid fine art illustrations. The story tells of three young sisters stumbling across a beached whale and their efforts to keep it alive. When the storm dissipates the next day, they rejoice in finding the whale gone.

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 8 years



## Once Upon a Small Rhinoceros

**Author:** Meg McKinlay

**Illustrator:** Leila Rudge

**ISBN:** 978-1925126709

**Published:** 1/09/2017

**Publisher:** Walker Books

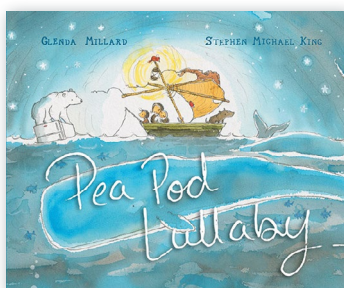
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Once, there was a small rhinoceros who wanted to see the big world. So she built a boat. And sailed away... From the duo behind award-winning picture book *No Bears* comes a simple yet inspirational tale about challenging the norm, pushing boundaries and being true to oneself.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Conforming to the norm and limiting your expectations are challenged in this eye-opening adventurous book. When a young rhinoceros is constantly told to accept what and where she is, she baulks and continues planning to see the world. Finally, she leaves in her makeshift boat to sail to far flung places. What a great adventure she has too. On returning, the other rhinos hear what they expect to, but one baby is inspired and begins her own plans for a larger future. A wonderful look at how dreams can become reality and how a lack of dreams can cause our lives to become humdrum. An insightful story with beautifully complementary illustrations.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Pea Pod Lullaby

**Author:** Glenda Millard  
**Illustrator:** Stephen Michael King  
**ISBN:** 978-1760290085  
**Published:** 23/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

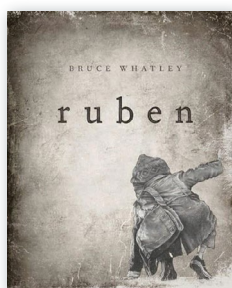
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

'I am the small green pea, you are the tender pod, hold me.' Words sing over the pictures in this evocative story: a beautiful lullaby about what we can be for each other. A mother and baby, a boy and a dog run for their lives. A little boat carries them across the sea. A polar bear, too, has come adrift. When will they find land? Where will they find friends? Who will welcome them in? *Pea Pod Lullaby* is an inspiring and timely story of courage, endurance, and hope ... for a world in which we can reach out and embrace one another.

### >> OUR REVIEW

With powerful words and almost mesmerising illustrations, this enthralling picture book captures the reader's heart and soul and leaves one spellbound. Ostensibly it's a tale about a family fleeing a war torn land and sailing to a safe haven aboard a rickety boat. Along the way they pick up a polar bear who has also had to leave his home. While the illustrations depict the often difficult journey, the poetic words capture thoughts of courage, safety and hope, as well as a certain resilience and even faith. A hard to pigeon hole, beautiful and worthwhile read that is highly likely to appear in the CBCA Awards 2018.

**Recommended Age:** 4 years +



## Ruben

**Author:** Bruce Whatley  
**Illustrator:**  
**ISBN:** 978-1743810354  
**Published:** 01/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Ruben's dreams were of places that made no sense to him. Places that didn't exist. At least not anymore. *Ruben* is a triumph and true tour de force showcasing Bruce Whatley's imaginative narrative and technical drawing skills. Set in a dystopian type world, it's also reminiscent of Metropolis with a sprinkling of steampunk thrown in. Consequently this is one of those books that is hard to pigeon-hole, but the stunning black and white images are full of detail and wonder, with a text that draws you deeper into this oppressive world.

### >> OUR REVIEW

The story follows a young survivor on his daily search for supplies. Having scoured his local area he's forced deeper into dangerous territory. Here he encounters a young girl called Koji, who is eking out an existence within Block City. This is her territory and she shows him around, careful to avoid the robotic Controllers and Monoliths. Suddenly a book drops from above, having dislodged from those destined for the furnaces. Ruben picks it up before a sweeper can retrieve it. Returning to Koji's safe place, they separate, but Ruben now has the means to escape, and with the book, the inspiration to drive him forward.

**Recommended Age:** 7 years +



## Sarah and the Steep Slope

**Author:** Danny Parker  
**Illustrator:** Matt Ottley  
**ISBN:** 978-1742974675  
**Published:** 1/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

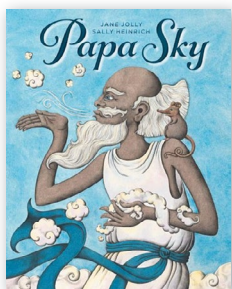
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

When everything feels like an uphill battle, your friends will get you through. Sarah wakes to find a steep hill has sprung up around the house overnight, preventing her from leaving. No matter what she tries, the hill won't budge. When the Hill Doctor suggests she gets in touch with her friends, Sarah discovers how the healing power of friendship can transform the steepest slope.

### >> OUR REVIEW

In this thoughtful picture book Sarah is unable to leave her home, due to what seems like an insurmountable slope she cannot climb. Finally she calls a doctor, who helps identify that all she can see is the slope. Following his visit, she invites her friends to come over. They don't see the slope at all. They have grand adventures, and when someone needs a hand they give it. The next day, when she looks outside, the slope looks different. It's not as steep, not as hard to climb, and at the top her friends are waiting to give her a hand whenever she needs it. A well thought out, well presented book, which conveys in simple terms the way our problems or obstacles can become all consuming, and the value of good friends who are willing and able to help us through.

**Recommended Age:** 6 years +



## Papa Sky

**Author:** Jane Jolly

**Illustrator:** Sally Heinrich

**ISBN:** 978-1925227291

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Midnight Sun Publishing

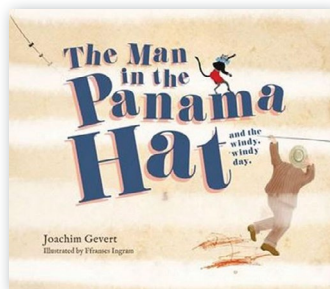
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Another stunning picture book from the award winning team who brought you *One Step at a Time*, Honour Book in the CBCA Awards 2016. Papa Sky sits where earth meets sky, until one night the wind blows him down, down, down through the cloud forest, where he lands with a bump. What will happen next? Who will help him? Teachers' notes available.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Poetic and metaphoric, *Papa Sky* reads like it's adapted from a folk tale. This impression is heightened by illustrations which are reminiscent of highly stylised, traditional woodblock or lino paintings. The story is an allegory for the affects of climate change on the biodiversity of the world's cloud forests. With the addition of a map indicating the location of these cloud forests, and a page of information about the various cloud-forest-dwelling species featured in the illustrations, the book lends itself well to classroom discussions on climate change, geography, animals and their habitats. There is much to discover in the pictures, and little eyes will be kept busy searching for animals in a few of the wordless pages. Visually and aurally pleasing, this book reads aloud wonderfully.

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 8 years



## The Man in the Panama Hat & the Windy, Windy Day

**Author:** Joachim Gevert

**Illustrator:** Ffrances Ingram

**ISBN:** 978-1925545418

**Published:** 1/07/2017

**Publisher:** Little Steps Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

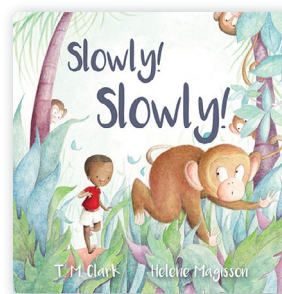
The Man in the Panama Hat would love nothing more than staying indoors. Every time he leaves the house, something goes wrong. Can Mr Black Cat convince his friend to venture outside and have some fun? A windy, windy day awaits!

### >> OUR REVIEW

A man's hat has been blown off by the wind after venturing outside, so he decides to spend the day indoors, watching TV. From the warm illustrations of his lounge room, however, we can see that this is a man with many interests, from art and music, to travel, literature and adventure. When Mr Black Cat knocks on his door, the Man in the Panama Hat invites him in. Mr Black Cat is not contented staying indoors, despite the wind, and is determined to find an outdoor activity the friends can do together. After many rebuffed suggestions, Mr Black Cat and The Man in the Panama Hat settle on an outdoor activity that is just right for the windy, windy day. While the dapper Mr Black Cat's ideas are depicted with idealism, charm and energy, the anxious Man's responses show him jumping to the worse-case-scenario. With a lot of persistence and a little bit of magic, this book strikes a balance between pessimism and optimism. It also

hints at the alienating experience of migration, and the comfort of animal friends. The whimsical illustrations are packed with cultural references (look out for the Aboriginal flags, book of Australian birds, and baggy green cricket cap).

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## Slowly! Slowly!

**Author:** T. M. Clark

**Illustrator:** Helene Magisson

**ISBN:** 978-1925563221

**Published:** 1/11/2017

**Publisher:** Wombat Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

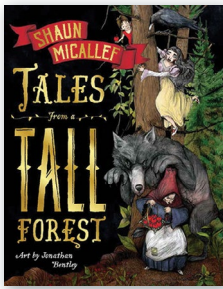
Bongani wants to go to school but he is too young. To prove to his family that he is big and strong just like his cousins, he tries to catch a monkey. Slowly, slowly, he must go. Luckily his family is there to school him in the lessons of patience and compassion.

### >> OUR REVIEW

More than anything else, Bongani wants to go to school with his cousins. But he is not old or tall enough. Grandfather and Dad give Bongani the important job of looking after the crops and chasing away the animals. He beats his drum and yells 'go away' to the monkeys and crows each day. Grandfather sees that Bongani is still sad. Therefore, he teaches him how to catch a monkey: 'slowly, slowly'. Bongani tries again and again, but keeps failing. Then, one morning, Bongani finally catches a monkey and realises that monkeys should be free to munch the maize, and chooses to let it go.

**Recommended Age:** 5 to 8 years





## Tales From a Tall Forest

**Author:** Shaun Micallef

**Illustrator:** Jonathan Bentley

**ISBN:** 978-1760129590

**Published:** 16/10/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Once upon a time being, forever and ever ago, there lived a forest tall of tales... When an innocent princess wanders into the forest, she finds herself trapped between a wolf with a ravenous appetite and a sweet little house with a secret. Meanwhile, a desperate fisherman enters into a very bad bargain with a power hungry monkey. And meaner while still, a tiny tricky tailor promises a promise that not even the most magic of beanstalks can help him escape.

In this rich and rambunctious tapestry of tales, satirist Shaun Micallef unravels the traditional fairy story and nimbly weaves your favourite characters into new and surprising adventures. Illustrated by award-winning artist Jonathan Bentley, this subversively silly trilogy will captivate parents and children alike and indignant fairytale authors too. More grim than Grimms', less soppy than Aesop.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This 224 page illustrated book is a mash-up retelling of the classic Grimm's fairy tales, tying them together around the setting of a tall forest. It's very similar to the style of *Into the Woods* with the very satirical narrator, Shaun Micallef.

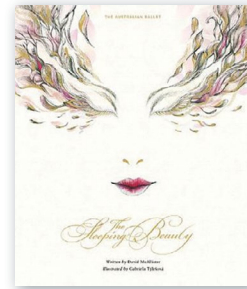
In the first tale, the Royal Woodsman

is ordered by the Wicked Stepmother to take the Princess Mathilda into the forest to kill her. On the way they are intercepted by a girl in a red poncho, claiming her grandmother has been eaten by a wolf. The Royal Woodsman agrees to cut the grandmother out of the wolf's stomach, and while they're arguing how to dispose of the body, the dissected wolf wakes up and chases them in revenge. They take refuge in Baba's Cannibal's Candy Slaughterhouse (of which they don't know the owner is the cannibal). Meanwhile, the Evil Stepmother disguises herself as a crone and knocks on the door. Conveniently the wolf eats her and Baba and they all live happily ever after.

In the second tale a fisherman promises a monkey three wishes in exchange for a child, when he and his wife can't conceive. The monkey first wishes to be rich and so the fisherman steals from another. Secondly, the monkey wishes to be king, so the fisherman convinces the king to hand his royal title to the monkey while he's away on holiday. Thirdly, the monkey wishes to be God, in which the fisherman teaches him that God's will goes against human's free will—so he can't rule them all.

In the third tale, a tiny tailor (who can't tailor) discovers a giant beanstalk with great riches. When Prince Hubert wishes for a never-before-seen fabric to drape himself in, the tiny tailor is at a loss. Prince Hubert also demands that the tiny tailor must vanquish the giants at the top of the beanstalk, so he does and steals the cloak of invisibility while he's at it. Meanwhile, a pedlar's wife (the sister of the fisherman's wife) decides to cut down the beanstalk. The tiny tailor dies and in some intersecting way, all the fairy-tale characters are affected by the felled beanstalk. Prince Hubert ends up taking the cloak of invisibility (that doesn't quite work properly) and parades in front of the court.

**Recommended Age:** 8 to 14 years



## The Sleeping Beauty

**Author:** David McAllister

**Illustrator:** Gabriela Tylesova

**ISBN:** 978-1760129934

**Published:** 1/11/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The story of *The Sleeping Beauty* spills over with fairies and princes, passion and despair, magnificence and splendour, and the ballet version of this classic tale is the most romantic and spectacular of all. Australian Ballet Creative Director David McAllister's impressive 2015 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, ornamented by internationally celebrated designer Gabriela Tylesova's lavish costumes and sets, cast a spell of delight on its audiences, and was a sell-out success.

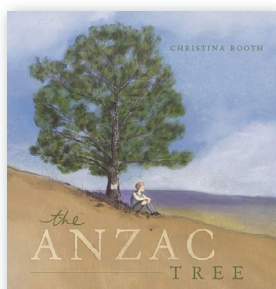
Now David McAllister and Gabriela Tylesova weave their magic again, transporting the enchantment of their production to the pages of this book. David's text and Gabriela's illustrations recreate the world of this favourite ballet for readers to enjoy again and again. Based on the spectacular Australian Ballet production of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

### >> OUR REVIEW

The familiar story of Aurora is presented in scenes illustrated with collaged photographs and pencil drawings that are at once whimsical and dark, reminiscent of the baroque and French theatre traditions. The allure of this book lies in these pictures, which carry the original malevolence of the Grimm brothers' collected fairy tales. Inky rose briars

creep their thorny tendrils across the pages and ethereal mixtures of dusty pink and sketchy graphite seem to capture the movement of dance. A special book for a ballet fan or young designer interested in the performing arts, *The Sleeping Beauty* is an alternative to the traditional fairy tale story.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## The Anzac Tree

**Author/Illustrator:** Christina Booth

**ISBN:** 978-1760154226

**Published:** 1/04/2017

**Publisher:** Omnibus

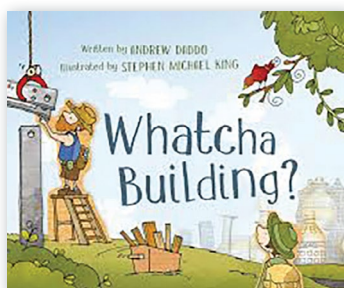
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Inspired by the story of two soldiers who planted two trees on their farm before they headed to the Great War, the story of *The Anzac Tree* is one that looks at the lives of those left behind in times of war.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Pinner's Pine, which still stands to this day, was one of two trees planted by Roy and Percy Pinner before they went off to the Great War. Sadly, Percy died and so did his tree, but Roy returned. This story purportedly follows future generations though the intervening years and the wars which were fought with facts, aids and comments on each conflict, it's the family's gathering at the pine tree on Anzac Day which is the common thread. A well researched and moving account of war's impact on ordinary families.

**Recommended Age:** 5 to 7 years



## Whatcha Building?

**Author:** Andrew Daddo

**Illustrator:** Stephen Michael King

**ISBN:** 978-0733334153

**Published:** 22/05/2017

**Publisher:** ABC Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The old milk bar on the corner is coming down to make way for something new. Little Davey Durak is gathering scrap a short piece of wood here, a long piece there. But what's Davey building? Bruce the builder wants to know, but Davey won't tell... Bestselling author Andrew Daddo and award-winning illustrator Stephen Michael King come together for the first time to bring you this very special picture book.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Little Davey Durack and burly builder Bruce have an ongoing exchange that takes place daily on Davey's walk home from school. As Bruce dismantles the town's old milk bar to make way for a brand new supermarket, Davey collects the discarded bits of wood to re-use. Time moves on and Bruce becomes more and more curious about what Davey could possibly be making, imagining all the things he himself would have loved to make when he was Davey's age. King's illustrations are a treasure trove of found, reusable objects digitally collaged together with simple illustrations mono-printed and drawn on cardboard. Children will love searching through the scenes to spot the objects, and are sure to enjoy talking about what each object has become. This story is ultimately about the changing man-made

Australian landscape, the value of old objects and places, and the impact of the built environment on community. *Whatcha Building?* will spark the creative imaginations of children and adults alike, and encourage a re-think about all those items waiting to be thrown in the recycle bin.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 7 years



## The Sloth Who Came to Stay

**Author:** Margaret Wild

**Illustrator:** Vivienne To

**ISBN:** 978-1760290221

**Published:** 28/06/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

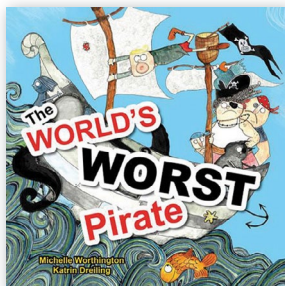
Amy's family is speedy! They are always in such a rush that there is no time to talk or play until the afternoon. Amy brings home a sloth. Then things start changing very, very slowly... A timely tale about enjoying the little things in life from award-winning author Margaret Wild.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Within this story lies a clear message advising the fast-living, professional families of today to slow down. Amy's family is 'the speediest family in the world.' They walk fast, drive fast, shop fast, eat fast, and never have any time to talk or play or laugh or laze ... until Amy finds a sloth in the local park, and brings him home to stay. As Amy's family adjust to life with a very slow sloth in their home, their hectic days seem to shift from a focus on work, exercise and household chores, to leisure, conversation and connection.

Amy has never been happier. The sloth moves next door to live with another speedy family, and Amy's family continue to enjoy their new, slower lifestyle. This title is also in the Crichton Award for New Illustrators short list.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## The World's Worst Pirate

**Author:** Michelle Worthington

**Illustrator:** Katrin Dreiling

**ISBN:** 978-0994626912

**Published:** 1/06/2017

**Publisher:** Little Pink Dog Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

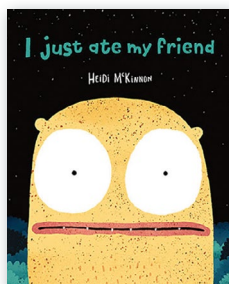
Pirates are swashbuckling, treasure hunting, buccaneers of the seven seas. But if your mother is the Pirate Captain and you can't stand on deck without getting seasick... that makes William The World's Worst Pirate. When the ship is attacked, can he use his own special talent to save the day?

### >> OUR REVIEW

Will thinks he is the world's worst pirate. He can't tie knots and always gets seasick. He would much rather bake cupcakes than become a Captain like his mother. But when their ship is attacked by a wild sea creature, only Will can save the day! This is a story about a young boy learning to play to his strengths in order to help his friends and family.

**Recommended Age:** 4 to 8 years

## CRICHTON AWARD FOR ILLUSTRATORS SHORT LIST



## I Just Ate My Friend

**Author/Illustrator:** Heidi McKinnon

**ISBN:** 978-1760294342

**Published:** 26/07/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

I just ate my friend. He was a good friend. But now he is gone. Would you be my friend? A hilarious story about the search for friendship and belonging ... and maybe a little bit about the importance of impulse control ... from an amazing new creator.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This is a very funny picture book about making friends, controlling yourself, understanding the consequences of your actions and how they might just come back to bite you! On the first page, a monster states 'I just ate my friend'. He acknowledges the friend he ate was a good friend, and consequently finds it difficult to make another. When he eventually does, he is very happy. However, this might be one of those occasions where it would be better not to be treated the same way you treated others ... oops, too late! An enjoyably silly book with few words and an underlying message that would provide lots of stimulus for discussion.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 6 years



## Once Upon An ABC

**Author:** Sophie Masson

**Illustrator:** Chris Nielsen

**ISBN:** 978-1760128432

**Published:** 1/04/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

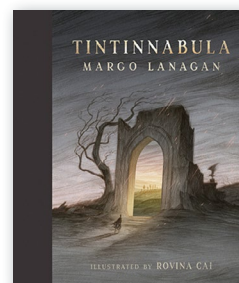
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

A romp through both the alphabet and the world of folk tale! The lively verse gathers together a dazzling range of folklore, made vividly contemporary with Chris Nielsen's striking artwork.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A delightful offering that uses fairy tale characters and aspects of their stories to teach the alphabet in an enjoyable, rhyming verse. The humorous and endearing illustrations have a Lino-cut quality and stand out from the page in bold, brilliant colours. One of the better examples of an alphabet picture book, it is both a source of wonderment and an opportunity for learning.

**Recommended Age:** 3 to 5 years



## Tintinnabula

**Author:** Margo Lanagan

**Illustrator:** Rovina Cai

**ISBN:** 978-1742975252

**Published:** 1/10/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont



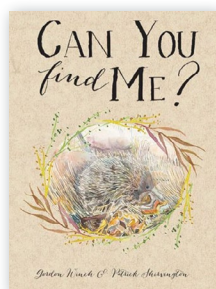
#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In wild times and in wartime, in times of fear and illness, I go to Tintinnabula, where soft rains fall. Tintinnabula is a story about moving from discomfort to peace, from violence and uncertainty to a still, sure place. It reminds us that our best friend in hard times can often be ourselves.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

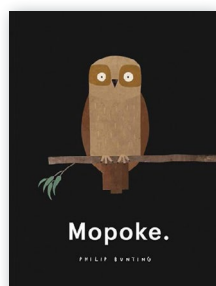
A moving picture book that takes us on a journey of self-discovery. The poetic text and emotive illustrations are initially full of violence and rage, gradually journeying to a place of tranquillity and serenity. This is portrayed within the settings and colours; ruined cities of darkness and fiery reds eventually give way to green fields, rolling hills and golden sunlight.

Recommended Age: 7 years +



### Can You Find Me?

\* This title also features in the Early Childhood Notables list. The review can be found on page 15.



### Mopoke

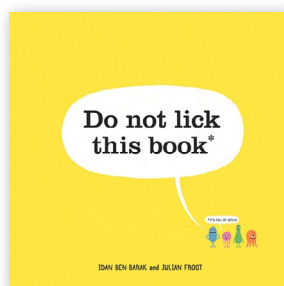
\* This title also features in the Early Childhood Notables list. The review can be found on page 20.



### The Sloth Who Came to Stay

\* This title also features in the Picture Book Notables list. The review can be found on page 33.

#### EVE POWNALL AWARD INFORMATION BOOKS SHORT LIST



### Do Not Lick This Book

**Author:** Idan Ben-Barak  
**Illustrator:** Julian Frost  
**ISBN:** 978-1760293055  
**Published:** 24/05/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Min is a microbe. She is small. Very small. In fact so small that you'd need to look through a microscope to see her. Or you can simply open this book and take Min on an adventure to amazing places she's never seen before - like the icy glaciers of your tooth or the twisted, tangled jungle that is your shirt. The perfect book for anyone who wants to take a closer look at the world.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

A well presented and interactive

introduction to microbes for early childhood. It is both clever and simple, communicating how small microbes are by getting the reader to connect the information to their own skin, teeth and clothes as well as the paper the book is printed on. Three types of bacteria and one fungus are depicted with a brief account of each at the back. The close up images are informative and humorous. An excellent book.

Recommended Age: 3 years +



### Amazing Australians in their Flying Machines

**Author:** Prue and Kerry Mason  
**Illustrator:** Tom Jellett  
**ISBN:** 978-1922244635  
**Published:** 1/04/2017  
**Publisher:** Walker Books

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Imagine what it was like to travel to far-off places before there were aeroplanes. For early 20th-century Australians, it could take days, weeks, or months just to get where they were going. *Amazing Australians and Their Flying Machines* tells the stories of ten brave Australians, including the youngest licensed woman pilot Nancy Bird, who took to the skies and changed the face of aviation forever.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

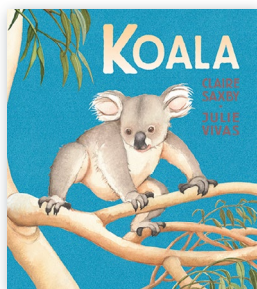
Presented as a scrapbook, this non-fiction book takes us on a journey through Australia's aviation history, beginning in the machine age, pre-automobiles, with Dr William Bland's 1850s sketch of his 'Atomic Ship', and continuing right up to aviation in

Australia today.

Each section contains a first person account of the historical character's motivations and ambitions when it came to aviation, along with vintage photographs and cartoon illustrations. A factual account of the outcomes of their goals is presented for each historical figure, along with some interesting trivia about them, and some technical facts about aviation.

As young readers follow Australia's aviation journey, they will learn the risks our pilots took, and the hurdles they overcame, to ensure Australia was ultimately able to unite with the rest of the world, shifting the nation from a sense of isolation, to one of global connectedness forever. The information is presented in a way that foregrounds the pilots' personalities, and celebrates their achievements, lending the book an enthusiastic quality to engage middle-grade readers.

**Recommended Age:** 9 years +



## Koala: Nature Storybooks

**Author:** Claire Saxby

**Illustrator:** Julie Vivas

**ISBN:** 978-1925126396

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Walker Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

It is time for Little Koala to leave the protection of his mother. But many challenges and dangers lie ahead for him as he searches for his own home eucalypt and learns to be independent. During his search he encounters other territorial koalas,

wanders through a bushfire-ravaged landscape and endures a night of storms. *Koala* is written by award-winning nonfiction picture book specialist Claire Saxby, and illustrated by the much-celebrated Julie Vivas, one of Australia's premier illustrators.

### >> OUR REVIEW

*Koala* is the non-fiction story of a young male koala trying to find his own way. As Little Koala is forced to leave his mother's pouch, readers encourage him on and he sets off in search of a new home. The koala encounters many dangers and setbacks on his journey before he finds a good home. At each stage of his journey, we learn a new fact about koalas, including their social habits, food sources, habitat, anatomy, the ways in which they move, and their special abilities. *Koala* forms part of the *Nature Storybooks* collection of nonfiction nature books, making it useful for school projects, or curious young nature-lovers.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## Left & Right

**Author:** Lorna Hendry

**ISBN:** 978-1742034430

**Published:** 5/03/2017

**Publisher:** Wild Dog Books

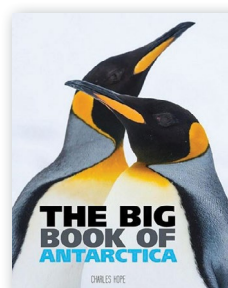
### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Left and right are all around us. From our hands and feet to our eyes and ears, the notion of left and right is inescapable. Left and right control how we travel and play sport, and even how we eat. The vast extent of how this deceptively simple subject shapes our lives is revealed in the *Left And Right* book!

### >> OUR REVIEW

Through the use of bright, bold pop-art, digital images and photographs, science and maths is made fun. Who knew the seemingly simple [but notoriously difficult to explain] concept of left and right could offer so much scope for learning? The author expertly traverses the territories of cultural myth, linguistic history, neuroscience, social science, physiology, geometry, mathematics, weather, navigation, transportation and much more in enthusiastic, easily digestible information bites. Readers will be telling their left from right in no time, and likely inspecting their household pets for right or left handedness too. With a helpful glossary at the back, this book would be a welcome addition to the classroom.

**Recommended Age:** 6 to 9 years



## The Big Book of Antarctica

**Author:** Charles Hope

**ISBN:** 978-1742034188

**Published:** 5/07/2017

**Publisher:** Wild Dog Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

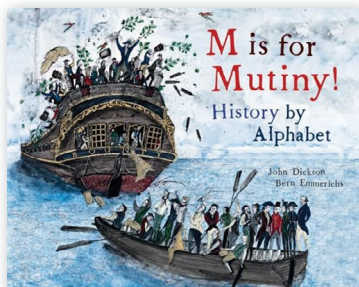
Antarctica is the driest, coldest and windiest continent on Earth. Even though it is a harsh and difficult place to live, Antarctica is home to more than a thousand plant and several hundred animal species. Antarctica has 90 per cent of Earth's ice and plays a major role in our weather. Scientists from around the world live and work in Antarctica to better understand the future of our planet.

## >> OUR REVIEW

Stunning natural history photos, along with historical pictures, provide the backdrop to a wealth of facts and information about our coldest and driest continent. The maps, drawings and photography—of both Antarctica's landscapes and its animal population—make this a visually appealing read that is sure to engage primary-aged children.

The information includes Antarctica's discovery; industries past and present, such as whaling in the past, science and tourism; key figures, such as Douglas Mawson and Ernest Shackleton; changing climate; native flora and fauna, and is presented in small portions of bold and brightly coloured text. It is both entertaining and educational, and as such would make an excellent resource for students learning about Antarctica's geography, wildlife or history.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## M is for Mutiny!: History by Alphabet

**Author:** John Dickson

**Illustrator:** Bern Emmerichs

**ISBN:** 978-0994384119

**Published:** 1/11/2017

**Publisher:** Berbay Publishing

## >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In the late 18th century, ragtag groups of Europeans started to arrive in Australia. Most were convicts, some were soldiers, a few had just run out of choices.

They blundered onto an ancient land that had been peopled for 60,000 years. They wanted to make it just

like home. They cleared the land, they fenced it, they paved it, and they put buildings on it. All the while, the country's first peoples watched on, bewildered by these clumsy immigrants and their mysterious ways...

*M is for Mutiny! History by Alphabet* is a taste of the intriguing history of Australia and the many entry points for children to explore further. Why did Sir Joseph Banks hate bananas? Did anyone like William Bligh? Where is Yemmerrawanne?

## >> OUR REVIEW

This book is a beautifully illustrated, alphabetical journey through Australia's colourful history. From indigenous land rights to Caroline Chisholm, convicts to kangaroos, readers are offered glimpses into moments in time and issues that continue to shape the nation.

Each double page spread focuses on one letter and the historical narrative that accompanies it.

Dickson does not shy away from the darker days of Australian history. When he does explore these more difficult events and themes, he does so in a way that is factual, unbiased and accessible, without being too confronting to young readers.

Coupled with dramatic illustrations, this informative and entertaining narration makes *M is for Mutiny!* a perfect springboard from which children can begin their own exploration of Australia's past.

**Recommended Age:** 7 to 12 years

## EVE POWNALL AWARD INFORMATION BOOKS NOTABLES



## A is for Australian Animals

**Author/Illustrator:** Frané Lessac

**ISBN:** 978-1925381009

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Walker Books

## >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

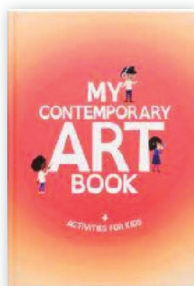
Australia is full of the most amazing animals on the planet! What animal has six thumbs? What animal has square poo? What animal is made up of 95 per cent water and is highly venomous? Discover the answers to these questions and more in this fantastic tour of Australian animals.

## >> OUR REVIEW

More than a simple alphabet book, this vibrant work of non-fiction not only takes readers through the A to Z of Australian animals, it presents interesting information on them as well. From facts about the anatomy and habitat of a bilby, through to the song-rehearsals of the zebra finch, this picture book will surely enrapture all budding zoologists. With the inclusion of a page of animal distribution maps, this resource is ideal for primary-school aged children learning about Australia, animals and geography. The impressionistic gouache illustrations are typical of Lessac's distinct style, as showcased in her preceding picture book, *A is for Australia*.

**Recommended Age:** 7 years +





## My Contemporary Art Book

**Author/Illustrator:** Kate Ryan

**ISBN:** 978-1925432466

**Published:** 9/01/2018

**Publisher:** National Gallery of VIC

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Meet some of today's leading artists and designers from different parts of the world. Read their stories, find out what inspires them and discover the ideas behind their works of art. Each artist has included an art activity for kids to make at school or at home. This engaging and accessible activity book features the following NGV Triennial artists and designers: Jorge Méndez Blake, Louisa Bufardec, Kushana Bush, Campana Brothers, Nick Cave, Olga Chernysheva, Shilpa Gupta, Alexandra Kehayoglou, Ron Mueck, Uji (Hahan) Handoko Eko Saputro, Sissel Tolaas and Xu Zhen.

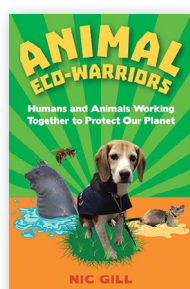
### >> OUR REVIEW

This curation of some of the world's leading contemporary artists is absolutely bursting with colour, life and ideas. Each page is explosive, providing generous insight into the featured artist's homeland, childhood, personality, studio, work and process. The art prompts are unique to a corresponding artist, influenced by their style and offering a diverse breadth of creation inspiration. These activities explore different mediums and techniques, encourage both independent and collaborative processes, and ask young artists to be aware of—and interactive with—the environment around them. A visually gorgeous read sure to expand the creative scope of budding artists, this

enlightening resource would be a worthy addition to any art department's collection.

**Favourite Quote:** *Art is the greatest equaliser in the world. There are no limits to the ways you can create, share or take in art. Only ways to connect with it.* Nick Cave [p87]

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## Animal EcoWarriors

**Author:** Nic Gill

**ISBN:** 978-1486306213

**Published:** 1/06/2017

**Publisher:** CSIRO Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Come on an action packed adventure with an amazing mob of animal ecowarriors as they use their special talents to help solve our planet's environmental problems! From the nosy noses of biosecurity beagles at airports to rats learning to sniff out landmines in wartorn landscapes, animals are using their unique abilities to help make the world a better and safer place.

With fantastic colour photos of animal ecowarriors at work, this book is full of fun facts on how animals are helping humanity work towards a more sustainable future. There are also plenty of tips on how you can make a difference to the planet. Join the animal ecowarrior team today!

### >> OUR REVIEW

Animal eco-warriors is a fascinating combination of scientific facts about animals and how they interact with their environment (including humans). It sports many stories about detector dogs (that can be

trained to detect anything from illegal quarantine items, exotic ants, rodents and other things), how to 'train' cows to eat new food, landmine detecting rats and weed-eating goats, among others.

**Major themes:** animal behaviour, animal physiology, animals and people working together, environmental issues

**Content Notes:** Not applicable



**Recommended Age:** 9 years +

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Tears in the Jungle: Fight for Survival

**Author:** Daniel & William Clarke

**ISBN:** 978-0987308917

**Published:** 1/01/2017

**Publisher:** Other

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

This new episode in Daniel and William's quest to save the orangutan covers their latest trip to the jungles of Borneo, Indonesia to see where the funds they have raised have been used to rescue, rehabilitate and release orangutans back into the wild. It is filled with wonderful photos and is an inspiring story of determination and success against all odds.

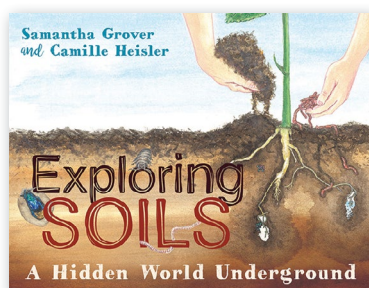
### >> OUR REVIEW

Sharing their passion to make a difference, two inspiring brothers document their return to Borneo six years after their first visit, during

which they wrote *Tears in the Jungle: A Children's Adventure to Save the Orangutan*.

In the hopes of raising awareness for the conservation of orangutans and their habitat, Daniel and William provide an inside look at this endangered species and the threats to their survival-- such as deforestation by palm oil plantations--as well as the efforts being made to save them--such as the work of the International Animal Rescue (IAR) Care Centre. Rife with relevant information, statistics and photographs, the brothers' book both devastates and instills hope in readers. With a foreword by Bob Irwin, orangutan fun facts, and QR codes to supplementary footage of their journey, this story would wonderfully complement any lessons on environmental and wildlife conservation.

**Recommended Age:** 7 years +



## Exploring Soils: A Hidden World Underground

**Author:** Samantha Grover  
**Illustrator:** Camille Heisler  
**ISBN:** 978-1486305001  
**Published:** 1/06/2017  
**Publisher:** CSIRO Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

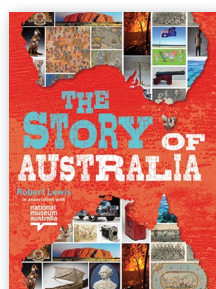
Have you ever wondered what happens in the earth underneath us? James has, and he wants to be a soil scientist. In *Exploring Soils: A Hidden World Underground*, James discovers that soil is not just dirt for digging in, but an essential part of our world. He explores how plants and animals

live in soil, how soils are formed, how they differ, and the ways that soil is essential in our lives. Written by Samantha Grover, a soil scientist and parent, and with engaging illustrations from Camille Heisler, *Exploring Soils* will take you to an underground world filled with activity and discoveries.

### >> OUR REVIEW

James, a young boy, is fascinated with soil and takes the reader on a journey to discover its secrets. He looks at the creatures which live within it, the microbes which help create nutrients for the plants and the different types of soils and their respective merits. An easy-to-understand account of what soil is, how it is made and why it is so important, which may well encourage further reading and deeper study.

**Recommended Age:** 6 to 9 years



## The Story of Australia

**Author:** Robert Lewis  
**ISBN:** 978-0857983145  
**Published:** 30/01/2017  
**Publisher:** Random House

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

How did Australia's earliest human inhabitants reach the island continent? Which discovery ushered in a new era of immigration, prosperity and technological advancement? How did a far-flung colony and military outpost transform into one of the wealthiest and most peaceful nations in the modern world? Dip into the pages to discover these answers and more...

Produced in partnership with the National Museum of Australia, *The Story of Australia* draws on the museum's rich collection of objects, photographs and artefacts. Entertaining, colourful and inviting.

### >> OUR REVIEW

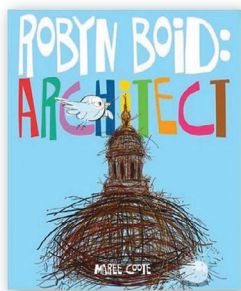
This impressive reference book is foreworded by Dr Matthew Trinca, Director of the National Museum of Australia. Trinca invites us to 'journey through *The Story of Australia* to understand what has happened in our history, when these things happened, how they happened, why they happened and by whom and to whom they happened'. He encourages young people to consider where this story may lead in the future, and how they may influence our unfolding narrative.

At 408 pages, the book is not one to attempt to read in a sitting, however is easily navigable through its chronological structure. For any child interested in or researching an area of Australian history, geography or culture, there is a plethora of information. Beginning with the shifting tectonic plates likely to have resulted in Australia as the separate landmass we see now, the book moves through well-written summaries of Australia's Indigenous history (from a distinctly anglo-Australian perspective), European and Asian exploration, European colonisation of Australia, and early settlement, right up to the events of the present day.

Particular focus is given to social, cultural and political changes, wars, migration, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life throughout each period of change, gender roles, race relations, treatment of the environment, key national debates and national identity. Photographs from the National Museum of Australia accompany each section, including portraits, letters and official documents, newspaper cartoons, objects and artefacts, propaganda and artworks. Developed with an eye to the Australian Curriculum

(particularly for Years 5 through to 9) this book is likely to become a fantastic go-to resource, for students learning about any of the subjects that explore our nation.

**Recommended Age:** 9 years +



## Robyn Boid: Architect

**Author/Illustrator:** Maree Coote

**ISBN:** 978-0992491741

**Published:** 1/05/2017

**Publisher:** Melbournestyle Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Robyn Boid studied Architecture at the National University, and dreamed of becoming an architect.

Meet Robyn Boid a small, dedicated bird who loves to build nests and dreams of becoming an architect. She lives at the University, where she listens to the architecture class through the window each day. Eager to learn, Robyn practises building all the important architectural shapes, but all the while, she seeks the perfect design for her very own nest. This encouraging tale of creative achievement is centred around the journey of a loveable character. Paired with unique and involving illustrations, this is a gentle introduction to the world of architecture. Includes: Teachers notes and Glossary.

### >> OUR REVIEW

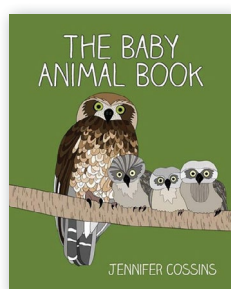
A companion book to *Andy Web: Artist* [see review on page ??], these two picture books each feature an industrious main character. Robyn the bird and Andy the spider each happily receive an artistic education because of the location

of their homes. While Andy's web is located in an art gallery, Robyn's nest is stationed right above the architectural class of a university.

The characters are inspired by what they're learning, and determine to pursue careers in architecture and fine arts. Each embark on a journey of trial and error as they set about learning their chosen craft. Readers will learn about principles of design - from shape, line, form and function - through important buildings and structures, and Robyn's designs.

Coote's picture books will introduce creative-minded children to the concepts of learning from the work of others, practicing to hone your talents, and thinking outside the box. These books present a career in the arts as a worthy aspiration, and encourage children to pursue their own interests with curiosity and enthusiasm. Featuring an index and a set of teacher's notes in the back, these picture books make for useful additions to the school library or a teacher's personal resources.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +



## The Baby Animal Book

**Author/Illustrator:** Jennifer Cossins

**ISBN:** 978-0734418159

**Published:** 8/08/2017

**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

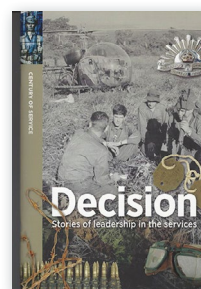
An adorable and informative picture book from the author of *A-Z of Endangered Animals* and *101 Collective Nouns*. What do you call a baby penguin? Or a baby owl? Or a baby platypus? Come along on

an illustrated journey through the animal kingdom with Tasmanian artist Jennifer Cossins and find out!

### >> OUR REVIEW

With its simple, repetitive structure and stark pages, the author encourages early readers to try and read the words themselves. Along the way they will learn what some of their favourite baby animals are called. Assisted by the vivid depictions of cute baby animals, this is a book that parents and teachers can use as a tool to encourage little ones to become active readers, rather than just listeners.

**Recommended Age:** 3 years +



## Decision: Leadership in the Services

**Author:** J. Cole-Adams & J. Gauld

**ISBN:** 978-0994477569

**Published:** 1/01/2017

**Publisher:** Dept of Veterans' Affairs

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

We all make decisions every day - they shape the lives we lead. In times of war, decision-making can take on a greater significance.

Many Australians over the past century of service have demonstrated leadership with the decisions they have made. These individuals have come from all ranks and services - some have made one-off decisions that saved lives; others have made a series of decisions over time that influenced the outcome of battles or wars.

This book explores the stories of twelve Australian leaders. In Australia's wartime history many

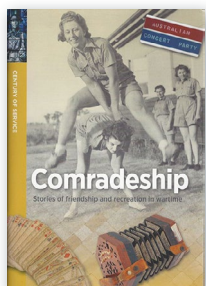


men and women have provided support and hope to those around them. This book highlights just some of these leaders.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Highlighting the contributions of a dozen notable men and women, this book looks at examples of outstanding leadership in the armed forces. It's a reminder of how few exhibit truly great leadership and command the respect of those under them. Some of those featured are well known, while others are not, but all have shown exceptional qualities in difficult circumstances. There's an outline of each person's life and service, along with photos, letters, personal items etc. A very worthwhile addition to this fascinating series from the Australian War Memorial.

**Recommended Age:** 8 to 12 years



## Comradeship: Friendship and Recreation in Wartime

**Author:** Kathleen Cusack

**ISBN:** 978-0987615107

**Published:** 1/01/2017

**Publisher:** Dept of Veterans' Affairs

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Millions of Australians have been affected by war. Many servicemen and servicewomen have faced extraordinary dangers, while their loved ones waiting at home suffered months and even years of uncertainty. Yet, despite the difficulties, a strong sense of shared experience, friendship, and camaraderie often developed.

The stories in this book are about comradeship.

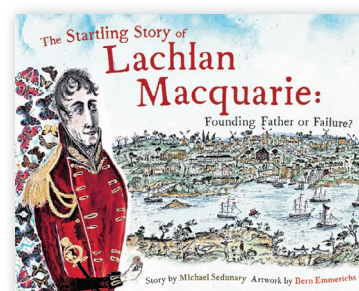
Corporal Leslie "Peter" Chitty BEM provided a welcome distraction on the sporting field for those longing for home; Lorrae Desmond MBE took the stage, drawing smiles from a grateful crowd; and Trooper David "Poppy" Pearce provided comforting words and a listening ear. Some friendships lasted well beyond the war years. Many of these men and women travelled across the world for reunions, while others held onto mementoes, a lasting reminder of the bond they had once shared.

The individuals in these stories share many qualities: an unshakeable optimism, a sense of humour, and a determination to help others. Even in the darkest days, these men and women found joy and laughter through simple pleasures like sport, music, games, and conversation. This sense of comradeship brought comfort, strength, and hope for a brighter future.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Offering a glimpse into another aspect of military service, this offering in the Century of Service series looks at stories of friendship and recreation during wartime. There are examples from all the major conflicts during the last 100 years, from concert parties of World War 1 to fly-in performers during Vietnam. Noteworthy individuals are featured as is the impact they had on morale. Old photographs, mementoes and artefacts are shown, as well as facts about the specific events. A fascinating book which complements this must-have series.

**Recommended Age:** 8 to 12 years



## The Startling Story of Lachlan Macquarie

**Author:** Michael Sedunary

**Illustrator:** Bern Emmerichs

**ISBN:** 978-0994384102

**Published:** 1/06/2017

**Publisher:** Berbay Publishing

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The story of Lachlan Macquarie is an important story in the history of modern Australia that has been largely lost to the current generation of school children.

Whilst we've all seen many things named after Macquarie, few realise the important role he played in the Australia we know today.

Lachlan Macquarie's gravestone bears the inscription, 'Father of Australia'. That's quite a claim, but is this a title Macquarie really deserves? He is rightly celebrated for his inspired infrastructure building and his enlightened treatment of convicts and emancipists, but his treatment of the Indigenous population was far from enlightened. And then there was the Bigge report to the British Parliament that was scathing in its criticism of Macquarie's governorship, on the grounds that he was far too 'democratic'. So how are we to think of this towering figure of Australian history: founding father or failure?

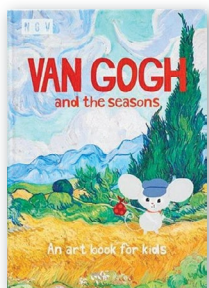
Michael Sedunary's narrative is both informative and interactive; he poses questions and points out modern parallels. Bern Emmerichs' extraordinary illustrations capture the lively naivete of the painting and drawings of that time with the

sophisticated, clever techniques of illustration today. The illustrations all painted on large ceramic tiles that are individually fired between each layer of colour. Teachers notes available.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

This picture book paints a portrait of Lachlan Macquarie, a man of many contradictions, who played a large part in Australia's history. On one hand, he transformed Sydney from an unwelcoming, harsh convict colony into a thriving town where ex-criminals could create a new life. But he also instilled in the Australian psyche the notion of European superiority and the need to 'civilise' indigenous peoples. This idea underpinned the horrific, dehumanising policies of the Stolen Generation and caused so much pain to so many. This thoughtful book illustrates the reality that history—and the people that make it—is never as simple as it first appears.

**Recommended Age:** 9 years +



## Van Gogh and the Seasons: An Art Book for Kids

**Author/Illustrator:** Kate Ryan

**ISBN:** 978-1925432374

**Published:** 10/05/2017

**Publisher:** National Gallery of VIC

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Join Theo, a little field mouse, to find out about Vincent's lifelong love of the seasons and the world around him. Along the way, there are activities and quizzes for kids to do with family and friends. A selection of iconic works by Van Gogh such as

*A wheatfield, with cypresses early September, 1889*, and *Orchard in blossom April, 1889*, are featured throughout and these are paired with interesting facts about the changing seasons, Van Gogh's life and artistic techniques.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Follow the travels of famed post-impressionist artist Vincent Van Gogh, from his hometown of Zundert in the Netherlands through to Arles in France, to learn which works arose from which moments and places in his life.

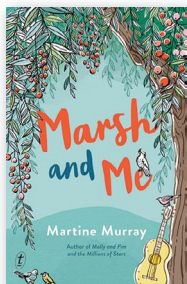
In an inviting, brightly-illustrated manner, this book explores the most significant influence on his work: nature.

Theo the field mouse, who guides readers through the book, shows us how and why Van Gogh painted the world around him, referencing his artworks and his quotes on the seasons and outdoors. There are also several opportunities for children to participate in activities and quizzes throughout.

This publication presents an eclectic collection of information, on topics ranging from changing seasons, to colour mixing, to the scientific processes of nature, to Van Gogh's artistic techniques, all brought together to show young readers that art and life are intrinsically connected.

**Recommended Age:** 5 years +

## YOUNGER READERS SHORT LIST



### Marsh And Me

**Author:** Martine Murray  
**ISBN:** 978-1925498011  
**Published:** 3/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Text Publishing

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

There's a hill out the back of Joey's house. Hardly anyone goes there it's not a beautiful place, just a covered over old rubbish tip. But Joey likes it up there. It's his hill somewhere he likes to go to wonder about life. He longs to be the best at something, to be a famous astronaut, or mountain climber, to stand out. When Joey discovers a tree house in an old peppercorn tree on the hill, he is annoyed that someone has invaded his special place. But he is also curious about who the intruder could be. But making contact isn't easy. The treehouse girl is wild and hostile and full of secrets Joey needs to work out a way to win her over. And as he does, he finds a way to shine. *Marsh and Me* is a story about friendship and trust and learning to believe in yourself and what makes you special. Martine Murray's beautifully rounded characters, with all their self doubts, yearnings and wise insights, will delight readers young and old.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Joey is a curious, considerate boy who doesn't know where he fits in the world. He spends much of his time dwelling on the lives and qualities of great men and wondering if he is anything like them. His mother tells him that one of his best qualities is

that is he "sensitive", but Joey can't see the value in that. He'd rather be strong, brave or talented; a footballer, a rock star, an astronaut or a mountaineer.

Much of Joey's thinking is done in his favourite place: a hill near his house. It is his hill. His place to explore, go on adventures and contemplate life. When Joey discovers that someone else has visited the hill, he feels like his sanctuary has been invaded. At first he is furious and prepares himself to battle the intruder. But then he meets her. Sitting in her self-made tree house with a carefully curated collection of inanimate objects, is a girl with a beautiful voice, strange oversized clothes and a wild imagination.

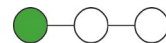
Marsh, as he begins to call her, breathes life into each object in her collection and talks to the wind. Joey is enchanted by her eccentricities and decides that instead of expelling her from his hill, perhaps they could share it. As their friendship blooms, Joey discovers that there is more to Marsh than he anticipated. Why doesn't she go to school? Why does she steal food? Throughout their musical meetings in the tree house, Marsh, whose real name we learn is Ruzica, opens up to Joey about the death of her mother and her father's consequent despair and despondency. By learning from and supporting each other as they prepare for Joey's Battle of the Bands, the two friends create light and joy that permeate the story.

Filled with hope, friendship and imagination, these wonderful, well-rounded characters will resonate with readers of all ages and leave you feeling warm inside. The inclusion of characters Molly, Maude and Pim are a sweet and subtle nod to Murray's other stories, including *Molly and Pim* and *the Millions of Stars*.

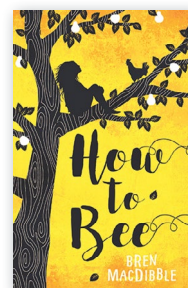
**Favourite Quote:** *I like to imagine everything is possible, even if it isn't. Explorers shouldn't squish down their curiosity with the weight of probability.*

**Major themes:** coming of age, growing up, identity, friendship, loss, grief, family, imagination

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



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



### How to Bee

**Author:** Bren MacDibble  
**ISBN:** 978-1760294335  
**Published:** 1/05/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Peony lives with her sister and grandfather on a farm outside the city. In a world where real bees are extinct, the quickest, bravest kids climb the fruit trees and pollinate the flowers by hand. All Peony really wants is to be a bee - dancing along the high branches and earning more for her family. Life on the farm is a scrabble, but there is enough to eat and a place to sleep, and there is love. Then Peony's mother arrives to take her away from everything she has ever known, and all Peony's grit and quick thinking might not be enough to keep her safe. *How to Bee* is a beautiful and fierce novel for younger readers, and the voice of Peony will stay with you long after you read the last page.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

A wonderfully written and gripping story line makes this a standout book. It's set in the near future, where bees are all but extinct, which adds to its plausibility and impact. The story



follows Peony, a 9-year-old girl and aspiring 'bee'. With no natural bees to pollinate crops, young children are trained in the job. This has resulted in food prices skyrocketing and mass destitution.

The farm workers themselves are unpaid, but received board and lodging. To a degree they have it lucky, many in the city are not so fortunate. Peony loves her life and promotion to a 'bee' will mean more food for her, her sister and grandfather.

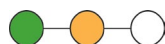
Peony's mother works in the city and only visits occasionally. Just as Peony is about to fulfill her dream, her mother abducts her and takes her back to the city against her will. Here she joins her mother working as help for a wealthy family. Peony does not fit in, but an abiding friendship develops between her and the family daughter. The daughter is fearful of nearly everything, the complete opposite of Peony, who understanding her fears, gradually helps her overcome them. Her desire to help keeps Peony in the city longer than she wants, but she and Esmeralda, hatch an escape plan. Soon she's on a truck heading out of the city and on her way home, where the farmer has an astonishing offer for her.

There is so much to love about this book and the principal character, Peony. Her loyalty, determination, love and protection of family and spirit, all make her an inspirational figure. Her desire to do her best for both her real family (her elder sister and grandfather) and her 'farm' family, at the cost of losing her mother, shows real fortitude. Her mother is a sad figure and though Peony fights this initially she comes to realise that she's better off without her and better to be where she's truly loved. The help, friendship and encouragement she shows to Esmeralda is also inspiring.

**Major themes:** near future, climate change, farm life, child workers, family, friendship, contentment,

abduction, city life, despair, destitution, service, overcoming fears, escape, bee keeping

**Content Notes:** Peony's mother's boyfriend is violent towards her.



**Recommended Age:** 9 to 12 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Henrietta and the Perfect Night

**Author:** Martine Murray

**ISBN:** 978-1760290245

**Published:** 22/02/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Hello everybody, it's me. Henrietta the Great Go-Getter, and I'm having a big think. Right now I'm thinking I'd like a baby sister, so I can dress her up in different sorts of hats. But Mum says we'll have to wait and see. I'm terrible at waiting... Meanwhile, I'm an explorer of life, and that includes trees, bugs, animals and all mysteries. I'm going to school for the very first time, which means I might have to go as a spy so that I can have a secret peep inside...*

When Henrietta sees Olive Higgie crying in the classroom, she goes on a rescue mission and finds that you only need one friend in a room full of strangers to feel perfectly happy...

Henrietta's stories are full of funny thoughts and discoveries, and maybe the best are the ones that take a long time to come.

### » OUR REVIEW

Henrietta is an endearing character who is eagerly waiting for her baby sister to be born and having adventures along the way. This includes her first day of school, where after a slightly bumpy start she meets Olive Higgie and they become best friends. There are a few different stories in the book, all told by Henrietta as she navigates life, school and the eventual arrival of the baby (who much to her surprise turns out to be Albert, not Alberta!). An enjoyable book for early readers with engaging illustrations.

**Major themes:** family, pregnancy, first day at school, school play, making friends, first sleepover, baby brother

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.

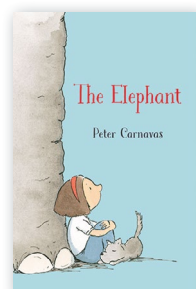


**Recommended Age:** 5 years +

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## The Elephant

**Author:** Peter Carnavas

**ISBN:** 978-0702259616

**Published:** 3/07/2017

**Publisher:** UQP

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

'Your dad won't fix your bike until you fix your dad.' Olive's father has a sadness so big that she imagines it as an enormous elephant following him around. Every day Olive sees the elephant, and every day she wishes it would go. With the help of Grandad and her best friend, Arthur, Olive sets out to chase the elephant away. But

how can Olive move something so big?

#### >> OUR REVIEW

*Grandad rubs out the grey parts of my day and fills them in with colour.* This delicate, yet profound statement is just one example of this author's stunning ability to capture how the depths of sorrow may be tempered by the warmth and hope of familial love and friendship.

This beautifully written story follows the plight of young Olive, who is dealing with the loss of her mother. Her whole family shares her grief, but her father is particularly despondent. The titular elephant is depression anthropomorphised: a huge, heavy, grey presence that weighs her father down and withdraws him from the world around him, including from her. With the help of her best friend, Arthur, and her kind and colourful grandfather, Olive searches for a way to make the elephant leave.

During Olive's quest to bring light back into her father life, we learn that her father is not the only one being followed by a grey and melancholic shadow. Nevertheless, by pulling together, Olive and her family escape the darkness and create a more colourful future for themselves.

In this book, less is more. Do not let the minimalist language or delicate illustrations sprinkled throughout the book fool you. Their apparent simplicity strikes at the heart of the raw emotions felt by the characters. This is a story that will resonate with readers of all ages who have ever felt loss or despair. It would also be a powerful book with which adults could facilitate a discussion with young readers about grief and depression, if they know someone affected by these feelings.

Despite its exploration of many dark and complex issues, the honest, sensitive and heart-warming way in which *The Elephant* approaches this difficult topic leaves readers with an overwhelming sense of hope and an understanding that there is always a

light at the end of the tunnel.

**Major themes:** loss, grief, depression, resilience, family, love, hope, supporting one another

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.

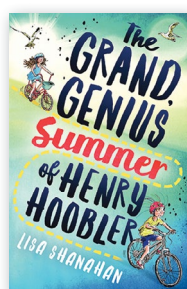


**Recommended Age:** 8 to 12 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## The Grand, Genius Summer of Henry Hoobler

**Author:** Lisa Shanahan

**ISBN:** 978-1760293017

**Published:** 25/01/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

It struck Henry that perhaps he was waiting for the exact right moment to be daring and brave. The exact right moment where he felt no worry at all, not one tiny flicker. But what if that moment never came? Henry Hoobler is a reluctant adventurer worried about his summer holiday: camping at the beach, bugs, spiders, snakes, stingers, blue ringed octopi and sharks. Worst of all, his family and friends are pushing him to ride his new silver bike without training wheels. But when Henry meets Cassie, he discovers that courage is there to be found when you have a friend who is straight up and true. A joyous, heart-warming story from the much-loved author of *My Big Birkett*.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

A wonderful book which richly deserves to be considered a modern

Australian classic. The story is both hugely relatable and superbly written, with the right amount of angst and humour to carry it through. Revolving around a soon to be third grader, Henry, it follows his family on their summer pilgrimage to the beach, where they are holidaying with friends.

Henry is a worry wart, like his mother, who sees the worst in situations rather than the opportunities. His mother has learnt to control her anxiety and, seeing the signs in her son, helps coach him in dealing with his. There's just one problem: Henry has a new bike and everyone expects him to ride it without training wheels! How will he pluck up the courage? Thankfully, a chance meeting with a resident of the park changes everything for Henry. Cassie is fearless, the complete opposite to Henry, and in her company he comes out of his shell, faces his fears and anxieties and learns to deal with them. Eventually he is whizzing down the steepest hills on his new bike and understands the meaning of true friendship.

A superb read which shows the importance of family, community and in particular the positive moderating effect of adults when children are unkind. An excellent read, highly recommended.

**Major themes:** family, community, holidays, friendship, seaside, fear, anxiety, courage, dealing with emotions, self esteem, doing the right thing, thoughtfulness

**Content Notes:** 'I swear to God' [p76].

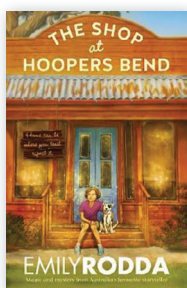


**Recommended Age:** 7 to 11 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## The Shop at Hoopers Bend

**Author:** Emily Rodda

**ISBN:** 978-1460753668

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Harper Collins

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

From one of Australia's most renowned children's authors, this is a story about coming home when you didn't even know that was where you belonged. Eleven-year-old Jonquil (known as Quil) Medway is a girl with more than an unusual name. Quil's parents died in a car accident when she was a baby and she now goes to boarding school, but spends her holidays with an aunt - or at camp, which is where Quil is heading when she decides to get off early at a train stop called Hoopers Bend. It is there that Quil meets Pirate, a chunky little white dog with black spots who immediately adopts her and Bailey, a crabby older lady who has gone to Hoopers Bend to check out the shop that has been left to her by an uncle. There is something magical about the shop at Hoopers Bend though, and once it casts its spell on Quil and Bailey they are drawn together in an unlikely friendship and their fight to save the shop from developers.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Quil (short for Jonquil) was orphaned at just 4-years-old. Her guardian and aunt, Pam Medway, is a high powered businesswoman whose PA is tasked with safely sending Quil off to a camp at Lithgow in the Blue Mountains. After seeing the name Hooper's Bend Gallery on a beautiful mug with her name on it at the local markets, Quil is surprised when her train stops at

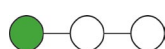
Hooper's Bend and feels a gentle urge to get off the train.

Prudence Bail (Bailey) has recently been made redundant. At a loss about what to do, she feels prompted to return to the Blue Mountains and sort out her Uncle Frank's old shop. As a child, Bailey loved to go and stay in the little rooms behind the general store. Then her mother fought with Frank and—much to her sorrow—they didn't go there anymore. Frank left it to her in his will as he always promised he would. That was 7 years ago and she has been working in New Zealand all that time. When she arrives she finds a skinny girl with a chunky little dog with black spots in the front yard, just like it was all those years ago when her friend Alice Twelvetimes would come to see her.

When Bailey has a fall getting out of her car, Quil helps her inside and falls in love with the place. After some quick talking, Quil arranges to stay with Bailey for a few days, which soon turns into weeks. As the little shop hosts a series of 'one week' tenants, it soon becomes clear there are some in the town who aren't happy to see Bailey return. With Quil's help the truth comes out, and both Quil and Bailey discover that home just might be the place you were always meant to be... This lovely story marks a return to magical realism by much-loved Australian author Emily Rodda.

**Major themes:** magical realism, belonging, finding your place, home, family, friendship, kindness, restoration, righting wrongs, valuing the past, protecting heritage

**Content Notes:** There are no concerns with this book. The 'magic' is a series of coincidences or urges that bring the people and the place together.



**Recommended Age:** 8 to 13 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★

## YOUNGER READERS NOTABLES



## 1917: Australia's Great War

**Author:** Omnibus Books

**ISBN:** 978-1743622506

**Published:** 1/02/2017

**Publisher:** Omnibus

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

The German planes patrolled in hunting squads. They flew fast fighting craft streaking across the sky in tight formation. The greatest of them was the Red Baron, the deadliest ace on the Front. He'd shot down twenty-one of our planes in a single month. And now were in his firing line. The war in France rages in the skies, and support for the war in Australia turns cold. Alex flies high above the trenches of the Western Front, while a world away his sister Maggie finds herself in the midst of political upheaval. Somehow, both must find the courage to fight on.

### >> OUR REVIEW

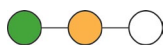
An excellent and compelling read, which—though based around actual events—is primarily fictitious. As the title declares, it is set in 1917 at the height of the First World War when tensions on the home front back in Australia were running high. The story follows the very different experiences of two family members. The son of the family enlists and becomes a seasoned reconnaissance pilot, while his younger sister is caught up in the Women's Peace Movement. Their stories are told side by side to



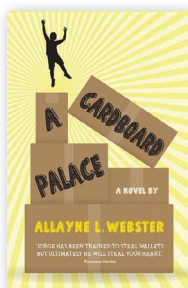
compelling effect. The military one is well known, but the political and social one was just as hard fought. The writing is excellent, the research extensive and the resultant read enthralling. For history buffs or those just wanting an overview of this turbulent time this is a highly recommended read. It offers plenty to think about and lots of historical detail within a great story.

**Major themes:** WWI, pilots, France, military life, home front, politics, women's movement, protests, survival

**Content Notes:** Non graphic war themes.



**Recommended Age:** 10 to 15 years  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## A Cardboard Palace

**Author:** Allayne Webster

**ISBN:** 978-1925227253

**Published:** 1/06/2017

**Publisher:** Midnight Sun Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Jorge lives in a shanty town on the outskirts of Paris. Bill, a controller, has an army of child thieves at his command and Jorge is one of them. But soon Jorge faces an even bigger threat. His home is to be bulldozed. Where will Jorge sleep? What will happen to his friends, Ada and Gino? Could a burgeoning friendship with Australian chef, Sticky Ricky, help Jorge to stop Bill and save the army of child thieves? And will he do it before he loses Ada forever? Jorge can't keep fighting to live now he must

live to fight. A harrowing, humbling story about one boy's desperation to escape a life of crippling poverty.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Eleven-year-old Jorge runs scams on the streets of Paris under the direction of middle-aged Bill who has ten children working for him; the youngest is a seven-year-old girl.

Jorge dreams of being a chef, but it seems impossible. He lives in a shanty town on the outskirts of the city, in a shack made of thick cardboard and bits of iron with the other street kids and their minders. Bill told Jorge's parents he would have a good job and be able to send money home to them in Romania. With many more mouths to feed, they reluctantly let him go. He hasn't had contact with them for years.

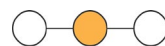
While Bill lives in a swanky apartment and eats in restaurants in his shiny suit, the children live in abject poverty and are beaten if they try to keep any money back. The girls are sold into marriage when they turn 12, returning many thousands of euros to their owners. Cheri was to be married, but touched a power line instead (something they had been told many times never to do). When his best friend Ada is told by her father that she is to be married next, she's horrified. Jorge promises to help her, but has no idea how.

Jorge has made friends with an Australian chef called Ricky and his girlfriend Honey. After he tells Honey the truth about his life and what is happening to Ada, Honey and Ricky help get the police involved, and once Jorge is free of Bill, they also give him a future—reigniting his dream that one day he will be the chef in his very own kitchen.

**Major themes:** homelessness, street kids, crime, Paris, exploitation, shanty towns, child trafficking, child marriage, kindness, friendship, courage, justice

**Content Notes:** 1. This book covers some heavy ground, in an age appropriate way. 2. Language:

'bloody' x 1 [p114], 'bugger' x 1 [p132]. 3. The police find three children under the age of eight locked in a shed. They are malnourished and have obviously been trafficked. 3. Cheri is electrocuted; inference that she chose to kill herself rather than marry [p108-9]. 4. Ada is sold to a 40-year-old man for 20,000 Euros, but is saved before the marriage can go ahead. 5. Seven-year-old Kali gets sick and the children insist Bill takes her to hospital. She is never seen again, and he has what looks like fingernail scratches on his face. 6. Cockfighting [p80]. A stolen sheep is gutted for cooking, its entrails pulled out [p141]. 7. When the police come, Ada's father tries to strangle Jorge for betraying them.



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



## A Dog's Tale

**Author:** Barry Jonsberg

**ISBN:** 978-1742991399

**Published:** 1/07/2017

**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Michael wants a dog. His mum & dad say no. No way. Never. They say dogs smell and get under your feet. But Michael is never going to give up. Ever.

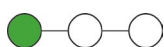
### >> OUR REVIEW

Mikey desperately wants a dog for Christmas. He's tried pleading and reasoning to no avail. Next, he tries to show how helpful and dependable he can be, albeit in an unusual way...

When Christmas rolls around, he's given a bike and a letter about helping an old lady look after her dog while she recovers from an accident. In this way, he can cycle to the lady's home and look after a real dog. His mum then hints that if that all goes well, he could get a puppy for his birthday. An enjoyable read about being responsible.

**Major themes:** family, responsibility, initiative, determination, pets

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.

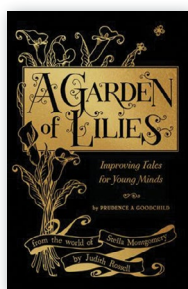


**Recommended Age:** 5 years +

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★

**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## A Garden of Lilies: Improving Tales for Young Minds

**Author:** Judith Rossell

**ISBN:** 978-0733338229

**Published:** 14/11/2017

**Publisher:** ABC Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

From the bestselling world of Stella Montgomery comes an illustrated alphabet of startling cautionary tales for the discerning young reader. Filled with uncommon facts for the novice conversationalist, prudent advice for house and garden, and rigorous lessons in etiquette and manners, *A Garden of Lilies* will transform any wayward child into the very picture of Victorian decorum and grace. *Children, listen and take heed, As this little book you read. All your evil ways amend, Or you will meet a dreadful end.*

### >> OUR REVIEW

This celebration of the wild, adventurous joys of childhood is disguised as an A to Z Victorian book of manners, etiquette and cautionary tales.

Each transgressing child meets a swift and grizzly end. Alice the scullery maid ties a ribbon in her hair and looks at herself in the mirror, then loses her position, becomes a beggar and drowns in a river. The tale is followed quickly by a dark, yet sing-song moral: *'Modesty should be your aim, or you will surely come to shame'*. The trend continues right through to Zenobia, who after refusing to do as she is told, is sucked through the window by a waterspout and is never seen again.

Interspersed with prudent advice for any variety of events, from Captain Frederick Marryat's Code of Signals (should one find oneself in trouble on the seas and require the use of flag signals to attract help), to instructions for fish scale embroidery. The book even suggests that children should learn to make calf's foot jelly and boiled sheep's head to contribute to a wholesome afternoon tea.

Illustrated throughout in both black and white and colour, in the style of Victorian children's literature, with beautiful lettering, and a gold embossed cover, this book will likely be treasured by stunned and giggling children for it's aesthetics alone. Sure to spark interesting conversations about childhood then, and childhood now, *A Garden of Lilies* will appeal to the Stella Montgomery fans, as well as the likes of Enid Blyton and Lemony Snicket.

**Major themes:** childhood, Victorian etiquette and lifestyle, morals, advice

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.

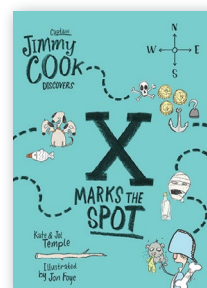


**Recommended Age:** 9 years +

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## Captain Jimmy Cook Discovers X Marks the Spot

**Author:** Jol Temple and Kate Temple

**ISBN:** 978-1760291945

**Published:** 29/03/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER 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! Treasure! Captain Jimmy Cook is about to make the discovery of a lifetime ...

### >> OUR REVIEW

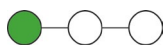
A wonderfully zany and at times, downright funny read. Young Jimmy Cook's antics will have readers

laughing out loud and cheering 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*, featured in the CBCA Awards for Younger Readers in 2017.

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

**Content Notes:** There are no concerns with this book.

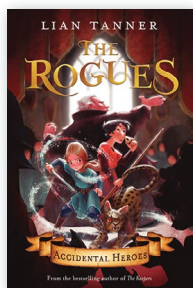


**Recommended Age:** 6 to 10 years

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Accidental Heroes: The Rogues # 1

**Author:** Lian Tanner

**ISBN:** 978-1760293529

**Published:** 27/09/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In the city, strange things happen. People disappear, trees sprout

overnight. But no one believes in magic. No, to believe in magic would be disloyal... The devious Lord Rump and his granddaughter, Duckling, need a disposable boy, and Pummel, a farm boy looking for work in the city, fits the bill perfectly. Duckling is happy to tangle him in her grandpa's web, as long as Grandpa keeps his promise - that this is his very last Scheme. Lord Rump's machinations take both children into the Strong-hold of Berren - where time has stopped and no one can leave - and before long they are entwined in a plot to kill the heir to the Faithful Throne. If they want to protect the Young Margrave, and save themselves from an awful death, Duckling and Pummel must learn to use the magic that no one else believes in.

### » OUR REVIEW

This first in a new series is set in an already established fantasy/fairytale world of schemes to kill heirs, a magical fortress that imprisons all who enter, magic gone wrong or in the wrong hands and similar exciting stuff. First there is Duckling, a young girl, and her Grandpa who may not really be a relative. They are close because they live by their wits. This means frequent changes of address. They've moved to Berren to settle down, which is a nice plan until Grandpa gambles their saving and loses. For his latest scheme to succeed he needs a boy with no family ties, a disposable boy, so he sends Duckling to the marketplace to find one.

Duckling finds Pummel, a cadet Snuffigator, a boy fresh from the country needing work to send money to his Ma to save the farm. Berren was a magical place until the current inhabitants took over. Now it's forbidden to believe in magic and it's the job of the Snuffigator to stamp out all signs of witchery i. e. to destroy snares that people fall into and disappear, to deal with poisonous vapours and trees that grow overnight and frogs that rain from the sky. These things are explained as

sabotage and hypnotism.

An old woman is dying. She is a Bajam, one of the original people of the area, the Saaf, with special magic. She must pass on her magical gifts before she goes but her daughter and her granddaughter are dead and her great grand- daughter has been sent to the salt mines. The Bajam knows a scheme is afoot. She gives the raashk to Pummel and the Wind's Blessing to Duckling, draws them together and commits their safety into the paws of a talking idle-cat. When the invaders came, the first Margrave, called Hemmen the Harsh built a Strong-hold on top of the Grimstone, the sacred rock of the Saaf. The Bajam of the day attempted to destroy it but something went wrong. Magic became twisted and there is an invisible wall around the fortress preventing exit.

Duckling, Pummel and Grandpa aka Lord Rump enter, stay too long and find they cannot get out. Duckling discovers Grandpa is involved in a scheme to kill the Heir and blame Pummel. The Margravine of Neuhalt (the invaders' name for the Saaf lands) hires Pummel as a companion for the Heir. However, she also takes Duckling which wasn't in the plan. Meanwhile somewhere in the Strong-hold someone is using magic to resurrect the original ruler using blood and spells from an old book. He, known as the Harshman with his hawk, will kill the Heir. Duckling and Pummel meet the Heir and the Heir's friend, a one-legged healer called Otte. They thwart the deadly plans of the assassin using the gifts given to them by the old woman. They realise those dwelling in the Strong-hold are roused to blood-lust on occasion by a whispering voice urging them to war, kill and revenge. They also learn the Heir and the Heir's friend were swapped at birth and Otte is the true Heir.

Duckling is challenged by the honest, trusting nature of Pummel having been taught conniving, lying, manipulating, self-seeking ways by her con-artist Grandpa. While they



eventually escape the Stronghold, away to the south in the salt mines, a young girl (now the Bayam) plans her escape and plots revenge on those who possess the magic gifts that are her right.

This is a well-plotted tale with familiar twists and strong, interesting characters. Readers (and reviewers!) will look forward to the next in the series.

**Major themes:** adventure, friendship, courage, trust, schemes, invasion, inheritance, manipulation

**Content Notes:** 1. The magic mentioned is mostly fantasy magic but there is occasional reference to blood-fed magic.

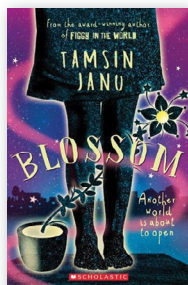


**Recommended Age:** 9 to 13 years

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Blossom

**Author:** Tamsin Janu

**ISBN:** 978-1742991641

**Published:** 1/07/2017

**Publisher:** Omnibus

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Lottie is excited when a lost little girl, Blossom, arrives on her doorstep. Lottie, who only has Uncle Bobby in the world, has always wanted a sister. But Blossom isn't like other kids. She doesn't speak and is obsessed with her flower, refusing to go anywhere without it. But everything changes when Blossom gets sick, and she is taken away. Lottie, with the help of her friends, must do whatever it takes to rescue her.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Ten-year-old Lottie lives with her Uncle Bob in a rundown town outside Sydney. One evening a knock at the door yields an unexpected visitor; a young girl with a mop of hair and piercing blue eyes. Lottie is immediately drawn to her and, after a trip to the police station, it's decided that she can stay with them as Bob is a registered foster carer.

Lottie christens the girl Blossom due to the flower she perpetually carries, however Blossom doesn't speak, which makes it impossible to get any information out of her. Lottie loves having a little sister, but soon learns that they can be frustrating, especially when they don't eat or speak. Eventually Blossom starts to talk in strange clicks and whistles, and also eats, beginning with grass and then salad.

There's a real bond between the girls, so when Blossom falls ill Lottie is very anxious for her. When the doctor can't find a pulse Blossom is whisked off to hospital. Here she's declared an alien, causing the media to descend in droves.

Lottie is determined to rescue her, so with the help of her friend and an avaricious neighbour, they do just that. By the time the girls are once again alone it's clear that Blossom is changing, and Lottie finally understands the significance of the flower she carries ...

This is a wonderfully engaging and quite mesmerising story. There is no explanation about where Blossom came from, but it's not needed, as this is a story of friendship, trust and love. Lottie's simple acceptance of Blossom, no questions asked, is uplifting. Similarly, Uncle Bob's character is an interesting one, as his life was rocked when his niece arrived and now he has another girl to look after as well. A great read and definitely recommended.

**Major themes:** small town life, poverty, displacement, lost girl, friendship, family, aliens, rescue

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.

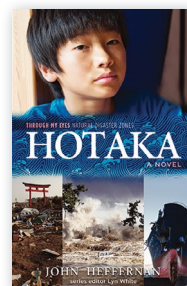


**Recommended Age:** 9 to 12 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Hotaka: Through My Eyes - Natural Disaster Zones

**Author:** John Heffernan

**ISBN:** 978-1760113766

**Published:** 22/02/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

When the tsunami strikes the Japanese seaside town of Omoriwan, the effects are utterly devastating. Three years later, much of what happened on that day is still a mystery. As Hotaka sets about convincing local performers to appear at the town's upcoming Memorial Concert, he finds himself increasingly haunted by memories of best friend, Takeshi, who perished without trace in the tsunami. Then his friend Sakura becomes involved in an anti-seawall movement, and all too quickly the protest gets serious. As the town and its people struggle to rebuild their lives, can Hotaka piece together what happened that day - and let go of the past?

### >> OUR REVIEW

Hotaka Yamato and his best friend Takeshi are on a class excursion to the puppet theatre when the earth begins to tear itself apart. After being saved by the quick thinking of a young teacher, Takeshi disappears under the water when

the boys rush to help some elderly citizens. Then disaster hits again ... When Hotaka awakes some days later, he discovers his town has been smashed to pieces. Hotaka himself was found unconscious face down in the mud. Takeshi is never found. Many have lost everything, including his classmate Osamu who is left orphaned by the tragedy. Hotaka's mother takes him into her home, as she will take many others.

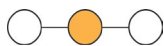
Fast forward to 2014, and life has fallen into some semblance of routine, even though their once beautiful town is beautiful no more. But all is not well. The government is determined to build a huge sea wall that will change the face of their town forever. It's a 'solution' that is doomed to fail and one that is being driven by corruption and greed. When Sakura becomes the unwitting face of the resistance against the government's plans, it isn't long before her best friends Hotaka and Osamu are also involved. The whole town will need to work together if they are to stop outside interests from destroying their home.

This well written story helps the reader understand some of the awful realities faced by children and their communities when struck with a natural disaster. Their history, their anchor and sense of place and the rhythms and rituals of life are shattered. People they'd see every day—friends, family and even enemies—are lost and in their place is an ache that never goes away. This is a tale that will help children develop empathy and compassion. Highly recommended.

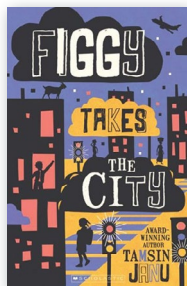
**Favourite quote:** *"Sadness is not necessarily the enemy of happiness. The two can live together. In fact, sometimes they need each other—for the dark gives the light a place to shine."* [p122].

**Major themes:** grief, tragedy, loss, natural disaster, tsunami, courage, Japan, friendship, family, recovery, corruption, activism, commemoration, bullying, hope

**Content Notes:** 1. 'oh my god' [p60, 113, 154, 177], 'OMG' [p130], crap [p60, 106, 108, 175, 184], 'what the hell' [p12]. 2. As you would expect Japanese beliefs are reflected at times during the story, including a shaman who essentially tells Hotaka he needs to let go of his deep grief over Takeshi if he is ever to be free [p59-65].



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



## Figgy Takes the City

**Author:** Tamsin Janu  
**ISBN:** 978-1742992006  
**Published:** 1/09/2017  
**Publisher:** Omnibus

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Both Nana and Figgy receive scholarships to attend the Hope College in Ghana's big city, Accra. Figgy and Nana will have to leave behind the village and family they love, meet lots of new people and learn new things. Figgy does not want to go, but Grandma Ama says she must. But Nana begins acting strange and he will not tell Figgy what he is doing when he disappears from school on the weekends. When Figgy follows him one day, to a place that is scary and sad, she must convince him that he will always be a part of her family, no matter where he comes from. And she learns that sometimes change is not so bad—especially if you have somewhere and someone to go home to.

### >> OUR REVIEW

It's always enjoyable to come across

a book set in a different locale, where the reader can learn a little about the country and its culture, particularly one as well written as this, that offers a glimpse of both rural village and city life in present day Ghana.

Eleven-year-old Figgy and her slightly older 'brother' Nana live with Grandma Ama and some younger cousins. They've just completed the scholarship exam for a prestigious school in the capital Accra. The exam is easy for Nana and he's eager to continue his education. Figgy, however, is less sure about leaving her family and village life. She is surprised to be accepted to the school along with Nana.

Soon Figgy and Nana are off to the boarding school and the unfamiliarity of the big city. They both make friends with their room mates and on weekends stay with Uncle Philmond. During one weekend visit, Nana pressures Philmond about his selfishness in not sending enough money back to Grandma Ama. Philmond implies that her financial woes are due to taking in children like Nana. At this Nana storms out and is lost to the city. He doesn't return until school on Monday morning. From then on he's secretive and avoids Figgy.

Eventually it transpires that Nana's working at the tip recycling metal from electronics in order to repay back everything that Grandma Ama has spent on him. When the authorities move in to clear the adjacent slums, Figgy and Nana are trapped but eventually break free, much to the relief of the school, Grandma Ama and Uncle Philmond.

A wonderful, wonderful tale which gives a great (albeit simple) overview of the issues facing this and many other African countries. Nana's recycling of electronic waste from first world countries is worthy of deeper discussions in class. A valuable book for primary aged readers.

**Major themes:** Ghana, Africa, village life, extended families, school,

scholarship, city living, poverty, recycling, child labour

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.

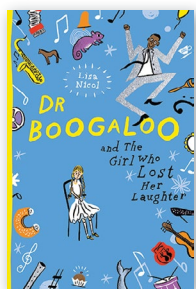


**Recommended Age:** 9 to 12 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Dr Boogaloo and The Girl Who Lost Her Laughter

**Author:** Lisa Nicol

**ISBN:** 978-0143782599

**Published:** 2/10/2017

**Publisher:** Random House

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Enchanting, timeless and surprising - this extraordinary novel will touch the hearts (and ears) of children and adults alike. Dr Boogaloo was no ordinary doctor. Not at all like the one you might visit if you had a sore tummy. No, Dr Boogaloo was a very different type of doctor. He treated folks who suffered from rather unusual complaints. And how did he treat them? Why, with the most powerful medicine known to mankind ... Music!

Blue was no ordinary girl. For starters, her name was Blue. But what was truly extraordinary about Blue was the fact that she hadn't laughed for 712 days. Not a hee hee, a ho ho or even a tiny tee hee. According to Dr Boogaloo, music can cure anything. [Of course, you need the right dose of the right music. No point listening to a jive if you're in need of some boogie-woogie, and you can't just substitute a toot for a blow!] But no laughter

was definitely a case for alarm. Can Dr Boogaloo compose a cure before Blue loses her laughter forever?

### >> OUR REVIEW

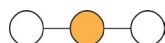
There's an interesting premise to this quite unusual story; that music not only has an emotional effect, but a healing one too, if only the right combination can be found. Mind you, the ailments are just as bizarre.

The story follows Blue, who has lost the ability to laugh. Due to this, she's ostracised by schoolmates, friends, and even her parents. As a last resort she's packed off to Dr Boogaloo's Family Clinic of Musical Cures. She thrives, becoming a new person with each experience, and on the final try is finally cured.

This book is a little off-beat, somewhat amusing and very different, but it's also a very enjoyable read with some fun characters and situations. You'll probably never find so many musical styles or obscure instruments mentioned in a single novel again!

**Major themes:** losing the ability to laugh, musical therapy, weird parents, family, servants, musical styles and instruments

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: Blue's mother frequently says 'bloody' x 9 [p29,31, 117, 159, 160, 178]. 2. Barton Blak can't open his mouth without swearing. His words are represented by symbols, eg. %\$#@ [p14]. 3. 'So it's okay I'm now imagining giving you the rude finger and stomping on your toes? Absolutely, Charlie. My mind is now enjoying giving you a swift kick up the bum. So all is well.' [p13].



**Recommended Age:** 9 to 12 years

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Lintang and the Pirate Queen

**Author:** Tamara Moss

**ISBN:** 978-0143783435

**Published:** 31/07/2017

**Publisher:** Penguin Random House

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Lintang dreams of having adventures on the high seas. When a deadly mythie attacks the same day the infamous Captain Shafira visits her island, Lintang gets her chance, defending her village with a bravery that earns her a place on the pirate queen's ship. But they've barely left the island when Lintang discovers her best friend, Bayani, has stowed away. Telling Captain Shafira means betraying her friend, but keeping Bayani's secret risks everything... including their lives.

### >> OUR REVIEW

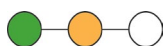
Lintang is an adolescent girl that wants more out of life than cooking, cleaning and those her islander family impose on her. She longs for adventure, sword fighting and generally getting into mischief [the last of which she's very good at achieving]. In fact she's constantly getting into trouble and lying to try and get out of it. So when she and her best friend Bayani are attacked by a dangerous (and very rare) mythie, no one believes them. Accept the Pirate Queen, Captain Safira. Safira needs an islander to get past a giant sea mythie, Nyasandra, that protects the region around Twin Islands, without an islander onboard, Nyasandra would destroy the ship. No one knows why there are so many mythie creatures; they simply appeared about 100 years before and everyone



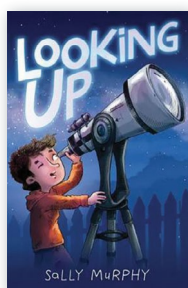
blames the three gods worshipped in some regions of the fantastical world. Sometimes they are dangerous, other times merely a nuisance. Lintang goes with Captain Safira and Bayani stows away on the ship. They begin a dashing adventure, barely escaping the grasp of a sea serpent, fighting sirens and dangerous mermaids. They also begin to untangle the mystery of the mythies, how they came to their homeland and how they can be 'cured'. This is a fast paced and exciting story that will be loved by any who enjoy fantasy fiction. Lintang must learn the hard-way on many occasions, sometimes with serious consequences that make her feel miserable.

**Major themes:** Friendship, trust and building deep relationships valuing life in all its forms, human and mythie, doing the right thing, even if the reason for doing so is not understood. freedom from oppression

**Content Notes:** 1. This is a fantasy fiction in which the three gods, Niti, Patiki and Mratzi are broadly considered creators of life and protectors of people's spirits after they die [explained well on pages 65-67]. 2. There is frequent low-level violence. They fight various mythies that nearly kill some people and almost destroys their ship. Both Bayani and Lintang are nearly killed on several occasions but are saved by people around them. Lintang is transformed into a dangerous mythie and nearly killed by her crew before she can be changed back into a human. The encounters are always non-graphic, though a sense of danger is portrayed strongly on several occasions.



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



## Looking Up

**Author:** Sally Murphy  
**ISBN:** 978-1925164572  
**Published:** 1/05/2017  
**Publisher:** Fremantle Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Pete is hoping desperately hoping for a telescope. There's nothing he wants more for his birthday. But when a mysterious card arrives in the mail, what Pete wants is turned totally upside down.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Nine-year-old Pete wants a telescope for his birthday, but knows their family can't afford it. As he collected the mail one day he discovers a birthday card from his Grandad, a Grandad he didn't know existed. His mum avoids conversation and says that she will have to think about it before she can tell him. Pete and his friend Tyler take matters into their own hands and head off to find the unknown grandad. They work it out as Pete's mum's maiden name is a very odd one.

Tyler and Pete ride off to visit the proposed grandfather, knocking on a stranger's door with a card to show. He recognises the card and realises it is Pete, invites him in but they both realise that maybe they shouldn't since Pete's mum does not know he is there. When Pete gets back home his mother asks where he has been but Pete doesn't tell him. Later his Mum tells Pete the story about how her mother [Pete's grandmother] died and that his Mum and Grandfather blamed each other for the accident because they had a fight. Pete's mum was 17 when it happened and wanted to go to a party that her father didn't want her to and the accident happened that

night. The mother and grandfather reunite with Pete's persistence and Pete discovers that his grandad has an even better telescope than he could have imagined. Concepts explored are lack of forgiveness, family fighting and honesty within the family.

**Major themes:** family break down, honesty, grandparents, getting what you want

**Content Notes:** While this is an easy read the themes and topics are quite advanced, dealing with long term unforgiveness. The mum does not appear that concerned with Pete being late home after visiting his Granddad.



**Recommended Age:** 9 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** NO  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Jehan & the Quest of the Lost Dog

**Author:** Rosanne Hawke  
**ISBN:** 978-0702259609  
**Published:** 28/08/2017  
**Publisher:** UQP

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Jehan closed his eyes to pray, then opened them again. It wasn't a dream. The water was still there - the biggest flood he had seen in his life.

For nine-year-old Jehan, life in Pakistan is just as it should be. He attends school, plays cricket with his little brother and fetches water for his family. But when the monsoon unleashes a catastrophic flood, Jehan is swept away from his village and

becomes trapped in a tree. Jehan stays alive by rescuing things from the floodwater, but as the days pass with no sign of help, Jehan starts to despair. Will he ever see his family again? Then Jehan rescues a dog and he is no longer alone. But why does the dog keep swimming away? Where is she going? Eventually, Jehan must follow the lost dog into the floodwater. But will the dog's quest lead them to safety? Or to more danger? Sensitive told, this important story brings home the horrific reality of natural disasters on the lives of children, families and communities around the world, but celebrates need for hope, kindness and resilience that these situations inspire in their aftermath.

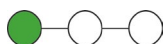
#### >> OUR REVIEW

Nine-year-old Jehan is swept away in a mighty flood. Turning a bath tub into a makeshift boat, he reminds himself of his mother's lesson to be happy and thankful. The dog, Lali, is fiercely protecting her pups when the floods come and she is washed away. She makes unlikely friends with the lone boy in the bath tub. They decide to search for their families together. The pair meet various strangers on their journey, and every so often, Lali disappears for days. Jehan does not know where she goes, but only hopes she returns so he is not so alone.

One day, Jehan gets the courage to follow Lali into the floodwaters and discovers her pups and owner, Fozia. Jehan is happy for Lali's reunion, and joins her and Fozia in the new tent city, but he misses his family and home. In the end Jehan is reunited with his family, and Lali and Fozia 'join the pack'.

**Major themes:** survival, love, family, kindness, happiness, friendship, generosity, multiculturalism

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



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



## May Tang: A New Australian

**Author:** Katrina Berkoff  
**ISBN:** 978-1742990743  
**Published:** 1/04/2017  
**Publisher:** Omnibus

#### >> PUBLISHER 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

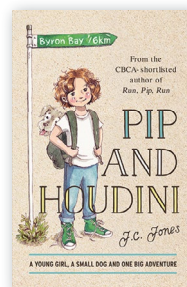
with the emotional upheaval going on inside May. The story is well researched which lends credence and depth to the characters and situations. Highly recommended.

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

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



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



## Pip and Houdini

**Author:** J. C. Jones  
**ISBN:** 978-1760296056  
**Published:** 26/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Pip has one clue about the whereabouts of her birth mother, Cass - an old postcard from Beautiful Byron Bay. She's been settled with the Brownings, who are planning to adopt her--at least, that's until Pip gets into trouble once again! Now, Pip is sure she won't find a home with the Brownings. There's only one place she might belong, and that's with her mother.

With her faithful hound Houdini by her side, Pip sets off north, to find out once and for all what became of Cass. It's a journey filled with interesting people, including a mysteriously musical young woman and a friendly, sun-bitten surfer. But as Pip draws ever-closer to Byron Bay, is she

prepared for what she will find when she gets there?

Once again this girl as skinny as a piece of string proves that adventure is where you choose to find it and a little bit of kindness can go a long way! *Pip and Houdini* is a warm-hearted adventure story about a feisty girl and her escape-artist dog exploring the world.

#### » OUR REVIEW

This sequel continues the story of Pip and her faithful dog Houdini as they settle into a new foster home with a loving family.

However, Pip's forthright ways are causing issues. She's punched a boy at school and been banned from a school trip, which she goes on anyway, and this has her continually questioning why such a nice family would want her. Convinced they're going to send her back, she decides to once again run away and find her long lost mother in Byron Bay.

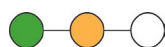
The trip isn't without its incidents, and with a state-wide search underway, she has to keep running. Eventually, she makes it to Byron and meets a local surfer who knew her mother. He turns out to be her uncle, as his now dead brother was her father. There's a family reunion of sorts, although we still don't know what happened to Cass, her mother. In the end, she decides to stay in Byron with her uncle and grandparents, but visit her foster family on holidays.

An enjoyable, fun read with Pip's aunties the cause of much amusement. Readers will be cheering for her and it's a nice twist that she finds her father's family. Pip is a great character, and the story is totally engrossing, very believable and well-written.

**Major themes:** foster child and home, loving family, perceptions, doing wrong, resilience, consequences, self-doubt, misunderstanding, runaway, adventure, birth family, Byron Bay

**Content Notes:** 1. Animal adaptation

is used as an analogy for Pip's ability to adapt and survive (p13-16).



**Recommended Age:** 9 to 12 years  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Shaozhen

**Author:** Wai Chim  
**ISBN:** 978-1760113797  
**Published:** 26/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

#### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Shaozhen has no intention of staying in his remote Henan village and becoming another poor farmer: he'll finish school, and then, hopefully, work in a factory in one of the major cities, just like his father. But when Shaozhen returns home for the summer holidays, imagining days filled with nothing but playing basketball with his friends, he's in for a shock. The worst drought in over sixty years threatens the crops that the entire village relies on for income. As the water situation becomes dire, Shaozhen realises he must come up with a plan. But will it be enough to save his family and friends and secure the future of his village?

#### » OUR REVIEW

The village of Hongsha is mainly populated by the elderly and the young. Children like Shaozhen live with their grandparents while their parents are migrant workers in Guangzhou. They are lucky to see their families for even a few days each New Year. Getting a job in the city is a dream for the village boys, who will otherwise marry and have

children who they will have to leave behind in the same way they have been left.

After his mother leaves to join his father in the city, Shaozhen is left with Nainai (his paternal grandmother) and Yangyang who they took in from another village after her grandmother died.

With the region suffering its' worst drought in more than 50 years, water is getting increasingly hard to find. The village wells have dried up and when a landslide cuts them off from their last hope—a small mountain spring—the situation becomes even more dire. Their only option is to walk the 90 minutes each way to Xifeng each day, in order to fetch water from the trucks organised by the Communist Party. They are only allowed two buckets per household per day.

The journey is hard enough on the young ones, but for the older villagers it is almost impossible. It is only when the villagers join together that Shaozhen and others are able to find a way to ensure they all survive...

An interesting story that introduces the reader to a completely different way of life in a time of great hardship. This would make an excellent class novel on Asia.

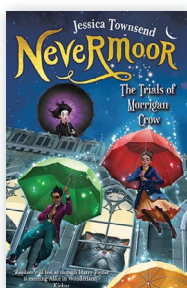
**Major themes:** family, isolation, deprivation, drought, communism, bureaucracy, forgiveness, kindness, helping others, caring for the elderly, teamwork.

**Content Notes:** 1. Shaozhen learns that in the 1990s commercial companies encouraged the villagers to give them their blood in exchange for money to build better houses etc. , they extracted the plasma and gave the rest back using unhygienic means. This caused an AIDS epidemic in the region. This is a true story.



**Recommended Age:** 11 to 14 years  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★





## Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow

**Author:** Jessica Townsend

**ISBN:** 978-0734418074

**Published:** 10/10/2017

**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Morrigan Crow is cursed. Born on an unlucky day, she is blamed for all local misfortunes, from hailstorms to heart attacks - and, worst of all, the curse means that Morrigan is doomed to die at midnight on Eventide.

But as Morrigan awaits her fate, a strange and remarkable man named Jupiter North appears. Chased by black-smoke hounds and shadowy hunters on horseback, he whisks her away into the safety of a secret, magical city called Nevermoor. It's there that Morrigan discovers Jupiter has chosen her to contend for a place in the city's most prestigious organisation: the Wondrous Society.

In order to join, she must compete in four difficult and dangerous trials against hundreds of other children, each boasting an extraordinary talent that sets them apart. Except for Morrigan, who doesn't seem to have any special talent at all.

To stay in the safety of Nevermoor for good, Morrigan will need to find a way to pass the tests - or she'll have to leave the city to confront her deadly fate.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Morrigan Crow is a cursed child, which means any local calamities are blamed on her—from floods to pestilence. She's grown up knowing that she is fated to die on the

midnight of her twelfth birthday, also called Eventide. As a special gift for her birthday, she begs her father (a cold, unloving man) to attend Bid Day. This is a day when children who've finished preparatory school receive an education bid—only if they are lucky! It's a huge surprise when Morrigan's name is bid on—not once, but four times. An elusive Mr Jones arrives after the bidding and asks Morrigan to become an apprentice to Squall Industries, which she refuses, knowing she does not have a future.

When Eventide comes a year earlier, Morrigan faces the reality of a more imminent death. Instead, the mysterious Jupiter North arrives and takes Morrigan away to be his apprentice, which enables her to avoid her fate. They escape The Hunt of Smoke and Shadow and arrive in Nevermoor (a free state that she's never heard of - not many have). Morrigan becomes a guest at Jupiter's Hotel Deaualion—an enchanted and ever-changing place.

Meanwhile, there is political unrest brewing in Nevermoor, as people believe the dreaded Ezra Squall, the Wundersmith, has returned. Jupiter informs Morrigan that she must try out for the Wondrous Society to stay in Nevermoor. This will require her to pass a series of challenges. She makes it through a 'fright challenge' with witches and a racing challenge on the back of a Magnificat.

Morrigan learns that she must discover a 'talent' (like Jupiter, his nephew Jack, and her friend Hawthorne) in order to complete the trials. In the end, her 'talent' is revealed to be that of a Wundersmith. Morrigan discovers this from Mr Jones, who is actually Ezra Squall, the much feared Wundersmith.

Ultimately, Morrigan has found the love and family she never had, a place in the Wondrous Society, but also a solemn responsibility - she bears the power of a Wundersmith. This enchanting tale draws the reader into a quirky and magical world that rivals predecessors such

as Hogwarts and Narnia. A fabulous read with positive underlying themes.

**Major themes:** magic, family, good vs evil, immigration, gifts/talents, competition, acceptance, power, love, courage, friendship, scapegoat

**Content Notes:** 1. Nevermoor is clean fiction with fantastical elements, including a vampire dwarf [p107], human-eating dragons [p54] witches [p281] and exorcism of ghosts [chapter 12], although there isn't actually a ghost at all. 2. Mention of violent history. [p182]. 'Scary' songs are sung by the dwarf for Hallowmas [chapter 15] and there are fancy dress festivities. On that night Morrigan has to endure the fright trial, which involves witches and zombie corpses [chapter 16]. 3. Language: bloody x 2. 4. The curse does not exist. It was a story made up by the Wundersmith to cover up his nefarious activities.



**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:** 29/03/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*A boy stood in the playground under the big fig tree. 'He can't speak English,' the children whispered...*

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 who is 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

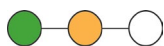
find Ellery and his father have gone. Based on something she heard, Hilda thinks they must have been sent to Holsworthy [although neither of the girls understand what/where Holsworthy is].

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

**Content Notes:** 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:** ★★★★★



## The Cursed First Term of Zelda Stitch. Bad Teacher. Worse Witch.

**Author:** Nicki Greenberg  
**ISBN:** 978-1760294908  
**Published:** 23/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Zelda rides a broomstick!* 'Zelda's got a bat-friend!' 'Zelda smells like toadstools!' 'Witch! Witch! Witch!' It was bad enough when I was eleven years old. But if they sniff me out now, it'll be a disaster. Zelda Stitch isn't much of a witch - she's hoping she'll make a better primary school teacher. But if the vice principal finds out about her, her dream will go up in a puff of smoke. Keeping her magic secret isn't the only trouble bubbling in Ms Stitch's classroom: there's wild-child Zinnia, lonely Eleanor, secretive Phoebe and a hairy, eight-legged visitor called Jeremy. Not to mention the nits...

With NO HELP AT ALL from her disagreeable cat Barnaby, Zelda must learn to be a better teacher, a better friend and a better witch - even if that means taking broomstick lessons. Magic. Mischief. Mayhem. Zelda's classroom is a cauldron full of laughs.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Zelda Stitch is lacking in confidence, both personally and professionally. She has little trust in her abilities as a witch, plus she's starting a new career as a primary school teacher. Her biggest challenge is keeping her identity a secret, as ordinary humans would baulk at having their children

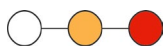
taught by a witch.

Whilst her teaching career seems to start off smoothly and she enjoys her pupils immensely, she senses something is not right. It turns out the Vice Principal is a witch too and that one of her students is showing signs. Being a worry-wart and fearing for her job, she constantly seeks outside advice, especially as she believes a hex has been put on the Principal. Eventually, with the help of her mother and other witch friends, they get to the bottom of the issue.

A fun and absorbing read with some engaging characters. The classroom antics are all very commonplace, which makes the story all the more relatable. The witch characters are not over the top and benefit from the restraint.

**Major themes:** magic, witches, school, new teacher, pupils, lack of confidence, seeking help

**Content Notes:** Witches and magic are obviously the main focus of the story, fairy tale style.



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



## The Exile: Tarin of the Mammoths #1

**Author:** Jo Sandhu  
**ISBN:** 978-0143309376  
**Published:** 27/02/2017  
**Publisher:** Penguin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Tarin longs to be a hunter, but his

twisted leg means he is feared and bullied. After a disastrous mishap, Tarin is forced to leave his family and travel alone across wild, unknown land to save the Mammoth Clan. Battling the hostile and savage Boar Clan, a deadly illness and treacherous terrain with twins Kaija and Luuka and their wolf cubs, Tarin realises that if they are all to survive he must conquer his greatest fear - his true self - and embrace the magic that is hiding within him.

### >> OUR REVIEW

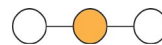
Tarin is the clan chief's son, but his twisted leg (a birth defect), stops him from taking up his rightful place as he is unable to join the hunt and other activities. A series of events leads to him being outcast and sent on a perilous journey to give offerings to the Earth Mother. She, however, lives in a distant mountain range - one that Tarin, with his disability, is unlikely to reach.

During his journey he is continually tested by the elements and his own lack of self belief. Teaming up with other runaways improves all their chances at survival. When they are captured by the vicious Boar Clan, all seems lost, but an unlikely ally helps and they are able to escape and continue Tarin's quest.

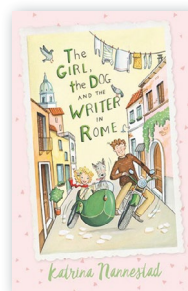
An entertaining story, although sometimes weighed down by too much detail. There is plenty of information on how Stone Age man lived and on their spiritual beliefs etc. but at times it detracts from an otherwise interesting story. Tarin is a positive anti hero, especially as disabled babies would not have been allowed to live in those earlier, barbaric times. His other abilities come to the fore during his journey, consequently we see self doubt and a victim mentality fade as he realises his body may not be strong, but his brain certainly is.

**Major themes:** Stone Age tribes, spiritual beliefs, friendship, banishment, disability, ability, quest, self belief, healing

**Content Notes:** There are many references to spiritual beliefs and even human sacrifice, but these are consistent with the setting and the time.



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



## The Girl, the Dog & the Writer in Rome

**Author:** Katrina Nannestad  
**ISBN:** 978-0733338175  
**Published:** 23/10/2017  
**Publisher:** ABC Books

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

For the first ten years of Freja's life, she and her mother Clementine have roamed the Arctic in search of zoological wonders. Happy, content, together. Freja and Clem. Clem and Freja. But now, everything is changing, and Clementine must send Freja away to live with her old friend Tobias, a bestselling crime writer and, quite possibly, the most absent-minded man on earth. Tobias isn't used to life with a child, and Freja isn't used to people at all, but together they'll stumble into an Italian adventure so big that it will change things forever ...

Award-winning Australian author Katrina Nannestad returns with a delicious new series about family, friendship and finding yourself.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Freja's mother conducts research for ten months every year in the Arctic regions of the world, investigating wildlife and habitats. Freja enjoys her



unusual life style, however, when her mother is found to be unwell, 10-year-old Freja is left in the care of Tobias Appleby, a man she has never met before but seems to be a relative. Tobias is a crime writer and spends his days at his typewriter, or on walks imagining various scenarios for his books. He owns an overgrown puppy called, Finnegan.

Freja is quite unaccustomed to being with other people and Tobias has never taken care of a child before, so between the two of them, they muddled their way through domesticity. Tobias is very kind and Freja doesn't want to admit how much she misses her mother.

One day in a desperate attempt to distract Tobias' attention from her homesickness, she blurts out that she would like to go to Rome. Tobias immediately agrees and soon after they find themselves living in Rome. A mystery develops involving missing diamonds and along the way Freja discovers she is able to make friends with a wide variety of people, who all become helpful in solving a real-life crime. The story ends with Freja and Tobias about to move to France, which prepares the way for further books in the series. The book finishes with a number of issues left unresolved. It is unclear what is wrong with Clementine, and how Freja is related to Tobias, though it's hinted that he is her uncle. Presumably these things become clear in future books. However, I found it a little disappointing to get to the end of a good length novel and not be rewarded with information about the biological connection between Tobias and Freja. Overall, the story is well-told, humorous and moves at a good pace. It contains a subtle encouragement for children to be brave about making friends.

**Major themes:** Adventure, Humour, Friendships, Family, Mystery

**Content Notes:** A Catholic lady teaches Freja to pray but unknowingly creates the impression that you can only pray in a church.



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



## The Extremely Inconvenient Adventures of Bronte Mettlestone

**Author:** Jaclyn Moriarty  
**ISBN:** 978-1760297176  
**Published:** 25/10/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*I was ten years old when my parents were killed by pirates. This did not bother me as much as you might think - I hardly knew my parents.*

Bronte Mettlestone's parents ran away to have adventures when she was a baby, leaving her to be raised by her Aunt Isabelle and the Butler. She's had a perfectly pleasant childhood of afternoon teas and riding lessons - and no adventures, thank you very much. But Bronte's parents have left extremely detailed (and bossy) instructions for Bronte in their will.

The instructions must be followed to the letter, or disaster will befall Bronte's home. She is to travel the kingdoms and empires, perfectly alone, delivering special gifts to her ten other aunts. There is a farmer aunt who owns an orange orchard and a veterinarian aunt who specialises in dragon care, a pair of aunts who captain a cruise ship together and a former rockstar aunt who is now the reigning monarch of a

small kingdom. Now, armed with only her parents' instructions, a chest full of strange gifts and her own strong will, Bronte must journey forth to face dragons, Chief Detectives and pirates - and the gathering suspicion that there might be something more to her extremely inconvenient quest than meets the eye...

From the award-winning Jaclyn Moriarty comes a fantastic tale of high intrigue, grand adventure and an abundance of aunts.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Ten-year-old Bronte lives with an aunt and her butler. Her parents mysteriously disappeared on an adventure when she was a baby. The story begins with the news that Bronte's parents are dead. This doesn't upset Bronte overly as she never knew her parents. However with their deaths and the reading of their will, comes instructions that Bronte is to visit her ten other aunts and deliver particular gifts to each of them. So begins Bronte's extremely, inconvenient adventures.

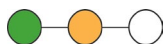
What follows is the amusing tales of Bronte's aunts and their families. Each aunt has a unique and unusual occupation. Bronte unwittingly learns information about the Whispering Wars, spells, dragons, pirates, elves and water sprites which becomes important in the final chapters.

In the climax of the book Bronte rescues her cousin, Billy who was taken captive by pirates. With her other cousins in tow, they are able to defeat the menacing powers of the Whispering King and also rescue her parents, who weren't dead after all. Something our reviewer had suspected, but a young reader probably wouldn't.

This well-written, whimsical story has a very satisfying appeal as so many seemingly unimportant details in the early stages of the book become important in the final resolution. While this is a long book (500 pages), it moves at a good pace with short chapters, and comical illustrations.

**Major themes:** families, friendships, adventure, fun, magic

**Content Notes:** 'bugger' x 1 [p158]



**Recommended Age:** 8 to 12 years

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## The Fighting Stingrays

**Author:** Simon Mitchell

**ISBN:** 978-0143784104

**Published:** 31/07/2017

**Publisher:** Puffin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Charlie, Masa and Alf are best mates - loyal and adventurous. They're the Fighting Stingrays. In between school, swimming and fishing on idyllic Thursday Island, they have a ripper time role-playing bombing missions and other war games. But when Japan enters World War II, the Fighting Stingrays are told that one of their own is now the real-life enemy. Drawn into a dangerous game of cat and mouse in the Torres Strait, their friendship and loyalties are tested as the threat of invasion looms closer.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Though a work of fiction, this well-researched novel has many factual roots—including the author's own family history—which makes for a fascinating and informative read.

Life on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait is fairly idyllic for Charlie and his schoolmates, Alf and Masa. However, things change rapidly with the onset of the Second World War, and they

escalate even more once Japan joins in and starts her march over the Pacific. This results in all the Japanese pearl divers and their families being rounded up and eventually sent to an internment camp.

The friends try to keep Masa out but he's eventually captured. After they manage to free him, they set off on a daring voyage to the mainland. When blown off course they end up on a small and safe deserted island.

Meanwhile a mad army captain is searching for them, believing Masa to be a traitorous spy. After a few months they're rescued by a local fisherman and returned to Thursday Island, where they are imprisoned and threatened with death by the captain. A Japanese air raid offers a chance to escape and do the captain in for looting homes.

Eventually, Charlie is reunited with his family in Brisbane, Alf joins his injured brother in Sydney and Masa goes unwillingly to the camp.

An excellent and absorbing read with plenty of details about this period in Australian history and the Torres Strait in particular. The treatment of indigenous and non-white Australians is also graphically depicted as are the preparations for war. There are additional notes at the back that help explain the history and background of the story. Highly recommended.

**Major themes:** Torres Strait, Thursday Island, pearl trade, WWII, war preparations, internment, friends, escape, desert island, corrupt military personnel

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



**Recommended Age:** 10 to 14 years

**Suitable class novel:** YES

**Good read rating:** ★★★★★

**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Too Many Friends

**Author:** Kathryn Apel

**ISBN:** 978-0702259760

**Published:** 1/05/2017

**Publisher:** UQP

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*At school I have lots of friends. I have so many friends that sometimes I don't know who to play with.* Tahnee wants everyone in her Year 2 class to get along and be happy. But what happens when all of Tahnee's friends want her attention at the same time? And how can Tahnee be friends with Lucy, when Lucy doesn't seem to want any friends? A verse novel about friendship and school life, and the balance we all need to find to be the best friend we can be.

### >> OUR REVIEW

It's important to Tahnee that she is a good friend. Sometimes that seems harder to achieve than others. From the challenges of group work, which offers insights into the different personalities of her teammates, to her desire to find a way to be a friend to new girl Lucy, Tahnee is focused on taking care of others.

When Tahnee presents the guest list for her 7th birthday party to her parents, every child in her class is on there. She doesn't want anyone to be left out - even the kids who can be annoying at times. Tahnee considers them all to be her friends.

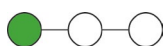
When her desire to be fair and include everybody puts her at odds with Roxanne, who is upset she didn't get to work with Tahnee on an art project, Tahnee comes up with a wonderful plan to overcome the awkwardness between them. She anonymously

writes a note to every person in her class – including her beloved teacher Miss Darling – focusing on the characteristics that make them a good friend. It's an act that restores her relationship with Roxanne, and sets off a lovely chain reaction ...

A sweet story told in verse from the perspective of a little girl with a kind heart who sees what others often don't, and does what she can to make the world a little brighter.

**Major themes:** friendship, class projects, making toys, privilege, inclusiveness, kindness, relationship challenges, family

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



**Recommended Age:** 5 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Skeleton Coast: Quest of the Sunfish # 3

**Author:** Mardi McConnochie  
**ISBN:** 978-1760290931  
**Published:** 23/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Annalie and Will's father, Spinner, is still on the run from the Admiralty. With their friends, Essie and Pod, and the talking parrot, Graham, their journey has taken them through dangerous waters, ferocious storms and marooned on abandoned islands. They've come heartbreakingly close to Spinner, only to be driven apart once again

by their old nemesis, Beckett. While the Sunfish crew loses precious days to yet another pirate attack, Spinner is fleeing south, to the mysterious land of Sundia. Now, the terrifying emptiness of the Outer Ocean lies between the Sunfish and Spinner. Even if they manage to cross it - with Beckett still hot on their tail - Sundia is a land forbidden to all outsiders. What awaits them beyond Sundia's Skeleton Coast - the greatest danger they have yet faced, or answers and journey's end at last? The thrilling conclusion to the Quest of the Sunfish series.

### >> OUR REVIEW

The final book in this enjoyable series naturally sees loose ends knotted, the children exonerated and reunited with their fathers and the nasty Beckett imprisoned. There's action aplenty from the word go, with the friends battling pirates intent on kidnapping them for ransom. Pod finds his sister and helps her escape from slavery, there's a dash across dangerous oceans and an ultimate final showdown with their nemesis Commander Beckett.

Throughout the story the children's resolve, comradeship and desire to right wrongs shines through and offers a great character example.

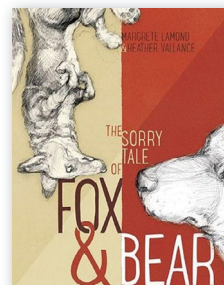
This enjoyable story is action packed with strong character development. The inclusion of Pod's ex-slave sister Blossom, offers some interesting opportunities for conversations around possessions, theft and appropriate behaviour. *The Skeleton Coast* is best read as part of the trilogy as prior knowledge is required to really get the most from it.

**Major themes:** missing fathers, search, quest, life at sea, pirates, slavery, escape, reunion, friendship, desert

**Content Notes:** 1. The Sundians believe in 'sea gods' (p138, 181, 215), and a whale is referred to as a 'temple spirit' (p264).



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



## The Sorry Tale of Fox and Bear

**Author:** Margrete Lamond  
**ISBN:** 978-0648023807  
**Published:** 1/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Dirt Lane Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Fox and Bear were true friends. They were close as can be friends, through and through friends... except for one thing. Fox was quick and slick and sly, and Bear was dumber than a pile of rocks. But that's how it was. And it didn't matter. Then Fox stretched the string of friendship until it snapped and they weren't friends any more.*

*The Sorry Tale of Fox and Bear* is the story of two friends who fall out with one another, and about what happens next. It is outrageous, passionate and poignant, and the bittersweet ending is as ambiguous as any friendship in real life. A mashup of several Norwegian folk tales, *The Sorry Tale of Fox and Bear* is told with wit and verve by Margrete Lamond, and the darkly brooding charcoal illustrations are by acclaimed artist Heather Vallance.

### >> OUR REVIEW

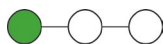
Crowd-funded through a Kickstarter campaign, new-on-the-scene publisher Dirt Lane Press promised a book that would 'explore challenging themes, evoke layered and nuanced emotion, and promote bold illustration styles'. They have certainly delivered with this debut.



*The Sorry Tale of Fox and Bear* is genuinely moving. The author has repurposed an old Norwegian folktale into a striking picture book, in the form of a letter, written from one friend to another. The story explores the nuances of friendship, and challenges traditional notions of what makes a good friend. The prose is intelligent, written with a sophisticated vocabulary and beautiful, child-friendly similes that give a physical feeling to the characters' emotions. Coupled with evocative charcoal illustrations, this is an emotionally acute book that will positively challenge younger readers, especially when read in the company of an adult. The themes it embodies make it equally as appropriate for older readers, and present an opportunity to generate deep discussion about friendship and what defines a healthy relationship.

**Major themes:** trials and tribulations of friendship, hurt feelings, betrayal, loyalty, forgiveness, unhealthy relationships, emotional growth, fables

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



**Recommended Age:** 6 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Wayward Witch and the Feelings Monster: Polly and Buster # 1

**Author:** Sally Rippin

**ISBN:** 978-1760129019

**Published:** 1/06/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Polly and Buster*: a brand new junior fiction series about the magic of friendship. Who ever heard of a witch and a monster being friends? Everyone knows that witches don't mix with monsters. Witches are educated, clever, sophisticated. But monsters? Monsters are just uncouth. Some are even dangerous. But Polly the witch and Buster the feelings monster have been best friends forever. It's the sort of friendship that makes your heart squeeze with happiness. Somehow, they've managed to keep their friendship a secret. Until one day, when everything changes...

### >> OUR REVIEW

Polly just can't seem to do anything right—she's terrible at spells, makes her toads explode and keeps disappointing her favourite teacher. But she's a great friend to the monster, Buster (even though witches should never be friends with monsters). Their weird friendship must be kept a secret.

When the monster academy and witch academy both have an excursion to the gallery, Polly sees Buster getting bullied by the other monsters for being different. In anger, she shoots sparks from her fingers—an extraordinary spell for a witch

her age. However, her classmates (especially mean girl Malorie) think her a hero for protecting them from the monsters. It even makes it into the newspaper and Polly becomes a symbol against monsters. She tries to explain that monsters are really good to everyone and she soon realises that other witchlings and warlocks agree in secret. However, Malorie starts a movement against Buster, and a committee of witches march on his house. Desperate, Polly casts a spell that makes them float in the air, out of harm's way. Polly realises she is the one to stop the war of witches against monsters.

**Major themes:** bullying, differences, unity, tolerance, magic, friendship

**Content Notes:** 1. Supernatural themes such as witches, warlocks, monsters. 2. Polly throws her wart potion at another student (p14). 3. Bullying (p117, 211).



**Recommended Age:** 7 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** NO  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Secrets We Share

**Author:** Nova Weetman

**ISBN:** 978-0702259784

**Published:** 30/10/2017

**Publisher:** UQP

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Clem is slowly rebuilding her life after a house fire destroyed everything. She's about to start high school with her two best friends and she's finally settled into living with her dad

in their tiny flat. But when her mum unexpectedly moves in, Clem feels like there's no space for her. Then she meets Matt, a funny and rebellious 14-year-old with family troubles of his own. When everything starts to unravel, Clem must decide which secrets to keep and which to share.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

It's been 11 months since Clem has lived with her mum; the same amount of time that has passed since their house burnt down. Clem hasn't been able to forgive her, so when her dad announces that mum is moving in to their tiny flat instead of waiting until their new house is finished, she struggles to cope and runs to forget.

At the same time Clem is anxious about starting high school, especially as she's smaller and looks younger than everyone else. Her best friend Bridge from her old school and Ellie from the school she switched to after the fire have suddenly hit it off. When she discovers her two friends are in the same home room but Clem isn't, her jealousy flares. She hasn't even told them about her mum yet.

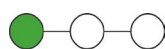
When her new neighbour Matt, who now seems like her only friend, doesn't seem to want her around, a poor choice leads to a broken leg. It's only when the truth is out that she realises its keeping everything inside that's making her problems worse.

This gentle story about a family recovering from a major trauma is about growing up, moving forward and understanding that while life may not ever be the way it used to, a new life can grow from the seed that is left. Although this book is the sequel to *The Secrets We Keep*, it also works very well as a standalone.

**Major themes:** jealousy, family, mental health, grief, friendship, starting high school, rooftoping, choices, loneliness, growing up

**Content Notes:** Matt is a 'rooftopper' and he and Clem sneak into a hotel and swim in their rooftop pool. They are almost caught. Later, after Clem breaks her leg after climbing onto the

roof of her new house. Matt realises he needs to stop acting out (as does Clem).



**Recommended Age:** 10 to 14 years

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★

**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★



## Whimsy and Woe

**Author:** Rebecca McRitchie

**ISBN:** 978-1460753040

**Published:** 21/08/2017

**Publisher:** Harper Collins

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

For fans of *Withering-By-Sea* comes a story from talented debut author Rebecca McRitchie about two curiously named children.

After being abandoned by their thespian parents one afternoon while playing their weekly family game of hideandseek, Whimsy and Woe Mordaunt are left in the care of their austere Aunt Apoline. Forced to work in her boarding house, looking after the guests, sharpening the thorns of every plant in the poisonous plant garden and listening to offkey renditions of 'Fish Are Friends Too' an aria made famous by the legendary Magnus Montgomery, Whimsy and Woe lose all hope that their parents will someday return.

Until one day, quite by accident, the siblings stumble upon a half charred letter that sets them on a course to freedom and finding their parents.

Dark, funny, darkly funny and funnily dark, Whimsy & Woe takes readers on an adventure with two intrepid siblings in a tale of mischief,

monocles, mice and mist.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Whimsy (age 12) and her brother Woe (age 10) are playing hide and seek when their parents mysteriously disappear. For three years, they have to live with their selfish and generally awful aunt Apoline at the Idle Slug; something akin to a hotel-rental house. The brother and sister are forced to clean, cook, garden (including the poisonous and carnivorous plants), maintain the house and generally appease both Apoline and the guests.

The pair feel they can't leave as their parents won't know where to find them. Then one day they find evidence that Apoline tried to destroy that implicates her in at least part of the kidnapping. They narrowly escape the Idle Slug in a hot air balloon and begin a harrowing adventure to solve the mystery of their missing parents. They come across other people who have had people go missing. And not just any people, but other thespians – like their parents!

Armed only with their whits, small change and a few 'treasures' that they collected at the Idle Slug, Whimsy and Woe escape a rampaging mob, avoid being caught despite being seen on 'really, really wanted', and manage not to be sucked into the mud in Anywhere Swamp, which is owned by some rather selfish and paranoid people (just some of the weird and wonderful people they encounter).

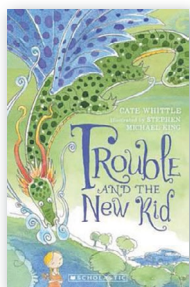
Despite these quite impressive feats, can Whimsy and Woe solve the mystery and find their parents and other missing people? This quirky and amusing story is perfect for budding and imaginative young readers that enjoy exciting and humorous (though somewhat unbelievable) adventures. Look out for the second book of the series, due for release later this year.

**Major themes:** persistence, courage, teamwork, sibling relationships, missing parents, quest, adventure

**Content Notes:** 1. Aunt Apoline treats Whimsy and Woe more like slaves than family. She clearly has no love for them and is using them for her own devices. 2. There is infrequent very low level violence and danger as Whimsy and Woe manage to escape many weird and wonderful calamitous situations in which they find themselves. Probably the most severe only narrowly escaping a burning building in which they believe their parents may also be held captive in some way. Before they can find out, the building collapses. 3. Whimsy and Woe are forced to act and essentially lie to avoid being caught and taken back to Apoline, e. g. they manage to ride the train without a ticket and avoid the ticket collector, however they always feel remorse when they act in this way.



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



## Trouble and the New Kid

**Author:** Cate Whittle  
**ISBN:** 978-1742990781  
**Published:** 1/02/2017  
**Publisher:** Scholastic

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Nina, the new kid at school, thinks that dragons don't exist. Trouble is still banned from the schoolyard, so he can't show her she is wrong. It's no fun when people don't believe in you, but believing in things is good for everyone, as Georgia is about to find out.

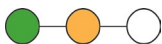
### >> OUR REVIEW

Trouble, the dragon, is well known by everyone in Georgia's school and town. However, when a new girl arrives in class, she steadfastly refuses to believe Trouble is real. As he's banned from school, Georgia will have to come up with a plan to make the girl believe, for her scepticism is causing Trouble to fade from existence. Meanwhile, the new student is also causing waves with Myra, the teacher's pet, who feels her position is under threat.

A fun read with some great characters whose thought processes accurately reflect those of primary aged children. As such, the interactions between classmates are very amusing and relatable for the reader.

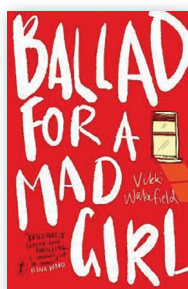
**Major themes:** school, classmates, new pupil, dragons, belief, friendship

**Content Notes:** Not applicable.



**Recommended Age:** 6 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** NO  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## OLDER READERS SHORT LIST



## Ballad for a Mad Girl

**Author:** Vikki Wakefield  
**ISBN:** 978-1925355291  
**Published:** 29/05/2017  
**Publisher:** Text Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Everyone knows 17-year-old Grace

Foley is a bit mad. She's a prankster and a risk-taker, and she's not afraid of anything-except losing. As part of the long-running feud between two local schools in Swanston, Grace accepts a challenge to walk the pipe. That night she experiences something she can't explain. The funny girl isn't laughing anymore. She's haunted by voices and visions - but nobody believes a girl who cries wolf.

As she's drawn deeper into a twenty-year-old mystery surrounding missing girl Hannah Holt, the thin veil between this world and the next begins to slip. She can no longer tell what's real or imagined - all she knows is the ghosts of Swanston, including that of her own mother, are restless. It seems one of them has granted her an extraordinary gift at a terrible price. Everything about her is changing - her body, her thoughts, even her actions seem to belong to a stranger.

Grace is losing herself, and her friends don't understand. Is she moving closer to the truth? Or is she heading for madness?

### >> OUR REVIEW

Grace hates the suburban life that's replaced the wide open spaces of their farm, 20 kilometres out of town. Her mum died in an accident two years ago, her 20-year-old brother Cody is a school drop out, their farm is lost and Dad has become an angry, unforgiving man.

Grace is the class prankster/risk taker, always good for a laugh, but while defending her pipe challenge record against their neighbouring school, she freaks out. Her memory of what happens is very different to what everyone else saw, and the videos they quickly share on social media soon turn her into the class pariah. Strange things are happening and Grace feels less and less like her normal self. It isn't just that she's failing school or that she used to be the one everyone followed and now is the one being left behind—her dog doesn't even like her anymore.



In art class she ends up drawing Hannah Holt, a local girl whose been missing for 23 years, without intending to. When Grace sees a photo of her mum with Hannah Holt, there are two mysteries to solve. Things get even stranger when she realises Dominic Aloisi—the driver of the truck that hit her mum—knew them too.

A clue left by William Dean, the boy who supposedly committed suicide after being suspected of killing Hannah, leads Grace to uncover the truth of what really happened—to Hannah, to William Dean, and to Grace's mum...

An engaging story about unsolved mysteries, family secrets, relationships and moving forward.

**Major themes:** grief, loss, family trauma, friendship, growing up, moving forward, domestic violence, murder, secrets, ghosts, mental illness, truth

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: shit x 24, pissed off x 3, bloody x 6, Jesus x 5, bitch x 1, dickhead x 1. 2. Passing reference to Gummer being stoned all the time (marijuana), but no other drug related content. 3. William Dean, the suspect in Hannah Holt's disappearance, committed suicide a year after she went missing. 4. Cody tells Grace their mum might have thrown herself under the truck that killed her [p152]. 5. Grace has a graphic nightmare about Hannah [p158-160]. 6. Kenzie gets drunk and passes out at a party (which is out of character for her). Someone takes photos of her out cold with her skirt hitched up and posts them online. Grace and Kenzie look very alike, so Grace tells everyone it was her to take the heat off Kenzie. 7. Grace has a vision of what happened the night William Dean died. He was thought to have committed suicide (he jumped off the pipe) after being bullied, but he actually survived and was killed by Dominic Aloisi. 8. Aloisi killed Grace's mum to keep her quiet. 9. Hannah Holt ran away from home because her mother was violent and abusive.

William Dean helped her escape and was then blamed for her death. She moved to Western Australia and setup as a clairvoyant and tarot card reader. 10. William Dean's spirit is pushing Grace to find out the truth so he can rest in peace. This is primarily a literary device and there are only a few pages where the ghost aspect is mildly spooky.



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



## Because of You

**Author:** Pip Harry  
**ISBN:** 978-0702259777  
**Published:** 31/07/2017  
**Publisher:** UQP

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Tiny is an eighteen-year-old girl living on the streets in Sydney, running from her small town past. She finds short term accommodation at Hope Lane— a shelter for the homeless where she meets Nola, a high school student on volunteer placement. Both girls share their love of words through the Hope Lane writing group. Can they share their secrets, too?

### » OUR REVIEW

When the local council installs homeless spikes in St James' Place to deter the vagrants, 18-year-old Tiny and her 'street dad' Zak have to find a new place to sleep. They're both struggling with their health—Tiny because of the rough street life and Zak because of his addictions.

Nola and her boyfriend Tom broke

up on their one year anniversary, after he found out she had been lying about her parents (her parents are both gay and she has been keeping them in the background purportedly for their sake as well as her own). She's devastated, not just at the loss of Tom, but also of his family who she dearly loves. When her teacher recommends that she volunteer at a homeless shelter called Hope Lane, the only reason she agrees is that she can't graduate without 20 hours of volunteer work. The first time she goes to help with their writing program, the smell of the homeless people horrifies her. She doesn't know how to relate to them.

Nineteen-year-old Eddie is at university and also trying to get a film made about addiction while he works two jobs and voluntarily runs the writing group at Hope Lane. His father died on the streets of an overdose when Eddie was nine.

Eddie encourages Nola to see the people behind their gruff street-hardened exteriors. As she gets more and more involved at Hope Lane, Nola finds it harder to relate to her best friend Ebony's obsession with the school formal and willingness to spend thousands of dollars on the experience.

As Nola's relationships seem to be falling apart, her new friend Tiny is finally getting the courage to restore hers. Nine months ago she left her home town, after parking her newborn baby in the foyer at her mum's work. With the support and encouragement of Nola, Eddie and the others from Hope Lane, Tiny takes the steps towards those she loves.

The juxtaposition of relationships falling away so Nola can be who she really is and finally discover what she wants to do with her life, and relationships being reconciled allowing Tiny to finally be free to pursue her dreams is a powerful one.

This is an outstanding book that provides insights into the life of those on the streets, the power of their stories, the life-changing value of

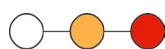
compassion, and the treasure that is the love of friends and family. The gentle development of a relationship between Eddie and Nola that is based on shared values is beautifully done and the writer's festival scene reminds us that it is often those who are heard the least who have the most valuable things to say. A wonderful read.

**Favourite quote:** *You think books will save him? ... Books can save anyone. If they're the right ones.* (p164)

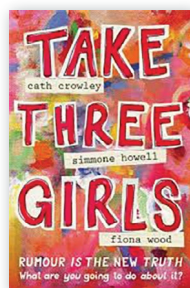
**Major themes:** homelessness, poetry, family, friendship, volunteering, depression, teen parenthood, charity, shelter, the power of storytelling, writing, writers festivals, facing your mistakes, sexual diversity, love

**Content Notes:** 1. There is comment on the very real difficulties of dealing with your periods when you're homeless (p9-10). The first thing Tiny ever stole was tampons. 2. Language: pissed off x 3, shit x 6, bitch x 2, bloody x 7, bastard x 2, bugger x 2. 3. Nola and Tom lost their virginity together (p20), and she uses sex to bring them back together when they fight (p23), a brief reference to sex (p62), however there are no sex scenes anywhere in this book. 4. Kissing (p245). 5. Nola's mother is a lesbian who is often mistaken for a man. Her father is an ex-drag queen who wears makeup and colourful scarves. Her parents have been lifelong best friends and she was conceived with a syringe (p21). They are loving parents who have lived together until recently, with her father taking the primary caregiver role. When they realise Nola has been lying about them it is naturally very painful for them, but they help her work through it. 6. Tiny, Nola and Eddie find Zak dead from an overdose (p204). When Eddie's father died in a bundle of blankets on the street, he was dead for three days before anyone realised. 7. As they walk through the city, Eddie points out the Wall to Nola, and explains its infamy as a place where boys sell themselves (p126). He also tells her

about the Holocaust memorial in Green Park for the gays who were targeted by the Nazis (p126-7).



**Recommended Age:** 15 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Take Three Girls

**Author:** Cath Crowley, Simone Howell, Fiona Wood  
**ISBN:** 978-1742612744  
**Published:** 29/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Pan Macmillan

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Kate, a quiet boarder, making risky choices to pursue the experimental music she loves. Clem, shrugging off her old swim-team persona, exploring her first sexual relationship, and trying to keep her annoying twin, Iris, at arm's length. Ady, grappling with a chaotic family, and wondering who her real friends are; she's not the confident A-lister she appears to be.

When St Hilda's establishes a Year 10 Wellness Program in response to the era of cyber-bullying, the three girls are thrown together and an unlikely friendship is sparked. One thing they have in common: each is targeted by PSST, a site devoted to gossip and slander that must have a source within St Hilda's. Who can you trust when rumour is the new truth?

### » OUR REVIEW

This is the story of a nine week Wellness Program run by the Year 12 Psychology teacher at St Hilda's, a private school for girls, to combat the problem of online bullying.

At St Hilda's, the online bully is PSST (Private School Secret Tracker) an anonymous website revealing secrets without a great regard to truth. On the basis of the length of their thumbs, three 16-year-old girls form a Wellness class group.

There's Clem, one of the school's top swimmers who has lost interest in swimming after a broken wrist. She doesn't get on with her twin Iris. They are boarders because their parents have moved overseas. Clem is madly in love with 19-year-old Stu who collects naked photos on his phone.

Kate, who is Iris's friend is a musician who experiments with computer generated sounds after hearing her hero Francis Carter play similar music. She had plans to win a scholarship to study medicine but is increasingly consumed by her music. She has conflict with Oliver, another musician, especially after quitting her private music lessons. Her parents live in rural Victoria while Kate boards. Kate is also the local computer whizz who has plans to unmask PSST.

Ady has problems at home. Her father goes into rehab for his alcohol and drug addiction. They are broke. Unpaid fees means Ady won't be doing Years 11 and 12 with her friends. Her passion is recycling clothes and costume design. She dates the good-looking and popular Rupert but doesn't love him and they have no shared interests.

The Wellness program requires them to perform activities to build and strengthen relationships and keep a personal journal. So the course works its way through topics such as Identity, getting to know each other, friendship, self-esteem, making choices, the idea of perfection, reflection, taking stock and moving forward.

The three develop a real friendship as they support each other through family and relationship dramas, PSST attacks and life choices although perhaps not always in ways the teacher anticipated eg Kate uses

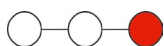
her leave pass to have dinner at Ady's house for both of them to go to a club which plays Kate's type of music. Unexpectedly, there she finds straight-laced Oliver playing in a band and the two team up to play music for a music scholarship to Iceland.

Ady meets another girl, Max who told Kate about the club. They have a shared interest in the Arts and begin a romantic relationship. Clem discovers Stu isn't a wise choice but during a visit to Kate's farm, she meets Ben.

Eventually the three uncover those behind PSST and turn the PSST event planned for the school formal into a very different event. This is a very readable story held together by the Wellness program classes and the journal entries. There is also the added interest of the different points of view as each girl tells her story with regular interruptions from PSST.

**Major themes:** online bullying, friendship, school anti-bullying programs, teen sexual encounters, decision-making, peer support, family pressures.

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: f\*\*k x 13, frequent use of shit, Jesus/Christ, bitch etc. 2. Frequent crude content, particularly in the PSST posts. For example, Ady responds to comments that she and Rupert are having anal sex (which isn't true). 3. Sexual content: Stud sends photos of himself in various states of undress to entice Cam to send some of her doing the same (p126). Clem goes to a party where there is alcohol and drugs and she and Stu have sex. There is some detail, and a condom is used (p243, 244, 257). Clem and Stu have sex again (p304). Ady kisses a girl called Max (p275). Stu kisses another girl with his hand down her jeans (p276). Masturbation as a sleep aid (p381).



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



## In The Dark Spaces

**Author:** Cally Black

**ISBN:** 978-1760128647

**Published:** 1/08/2017

**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Tamara has been living on a star freighter in deep space, and her kidnappers are terrifying Crowpeople – the only aliens humanity has ever encountered. No-one has ever survived a Crowpeople attack, until now – and Tamara must use everything she has just to stay alive. But survival always comes at a price, and there's no handbook for this hostage crisis. As Tamara comes to know the Crowpeople's way of life, and the threats they face from humanity's exploration into deep space, she realises she has an impossible choice to make. Should she stay as the only human among the Crows, knowing she'll never see her family again ... or inevitably betray her new community if she wants to escape?

This ground-breaking thriller is the latest young-adult novel to win the Ampersand Prize, a stand-out entry with a blindingly original voice: raw, strange and deeply sympathetic. With its vivid and immersive world-building, this electrifying debut is for the next generation of sci-fi readers.

### >> OUR REVIEW

It is impossible to define this story within the confines of any one genre. In a young adult market saturated with science fiction, this book is a profoundly refreshing and incredibly insightful read, offering so much more than can be explicated in words. Debut author Cally Black's raw

voice and unique storytelling ability is strengthened by an absolutely thrilling plot.

The only light in Tamara's life is her family: her aunt Lazella and baby cousin Gub who like her is a stowaway, raised in secret and in silence aboard the freighter ships that carry minerals the Starweaver corporation trades with other planets. It is during transit that Tamara witnesses her entire ship massacred by an army of aliens who look like human crows. When she finds Lazella dead, she hides Gub in the kitchen pantry and—in a frantic attempt to survive—tries to blend into the army. She is caught out by the leader, Tootoopne, spared for some reason and kidnapped. Her mission from there on out is to find a way back to Gub.

She makes herself useful to the aliens—which she later discovers are Garuwa—so as to prove her worth to them and stay safe. Tamara deciphers their language of whistling sounds and becomes a translator for Tootoopne, and is then forced to go on raids with the squad and witness many deaths which accumulatively take a toll on her. She realises Tootoopne wants to understand the human race in order to save the Garuwa, whose hives and existence are being threatened by the Starweaver ships commandeering minerals from their space.

The minerals are needed to feed the hives, living entities which are home to Garuwa communities. They provide warmth, protection and sustenance to each being inside purely because they belong to that hive, a truly beautiful concept that works as a wonderful allegory for mother earth and the reciprocity required from its inhabitants in order to thrive.

A consistent theme throughout the book is Tamara's sense of belonging: she doesn't fit in with the humans because she's too poor, and she doesn't fit in with the Garuwa because she's too human. Though



still captive, Tamara integrates into the Garuwa way of life, and through her growing empathy for their circumstances the story explores many constructs of human society. In juxtaposition to our own, money does not exist in the Garuwa world; individuals work and care for one another simply 'for the hive'.

In the end, after much fighting, bloodshed and negotiating with those humans in power, Tootoopne creates a hive for displaced humans and Garuwa to co-exist peacefully. A hub which is also an independent marketplace free of corporate control, where Garuwa can exchange their minerals for that which humans value above all else, beating them at their own game. It is here Tamara is finally reunited with Gub.

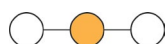
This book exquisitely navigates many complex societal constructs—such as capitalism, status, poverty and the control corporations and money have over humankind—challenging young people to reflect on and question the systems they are a part of. The Garuwa turn out to possess great wisdom about humanity, as they notice things such as the way in which a person's value is determined by their wealth. There is also some interesting exploration into femininity and maternity, as the entire Garuwa race is female.

**Favourite Quote:** *'So nonee [money] tells them where they live, if they eat, what work to do?' I nod. Tootoopne tilts her head at the captain as if she finally understands. 'I'm right! Antonee is a slave to nonee.' I repeat it to the captain, who throws up his free hand and rolls his eyes. 'Of course I am. Every human is born into slavery and only one thing can set them free. Money.'* [p150]

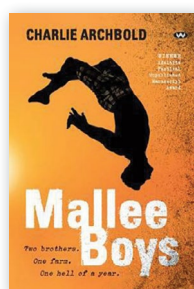
**Major themes:** space civilisations, life as an outcast, kidnapping, survival, guilt, loss, resilience, responsibility, loyalty, protecting your family, feeling alien, sense of belonging, cultural barriers, meaning lost in translation, societal constructs, money, corporations, power, commodities,

trade agreements, peacemaking, forging your own path, defying the system, thinking for yourself

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: slut x 1, shit x 28, bitch x 2, penis x 3. 2. Frequent moderate violence as much of the action revolves around the raids. However, description is relevant to the plot and reinforces the harshness of Tamara's life, eg. a Crowman fires a weapon used for mineral mining at a human and its force snaps his body in half [p21], Tamara finds her aunt Lazella dead [p33], Tootoopne keeps a cabinet of her victims' severed hands [p127], humans kill themselves to avoid being slaughtered by the Garuwa [p137], Tamara euthanises Tweetoo by tearing through her neck artery with a pair of pliers [p217]. 3. Sexual references: brief non-descriptive kiss between two minor characters [p12], Crowpeople watch Tamara shower out of curiosity [p73], Tamara creates period pads from a sheet [p97], a human paints a Garuwa on the back of a door in such a way that when the door is opened its head and penis are cut off [p242].



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



## Mallee Boys

**Author:** Charlie Archbold  
**ISBN:** 978-1743055007  
**Published:** 10/10/2017  
**Publisher:** Wakefield Press

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Sometimes I feel like I'm neither one*

*thing nor another. I live in the Mallee but I don't like the desert. I live on a farm but I get hay fever and I'm scared of goats. I like school but my best mates don't. I'm stuck between stuff. It's like I'm not meant to be here but I am.*

Sandy Douglas knows that life at fifteen is hard, but it's even harder when your mother died a year ago and nothing's gone right since. His brother Red, on the other hand, is eighteen now and working the farm. He's amped up on rage and always looking for a fight. And then there's their dad Tom. He does his best, but - really - he doesn't have a clue.

As Sandy and Red deal with girls, dirt biking, footy and friendship, both boys have to work out who they want to be, without their mum around. The Mallee, where they live, may seem like the middle of nowhere, but it turns out this is going to be one hell of a year. Winner of the 2016 Adelaide Festival Unpublished Manuscript Award.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Brothers Sandy and Red are dealing with the loss of their mother, who was hit by a car during a family shopping trip in St Kilda and never woke up. Both are burdened by a personal guilt; Sandy stayed in that day and wasn't there to stop the accident, and a petty teen outburst from Red is the reason his mother ran across the road after him. However, the brothers' starkly opposing personalities leave them dwelling in their respective pain alone and trying to relieve themselves through different outlets.

Sandy's entire existence has him feeling like he doesn't fit it: his name, his hometown, the fact he's an academic and hates farm work. The only things he has going for him are the possibility of being accepted into a city school for Year 11 & 12 and the girl he has a crush on. But the universe just won't throw him a bone. He only receives rejection letters, and just when he's starting to connect with Becky, her dad moves them to

Townsville. It seems that since he lost his mum, anything he cares about just disappears.

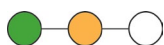
Red's anguish is unleashed as anger toward Sandy and their well-meaning dad. He instead chooses to spend his time around a questionable group of friends, acting irresponsibly, trying to numb the pain. The girl he likes, Lisa, is the ex of one of his volatile mates, Ryan. But he can't help falling for her. Not only does Lisa make him feel happiness he hasn't in a long time, she understands his loss because her little brother died.

This is ultimately the tumultuous coming-of-age story of two boys, told from both perspectives and set against a rural Australian backdrop. As narrators, the brothers have distinctly different voices, making for captivating alternating chapters and insight into the ways each is coping with life in the aftermath of their loss.

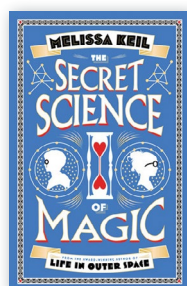
Despite the dark circumstances, this story exudes a lot of warmth. It really captures the bumbling awkwardness and empowerment of a first love, the feelings of both alienation and connection that teenage readers will be able to relate to, and the strength of a broken family unit trying to rediscover their forever-changed dynamic.

**Major themes:** death of a parent, grief, family, friendship, estrangement, overcoming loss, fitting in, falling in love, finding support, school, small town, farm life

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: frequent use of 'bloody' as an Aussie colloquialism, shit x 25, piss off/pissed x 12, cocked up x 1. 2. Brief reference to alcohol/joints/drinking [p47, 76, 79]. 3. Infrequent moderate violence: Ryan and Red beat each other up [p159], Ryan turns up drunk, locks Sandy in the shed, douses it with petrol and waves a matchbox, but then leaves with Red's dog instead. 4. Sandy attempts to kiss Becky [p106-7], Red kisses Lisa [p121], Sandy kisses Becky [p173].



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



## The Secret Science of Magic

**Author:** Melissa Keil  
**ISBN:** 978-1760127763  
**Published:** 1/04/2017  
**Publisher:** Hardie Grant Egmont

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Sophia is smart, like genius-calculator-brainsmart. 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.

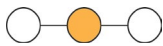
Sophia may feel like a freak, but if anyone can understand her, Joshua can. His younger sister Gillian is very much like her, '*Gilly is just a hell of a lot smarter than most people, and it's kinda like this weapon she doesn't know how to wield*'. [p168]. Joshua works at Houdini's Apprentice, a magic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

**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].

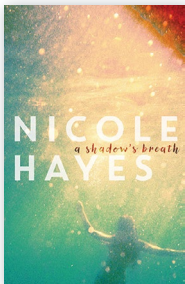
**Major themes:** genius, prodigy, maths, social anxiety, romance, magic, prestidigitation, sibling relationships, friendship, future, leaving school, cultural diversity

**Content Notes:** 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: ★★★★★

## OLDER READERS NOTABLES



### A Shadow's Breath

**Author:** Nicole Hayes  
**ISBN:** 978-0143781097  
**Published:** 30/01/2017  
**Publisher:** Random House

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Then, things were looking up for Tessa. Her mum was finally getting back on track. Tessa had started seeing Nick. She was making new friends. She'd even begun to paint again. Now, Tessa and Nick are trapped in the car after a corner taken too fast. Injured, stranded in the wilderness, at the mercy of the elements, the question becomes one of survival. But Tessa isn't sure if she wants to be found. Not after what she saw. Not after what she remembered.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Tessa's home life is difficult. After her artist father's death, her mother became an alcoholic with an abusive partner. After having a meltdown at the school fete at 'the arsehole' (her mum's partner), she is treated as a pariah. There's only best friend Yuki and new boy Nick who soon becomes her boyfriend. He sees her, and gets her. Nick is one of the few people who understands the situation she has been in.

That was then, but now she and Nick

are in danger. Their car has run off a cliff and no-one knows where they are. In terrible conditions, they must brave their injuries and the dangers of the bush to make it to safety. Their story unfolds in alternating chapters between 'then' and 'now', leading up to the moment that led to their accident – Tessa's sighting of the 'arsehole' drinking at the local pub with her mum.

It's been months since he left and those have been good months. Her mum dried out and got a job and things have been so much better. Tessa can't bear the thought of going back to the way things were.

It's in the car as they are trapped that Tessa remembers the thing she had tried hardest to forget – her father's death and the secret she has carried with her for so many years. Nothing will ever be the same. But as Tessa discovers the difference between truth, memories and the conclusions we jump to, she also discovers the power and importance of hope.

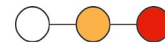
Great technique and an engaging story make this a worthwhile read. A skilfully crafted book.

**Favourite quote:** *Hope, she decides ... is painful. Frightening. Cumbersome. But the absence of hope? That's something far more terrible.* [p246].

**Major themes:** broken families, alcoholism, domestic violence, courage, suicide, death, loss, accident, friendship, hope, following your dreams

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: bloody x 4 [p10, 37 93, 126], Jesus x 12 [p12, 29, 72, 92, 93, 116, 117, 240, 250, 254, 268, 302], dick x 6 [p16, 29, 92], shit x 10 [p17, 47, 59, 61, 90, 177, 185, 229, 266], f\*\*k x 11 [p29, 38, 47, 90, 92, 127, 128, 167, 191, 201]. 2. Kissing [p32-33], making out on the couch and Tessa freaks out [p132-3] – subtle inference throughout that she was being abused at home and had a flashback. Kissing and non-graphic inference that they have sex [p243], it becomes clear that is what happened when they get out of bed later [p247-249].

3. The memory Tessa blocked out was that she found her dad hanging in the garage [p235, 254-5]. 4. Nick was killed in the accident, which happened because they were fighting in the car. Tessa hallucinated he was still with her and it helped her survive [p285].



Recommended Age: 15 to 18 years  
 Suitable class novel: NO  
 Good read rating: ★★★★★  
 Literary value rating: ★★★★★



### Beautiful Mess

**Author:** Claire Christian  
**ISBN:** 978-1925498547  
**Published:** 28/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Text Publishing

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Since Ava lost Kelly, things haven't been going so well. Even before she gets thrown out of school for shouting at the principal, there's the simmering rage and all the weird destructive choices. The only thing going right for Ava is her job at Magic Kebab. Which is where she meets Gideon. Skinny, shy, anxious Gideon. A mad poet and collector of vinyl records with an aversion to social media. He lives in his head. She lives in her grief. The only people who can help them move on with their lives are each other.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Ava isn't dealing well with the suicide of her best friend, Kelly. She's become self-destructive: getting expelled from school, drinking, sleeping with her dead-best-friend's brother (Lincoln) and just not caring about life.



The reader is given explicit detail on how much she's rebelling against her grief. She's a mess. That is until Gideon comes along. Ava meets Gideon at Magic Kebab (their part-time gig at a greasy kebab shop). He's different to everyone she knows: anxious, a poet, non-technological and in his head. He sees her as a beautiful mess – one not to be fixed but helped like a Kintsukuroi (Japanese mug).

As Gideon doesn't have a phone or Facebook, they start sending letters to each other. Slowly, they realise that they each need the other (Gideon is given confidence and Ava is given happiness). A friendship strengthens into something deeper and Gideon asks Ava to his formal to tell her he loves her. However, Lincoln flirts with Ava at the formal and she, in return, kisses him. In retaliation, Gideon punches Lincoln and Ava breaks up with him.

Weeks later, Ava goes to Lincoln and Gideon's graduation. In front of the cohort, Gideon reads a poem from one of Ava's letters about Kelly's suicide so that they remember. Ava realises she needs to start living again because of Gideon. The book ends six months on, when Gideon finally sends Ava a letter advising her that he now has a mobile phone she can call him on.

**Favourite Quote:** *Kintsukuroi they call it. They take broken pieces of porcelain and they repair the cracks with gold...they believe that the cracks can make something more beautiful, more valuable.* [p163]

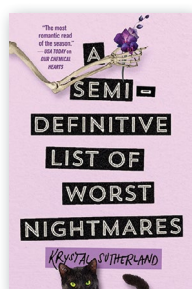
**Major themes:** mental illness, suicide, depression, grief, love, friendship

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: f\*\*k x 44, dickhead x 14, shit x 53, bitch x 6, pussy x 1, fag x 1, douche x 1, wog x 1, piss off x 1. 2. The entire book is about how Ava deals after the suicide of her best friend, so there are numerous mentions of teen suicide. Gideon also has tried to commit suicide and self-harmed. There is explicit mention of Gideon's self-harm [p139]. There is also explicit mention of how Kelly committed

suicide [p154]. Ava mentions her visit to a psych ward with suicidal and anorexic patients [p149-150]. 3. Illicit substances: teen smoking, underaged drinking and drug use. 4. Sexual references: porno [p7], mention of sex [p26], explicit sexual encounters [p110, 217, 225, 226], talk about orgasms [p218], talk about erections [p18], buying condoms [p223, 233]. 4. Violence/school fight between Gideon and Lincoln [p253].



**Recommended Age:** 17 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** NO  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## A Semi-definitive List of Worst Nightmares

**Author:** Krystal Sutherland  
**ISBN:** 978-0143573913  
**Published:** 28/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Penguin

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Ever since Esther Solar's grandfather was cursed by Death, everyone in her family has been doomed to suffer one great fear in their lifetime. Esther's father is agoraphobic and hasn't left the basement in six years, her twin brother can't be in the dark without a light on, and her mother is terrified of bad luck. The Solars are consumed by their fears and, according to the legend of the curse, destined to die from them.

Esther doesn't know what her great fear is yet (nor does she want to), a feat achieved by avoiding pretty much everything. Elevators, small

spaces and crowds are all off-limits. So are haircuts, spiders, dolls, mirrors and three dozen other phobias she keeps a record of in her semi-definitive list of worst nightmares.

Then Esther is pickpocketed by Jonah Smallwood, an old elementary school classmate. Along with her phone, money and a fruit roll-up she'd been saving, Jonah also steals her list of fears. Despite the theft, Esther and Jonah become friends, and he sets a challenge for them- in an effort to break the curse that has crippled her family, they will meet every Sunday of senior year to work their way through the list, facing one terrifying fear at a time, including one that Esther hadn't counted on- love

### » OUR REVIEW

The Solar family are known for their spontaneous development of phobias. Her father's been confined to the basement for six years so when 17-year-old Esther's gambling-addicted mum can no longer pick her up because a black cat sat on the bonnet of the car, she heads for the bus stop. There she meets Jonah Smallwood, her ex-best-friend who she hasn't seen since they were eight-years-old. Jonah cons her out of her hard earned money. He also pickpockets her watch and anything else she has. It isn't the first time she has felt conned by him but it won't be the last time she sees him. It takes her over three hours to walk home.

Esther's grandfather Reg came face to face with Death in Vietnam and since then their family have been cursed to fear. Whatever they fear will consume their life until it eventually kills them – or so Esther believes. Consequently whenever she feels the slightest inkling of fear, she writes the cause on her *Semi-Definitive List of Worst Nightmares*, and takes great pains to avoid going anywhere near it, ever again. There are 50 items on her list so far, although number 1 is blank – she hasn't worked out her greatest fear yet. That list is now in Jonah's hands.

Jonah convinces her to work through her phobias – starting with lobsters –

and videos her doing it on a GoPro. An aspiring filmmaker, he cuts it into a 2 minute video and it is incredible; incredible enough to encourage her to keep going. She has no idea what he's actually doing with them, or how many people are watching.

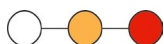
With both Jonah and Esther's families crumbling around them, Esther ultimately realises that a curse only lives as long as you believe in it, and maybe the only one making it thrive was Esther herself ...

This is an absolutely outstanding and ultimately uplifting book. It is enthralling to read, very different and contains some of the most brilliant characterisation we've come across. It's engaging, insightful and wonderfully conceived. Highly recommended [please check content notes first].

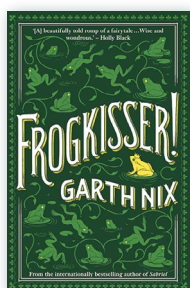
**Favourite Quote:** *...she'd passed the fear barrier and she'd lived and she'd discovered not certain death as she'd imagined but impossible splendour.*

**Major themes:** fears, phobias, depression, mental illness, family, friendship, selective mutism, curse, courage, love, addiction, grief, death, escapism, domestic violence, film making, inspiring others

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: Christ x 4, Jesus x 7, f\*\*k x 35, shit x 38, bastard x 4, bitch x 16, dick x 6, dildos (as an insult) x 1. 2. Eugene (who suffers extreme depression) has been cutting, and eventually slits his wrists and nearly dies. 3. Esther's grandfather was a homicide detective, who was haunted by an unsolved crime involving the murder of little girls who he found naked in a creek bed (Chapter 26). 4. Very mild kissing. 5. Jonah's grief stricken, alcoholic father beats him. 6. Mild, infrequent references to underage drinking. Esther uses alcohol to deal with her social anxiety.



**Recommended Age:** 15 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## Frogkisser!

**Author:** Garth Nix

**ISBN:** 978-1760293512

**Published:** 22/02/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Talking dogs. Mischievous wizards. An evil stepstepfather. Loads and loads of toads. Such is the life of a Frogkisser...

Princess Anya needs to see a wizard about a frog. It's not her frog, it's her sister's. And it's not a frog, it's actually a prince. A prince who was once in love with Anya's sister, but has now been turned into a frog by their evil stepstepfather. And Anya has made a 'sister promise' that she will find a way to return Prince Denholm to human form...

So begins an exciting, hilarious, irreverent quest through the Kingdom of Trallonia and out the other side, in a fantastical tale for all ages, full of laughs and danger, surprises and delights, and an immense population of frogs...

### >> OUR REVIEW

With a title like Frogkisser, one expects a tale about princesses, wicked witches (in this case evil sorcerer stepfather) and princes who undergo an unfortunate life change with all ending well as a result of true love. This book doesn't disappoint those expectations although the sheer volume of frog princes becomes an issue.

After the Deluge (due to mismanaged sorcery), the Old Kingdom is divided into numerous small kingdoms. There are two attempts underway to reunite it.

One lot want the re-establishment of the All-Encompassing Bill of Rights and Wrongs which limits the power of rulers and establishes such things as a fair trial etc. The other lot are a group of heartless, power-mad sorcerers whose power increases daily.

The story centres on Princess Anya. Her older sister Morven, a bit of a self-centred airhead, is heir to the throne although their stepfather, Duke Rikard, an evil sorcerer, has other ideas. He turned Prince Denholm, Morven's true love, into a frog. Unfortunately she can't kiss him and turns him back because he has joined thousands of other frogs in the moat.

Anya makes a sister promise to find him, but unfortunately by the time she has, Morven's affections have moved on. Morven is now in love with Prince Maggers (he's really a magpie) whose delightful singing entrances her. There's only one other option - the Transmogrification Reversal Lip Balm. With this, true love is not required as any princess can kiss anyone and return them to their original form. Anya uses the last smear in the pot and kisses the frog. Only problem is she has the wrong frog and the result is not Denholm, but a previous boyfriend!

Anya, accompanied by Ardent, a Royal Dog (they talk and play an important role in royal life) and the real Denholm frog set off on a quest to find ingredients to make more lip balm. These include three drops of retired Wizard's blood and a pint of witch's tears. The quest grows to reuniting the kingdom and others join it. Lots of adventures later, Duke Rikard is defeated and brought to trial. Morven becomes a magpie and flies off with her true love and Anya is crowned Queen of Trallonia.

Moves are afoot to re-establish the Bill of Rights and Wrongs and lots and lots of frogs and other creatures are kissed and returned to their true forms. This is a cleverly told tale and great fun. The back of the book says it's for 13 to 16-year-olds but it would

also be suitable for younger readers.

**Major themes:** fairy tales, power corrupts, sorcery, justice and the rule of law, dysfunctional step-families, a promise, teamwork, true leadership

**Content Notes:** The magic and sorcery is that of fairy tales.



**Recommended Age:** 10 to 16 years

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## Gap Year in Ghost Town

**Author:** Michael Pryor

**ISBN:** 978-1760292768

**Published:** 26/07/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Let's get this straight - ghosts are everywhere. And they're dangerous. This is why my family has hunted them for hundreds of years. The Marin family run a two-man operation in inner-city Melbourne. Anton has the ghost-sight, but his father does not. Theirs is a gentle approach to ghost hunting. Rani Cross, combat-skilled ghost hunter from the Company of the Righteous, is all about the slashing. Anton and Rani don't see eye to eye - but with a massive spike in violent ghost manifestations, they must find a way to work together. And what with all the blindingly terrifying brushes with death, Anton must use his gap year to decide if he really wants in on the whole ghost-hunting biz .

### >> OUR REVIEW

Anton Marin is a ghost hunter, but not your ordinary ghost hunter who hacks and slashes ghosts into oblivion. Anton and his family are independent ghost hunters who shove their hands into ghosts to help ease their way out of the world and into wherever it is ghosts go when they depart.

He's new at ghost hunting when he runs into Rani (a Company of the Righteous, hack and slash ghost hunter), who becomes curious about the Marin ways. They form an unlikely and humorous pair, protecting each other from a new dangerous Melbourne mystery. Who is the woman who is summoning and controlling Rogue Ghosts? One thing that everyone in the ghost hunting community agrees on is that controlling ghosts with bad magic must be stopped at all costs.

The Company and Marin family pit forces once again to protect civilians from ghost threats. But what will it cost them? Can the Marin's really trust a Company agent? And will Anton continue being a full time ghost hunter or give up his family legacy to become a civilian?

This is a fast-paced, witty and engaging modern-day fiction that will engross students and adults with a bent for the supernatural. It is very humorous and has significant Aussie culture throughout.

**Major themes:** good versus evil, the afterlife, ghost hunting, supernatural activity, learning when to speak and when to hold your tongue

**Content Notes:** 1. Frequent low to moderate violence and danger associated with hunting ghosts, eg. one of Anton's associates has his throat cut by a Rogue Ghost, and Rani and Anton's lives are nearly cut short on numerous occasions. 2. Magical themes play a significant role throughout the book, eg. Anton has a magic charm that helps him relieve ghosts from the world and also opens locks. Rani has been magically endowed with super speed and strength (but is by no means

invincible). However, the process leaves her without memories of anything prior to it (including her parents who died when she was very young). Then there's the ghost magic, obviously used to harm people. 3. Anton remembers his little brother's death. Anton was eight and his brother three when he died of a freak gardening accident (a bamboo stake through the eye). His mother left the family a number of years later. While the description is matter of fact, it still could be disturbing for some, perhaps more so than the ghosts. 4. Language: bloody x 1, shit x 6. 5. The main 'bad guy' is possessed by a ghost, which is how she manages to raise and control ghosts so well. She is portrayed as being mildly insane, but Anton doesn't find out why for quite some time. Eventually, Anton manages to release the ghost that has possessed her and she returns to normal before sacrificing herself to save Anton and Rani from being killed by a host of ghosts.



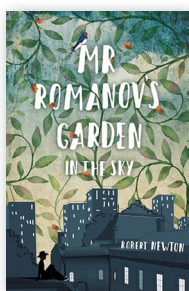
**Recommended Age:** 15 years +

**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★





## Mr Romanov's Garden in the Sky

**Author:** Robert Newton

**ISBN:** 978-0143309307

**Published:** 27/02/2017

**Publisher:** Penguin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Living in the commission, Lexie is left to fend for herself. Her mother is mostly absent, out searching for something to help her forget the tragic death of Lexie's dad. But then, after witnessing the aftermath of a shocking incident, Lexie finds solace in the most unlikely of places - in a troubled old man called the Creeper.

A chance, life-saving encounter on the commission's roof seeds a friendship between the two and when they enlist the help of Lexie's friend Davey, the three set off on an epic journey; one that will change their lives and the lives of those around them.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Lexie didn't even know his name until the day she stopped him from jumping. Thugs from their housing commission block had thrown his beloved dog to its death on the pavement below the day before.

Mr Romanov lets Lexie and her friend Davey into a secret - he plans to build a garden on the rooftop. For 18 months, he and his little dog have been smuggling dirt up there at night from the grounds below. It was because of this mysterious behaviour that the residents dubbed him 'the creeper'.

All of them have lost. A year ago, Lexie's father died when his car hit a tree. She's not sure if he just fell

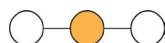
asleep or if he left her on purpose. Her mother is a drug addict. Davey's father is in prison, and Mr Romanov's wife and daughter were killed in a house fire many years ago. Working together on the garden gives them a purpose. When it is finished, they take off on a road trip.

In the grey existence of their commission flats, Lexie has long dreamed of moving to Surfers Paradise where everything is brilliant blues, greens and golds. Unbeknownst to Lexie and Davey, the decision is really being made by three kids, not two kids and an adult - Mr R has dementia. It's a somewhat crazy journey, but it's also a journey that brings some answers. Ultimately Lexie realises that she didn't save Mr Romanov that day on the rooftop - he's the one who saved her. This is a great read with well drawn characters and an interesting storyline.

**Favourite quote:** *I know what it feels like when people make decisions about who you are without ever bothering to find out.* [p48]

**Major themes:** belonging, friendship, broken families, drug addiction, dementia, road trip, dreams, trust, disadvantage, hope

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: shit x 8 [p8, 60, 93, 126, 127, 189, 199], Jesus x 6 [p36, 48, 158, 159, 169, 170] bloody x 5 [p69, 93, 96, 159, 174], bitch x 1 [p142], prick x 1 [p145], buggie x 1 [p171]. 2. Mr Romanov has 'angina'. Davey thinks he says 'vagina' and flips out [p108]. 3. When Lexie stops Mr Romanov from jumping, he is drunk. Lexie's mother is a drug addict. Her father is dead. Davey's father is in jail.



**Recommended Age:** 12 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★



## My Life as a Hashtag

**Author:** Gabrielle Williams

**ISBN:** 978-1760113681

**Published:** 24/05/2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

I'd been warned - in French, no less. By a tram-riding, mermaid swaying, wolf-eaten, peace-sign flipping friend. I knew she wouldn't be happy if I stayed out here by the pool, with Jed's nail tracing the length of my neck. But I didn't want to go inside. I didn't want another drink. I wanted to stay out here and see what would happen.

What's a girl to do when her parents have split up; her mum's trawling Tinder; and one of her best friends has decided not to invite her to the biggest party of the year, which she then has to watch unfold on everyone else's social media?

If you're a girl called MC, you get mad as hell, that's what you do. But what begins as one girl's private, no-holds-barred rant soon snowballs in the most public way possible.

A funny, heartfelt novel for anyone who's ever wished they hadn't pressed send.

### >> OUR REVIEW

A relatable contemporary story of what the combination of teenage regrettable behaviour and social media can do. Thankfully it ends in a greater place of hope than many such situations do.

Marie-Claude [aka MC] and her brother Harley are at her friend Yumi's house where Yumi's brother

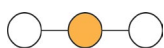
Wilder is watching old movies. The characters in the movie yell 'I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore'. The friends yell this with MC perceiving it as just noise, no one is listening and no one will care - as she vents to the world. The story then unfolds to show when it comes to social media, this is not the case.

Some months later, MC's parents have split up. Her Dad has moved in with his PA, Tosca. Wilder and Harley no longer hang out and MC has her friends Yumi, Liv, Anouk and Hattie. Anouk has fallen for Jed who has been making a play for MC. Jed and MC spend time together at a party. Afterwards, Anouk no longer speaks to MC.

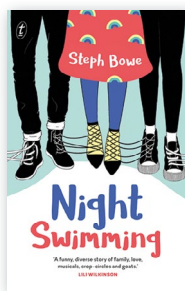
Jed has shown MC how to download an App which makes his dog look like its talking. When Anouk doesn't invite MC to her next party, MC takes revenge. She puts versions of 'Fook Anouk' into the mouths of a number of celebrities using the App. MC's life gets worse. Jed moves on to another girl and she finds out Tosca may be pregnant. Her mother meets someone online. Then things start to improve as the rifts with her friends begin to heal. When someone finds the 'Fook Anouk' celebrity photos online and collects them, they go viral causing a worldwide search with \$5,000 prize money for whoever finds the Anouk involved. This then turns into a search for the sender. The trolls are out in force and journalists are camped outside both front doors. MC loses her scholarship and is expelled from her school for bringing it into disrepute. MC then realises she has been a bully and she needs to put a guard between her mind and her mouth or finger. She apologises and the friends make up. Tosca's baby is born prematurely. MC's mum gets a new job and throws a moving on party. A very readable story that puts a contemporary spin on the old adage of thinking before you speak.

**Major themes:** social media, cyberbullying, public shaming, friendship, teen romance, jealousy, rage, consequences, broken families

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: shit x 9, 'f\*\*k' x 8 [p82, 112, 133, 134, 167, 216, 267, 268], bitch x 5, dick x 2, bastards x 2, Jesus x 1 [p106], piss off x 1. 2. Jed asking MC about swimming in underwear. [p57] 3. Harley tells MC he is homosexual and his cute friend Seth whom MC fancies is his boyfriend. He'd made a move on Wilder when drunk but he now reestablishes their friendship. [p100]



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



## Night Swimming

**Author:** Steph Bowe  
**ISBN:** 978-1925498165  
**Published:** 3/04/2017  
**Publisher:** Text Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Imagine being the only two 17-year-olds in a small town. That's life for Kirby Arrow—named after the most dissenting judge in Australia's history—and her best friend Clancy Lee, would-be musical star.

Clancy wants nothing more than to leave town and head for the big smoke, but Kirby is worried; her family has a history of leaving. She hasn't heard from her father since he left when she was a baby. Shouldn't she stay to help her mother with the goat's-milk soap-making business, look after her grandfather who suffers from dementia, be an apprentice carpenter to old Mr Pool? And how could she leave her pet goat, Stanley, her dog Maude, and her cat Marianne?

But two things happen that change everything for Kirby. She finds an article in the newspaper about her father, and Iris arrives in town. Iris is beautiful, wears crazy clothes, plays the mandolin, and seems perfect, really, thinks Kirby. Clancy has his heart set on winning over Iris. Trouble is Kirby is also falling in love with Iris...

### >> OUR REVIEW

Seventeen-year-old Kirby has only ever known Alberton—a small-town, miles from anywhere. She's content to live her small life—with her single mum and dementia-prone grandad—in her small town. Clancy, her best friend, is desperate to escape and make a musical career in Sydney. These two complete opposites are inseparable, and the only teenagers in town—until the day that that Iris moves to Alberton. Beautiful and quirky, she's a reminder that there's so much more out there.

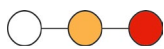
Clancy is desperate to win over Iris ... but Kirby is also falling in love with Iris. The three decide to put on a town musical at the pub and tensions rise. When it's clear that Iris likes Kirby back, Kirby starts feeling guilty about betraying her friendship with Clancy. Everything implodes when Clancy discovers them kissing beside the dam.

Kirby decides it's best not to see Iris anymore as Clancy has stopped talking to her—and anyway, she's trying to deal with her dad (who abandoned her) turning up outside her door. A bad flood hits the town and Kirby is trapped with Clancy. He lets her know that he's not upset that she kissed Iris, but that he doesn't fit in with the town like Kirby does. She teaches him that where you belong is with the people you love. In the end, Kirby decides to leave town with Iris and Clancy to try to find a home and sense of belonging in Sydney.

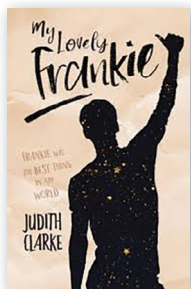
**Major themes:** belonging, love, friendship, broken families, same sex attraction, family, rural Australia, dementia, small town life, rivalry

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: shit x 4

[p204, 220, 270, 275]. 2. Non-graphic sexual content: talk about sex and condoms [p155-7].



**Recommended Age:** 16 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★



## My Lovely Frankie

**Author:** Judith Clarke  
**ISBN:** 978-1760296339  
**Published:** 28/06/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Frankie believed in Heaven quite literally, as if it was another lovely world out past the stars. And when he spoke the word, it seemed to spring free and fly into the air like a beautiful balloon you wanted to run after. But I couldn't tell my parents about Frankie, not properly. I told them I'd made friends with the boy in the room next to mine, and how he'd come from this little town out west. I couldn't tell them how he was becoming the best thing in my world. I couldn't tell anyone, I hardly admitted it to myself.*

In the 1950s, 'entering' the seminary was for ever, and young boys were gathered into the priesthood before they were old enough to know what they would lose. Tom went to St Finbar's because he was looking for something more than the ordinary happiness of his home and school. But then he discovered that being able to love another person was the most important thing of all. For Tom, loving Frankie made him part of the world. Even when Frankie was gone...

### >> OUR REVIEW

This emotionally intimate fictional story is told in close first person point of view by Tom Rowlands, who met and fell in love with a boy called Frankie while in the seminary during the 1950s. The seminary was cold and lacking any kind of comfort—human or otherwise. The boys are not fed properly and are treated harshly over the mildest of transgressions. They are told they must leave their families and friends behind, but Frankie can't help but speak out when he sees injustice.

A few months after their arrival at the seminary, after being punished for intervening in the unfair treatment of a younger boy, Frankie leaves in the middle of the night. Tom has never been able to forget him.

Frankie was handsome and full of life, a generous kind-hearted soul. He went to seminary after his father caught him having sex with an older girl [his first experience] who had seduced him. His aggressively religious father beat him for three days, and Frankie determined to become a priest in order to make up for being bad. He didn't seem to have grasped that he would never love another woman or have a family, and spent his days dreaming of the girls at the school next door.

A fellow student, known as Etta, was a sneaky, ambitious type. He was also in love with Frankie, but unlike Tom—whose parents had modelled acceptance of homosexuality in an era when most saw it as either farcical or morally degraded—Etta was horrified by his attraction to Frankie which he saw as demonic and determined to get rid of him one way or another.

As Tom reflects back on those days, sharing the story with his favourite cousin as he has done many times before, he comes face to face with the truth—that Etta was responsible for Frankie's disappearance, and that he would never be coming back...

**Major themes:** homosexuality, Catholic Church, the hardships of 1950s seminary life, friendship,

jealousy, ambition, family, injustice, shame

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: bloody x 2, f\*\*k x 3 [p106], bastard x 1. 2. Frankie asks Tom if he has ever had sex with a girl [p151]. 3. Tom has never been kissed, so Frankie kisses him briefly on the lips [p153]. It means nothing to Frankie who is only interested in girls, but everything to Tom. However he never tells Frankie how he feels.



**Recommended Age:** 17 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** NO  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★



## Remind Me How This Ends

**Author:** Gabrielle Tozer  
**ISBN:** 978-1460751688  
**Published:** 27/03/2017  
**Publisher:** Harper Collins

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*Milo was a discoloured memory with blurred edges and a washed out palette. Yet five minutes with him and everything came back to me in an instant.*

Layla Montgomery's life fell apart at thirteen. After her mum died in a shock accident, Layla's grieving father packed their bags and forced her to leave behind everything she'd ever known. Milo Dark has been stuck on pause since the Year 12 exams. His longterm girlfriend moved 300 kilometres away for uni, his mates bailed for bigger things, and he's convinced he missed the reminder to plan out the rest of his life.



As kids, Layla and Milo shared everything their secrets, a treehouse and weekends at the river. But they haven't spoken since her mum's funeral. That is, until Layla shows up five years later in his parents' bookshop without so much as a text message. Pretty soon they're drawn into a tangled mess that guarantees someone will get hurt. And while it's a summer they'll never forget, is it one they'll want to remember?

A boy-meets-girl-again story from the awardwinning author of *The Intern* and *Faking It*.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Milo is stuck in the middle-of-nowhere, Durnan, after high school, while all his mates and his girlfriend are doing things with their lives—uni, travel, jobs. But he's going nowhere, doing nothing—much to his parents' dismay. They keep pushing him to do computer science at uni or get a real job.

Layla has been running from her life since she was 13. She can't keep a job and stays with her low-life, drug-dealing boyfriend.

Five years ago, Layla disappeared from Milo's life one night after her mum died in a shock accident. For five years there were no text messages between them. That is, until one day when she turns up in his parents' Durnan bookstore, unannounced.

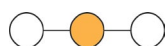
Their friendship begins to blossom again as they realise that they might be able to heal each other. They eat gelato together, swim in the water hole and go on a road trip through an unforgettable summer. They realise there's something more between them, but Layla needs to stop running and Milo needs to run away.

In the end, Milo decides to go abroad to London by himself. Layla finally confronts her demons about her mother and accepts a room in her dad's house, setting into a new and more stable life.

**Major themes:** friendship, grief, love,

life decision, university, change, finding yourself

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: douche x 2, pissing x 5, bitch x 2, shit x 21, dick/cock x 2. Sexual innuendo [p161]. 3. mention of bongs [p26], Kurt deals pot [p28], drugs [p101, 151, 206]. 4. Milo punches Trent [p266, 267].



**Recommended Age:** 16 years+  
**Suitable class novel:** NO

**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Fall

**Author:** Tristan Bancks

**ISBN:** 978-0143783053

**Published:** 29/05/2017

**Publisher:** Random House

#### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In the middle of the night, Sam is woken by angry voices from the apartment above. He goes to the window to see what's happening only to hear a struggle, and see a body fall from the sixth floor balcony. Pushed, Sam thinks. Sam goes to wake his father, Harry, a crime reporter, but Harry is gone. And when Sam goes downstairs, the body is gone, too. But someone has seen Sam, and knows what he's witnessed. The next twenty four hours could be his last.

#### >> OUR REVIEW

Sam is a perfectly normal 12-year-old misfit. Just like every other pre-pubescent child, he has struggled with bullying, fitting in, anger and rampant hormones.

Sam has grown up with a completely absent dad, Harry Garner, a crime reporter. Naturally, Sam idealises the

Dad who's never been part of his life and gives his mum constant grief because he wants to spend time with his dad. Sam needs a week of bed-rest following surgery to correct his short left leg and bent spine (inherited from his Dad) and finally convinces his mum to ask Harry if Sam can come and stay for the week. But Harry turns out to be something of a disappointment. He has no wife in his meagre flat and works extremely long hours, leaving Sam alone and bored for the week. There's no food in the pantry and Harry's dog, Magic, is Sam's only company.

On the eve of Sam's 13th birthday Sam asks his dad one too many personal questions and Harry pops out for milk ... and is gone all night. During the night Sam wakes to hear an argument in the flat above. He watches a man fall from the 6th floor balcony to his death below. Hobbled on crutches because of his surgery, Sam starts to investigate the murder he believes he has witnessed.

Harry eventually comes home, after obviously drinking too much and staying out all night. He's shocked to hear what Sam tells him and asks Sam to trust him. He has to go out again. Left alone again, Sam does some investigating of his own, and his apartment is broken into during the day.

Eventually that night, after meeting Scarlett, the girl who lives upstairs, Sam hobbles to the nearby police station. But he is horrified to see that the senior police officer is the very same man he saw standing over the dead body outside his apartment building. Sam's hunch is right – the police officer is the one who pushed John Merrin, another crime reporter, off the balcony.

Sam and his dad are kidnapped and taken to a cliff face in the bush where it seems they will both die at the hands of the crooked policeman. But Sam still has Scarlett's phone in his pocket. She tells her mum what's going on and using a phone tracker, the police trace Sam and Harry and get to them

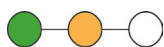
in the nick of time – moments before they would both have been killed. But Sam falls over the cliff in the final struggle. He wakes up in hospital and learns that his Dad (who'd taken a shot to his knee) had climbed down the cliff and given him CPR to bring him back to life and keep him breathing until the ambulance arrived.

Harry saves Sam's life, but Sam also saves Harry's as he gives him something to live for other than his work that he's been married to for over 40 years. This is a passionate, believable and relatable story that will resonate with teens who are stuck in lives they want to change but suffer from the sense of powerlessness that can be so suffocating at that age.

No-one in this story is perfect. Everyone has their scars. Harry is no hero-dad, but he's all the dad Sam needs. This is an edgy and edge-of-the-seat action-packed drama crafted with a truly authentic YA voice. A fabulous read!

**Major themes:** broken relationships, absent fathers, crime reporting, physical disability, surgery, friendship, relationship with pets

**Content Notes:** 1. In a phone argument between Sam's mum and dad, Mum tells Dad to 'Grow a pair' [p. 17]. 2. Non graphic violence. 3. Harry abuses alcohol.



**Recommended Age:** 12 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Tides Between

**Author:** Elizabeth Jane Corbett

**ISBN:** 978-1925652222

**Published:** 20/10/2017

**Publisher:** Odyssey Books

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

In 1841, fifteen-year-old Bridie Stewart and her family leave their grim, hand-to-mouth existence in Covent Garden and travel to a prosperous new life in Port Phillip. Bridie's mother and stepfather expect Bridie to grow up during the long months at sea, forget her dead father, and prepare for a sensible marriage in colonial Australia. Bridie doesn't want to grow up, or ever forget her dad. She's determined to smuggle a notebook filled with his fairytales to the far side of the world.

When Rhys Bevan, a soft-voiced young storyteller and fellow traveller realises Bridie is hiding something, a magical friendship is born. But Bridie doesn't realise the Welshman's life also holds secrets. Or that the message written on the flyleaf of her notebook holds a dark, double meaning. As they traverse the world's oceans, Rhys's past returns to haunt him and Bridie grapples with the implications of her dad's final message. The pair take refuge in fairytales, little expecting the trouble it will cause. Or that Rhys's ancient tales will challenge every certainty Bridie has ever known.

### » OUR REVIEW

Fifteen-year-old Bridie Stewart is emigrating with her mother and stepfather to Australia on the Lady Sophia as early settlers. Bridie is deeply unhappy with having to move and give up her childhood home

and particularly concerned that they don't want her to bring the special notebook that her father, described as a dreamer, gave her.

On the boat, Bridie meets 21-year-old Rhys and his wife Sian. She is instantly drawn to them and soon discovers that Rhys is also a dreamer and storyteller, although it becomes clear he is running from something. Rhys and Sian perform stories together for Bridie to write down, but her mother and stepfather are not supportive of her relationship with the couple, trying to persuade Bridie to focus on real life rather than fairy tales.

Bridie's mother and Sian are both pregnant and have great fears due to the risk of birthing while on board. The boat's surgeon is not a man to be fully trusted, so Rhys particularly is scared for his wife as they get closer to the birthdate. The story climaxes during Christmas, when a major storm hits. Bridie's mother and Sian are in labour simultaneously and do not get the medical care they need. Sian ends up losing her baby and then passing away herself, plunging Rhys into deep depression.

When Bridie learns her father might not have died accidentally but actually killed himself, she worries Rhys might be facing a similar danger. She writes him a story and, as they dock in Australia, passes onto him her treasured notebook, encouraging him to read it and return it to her when he is done. Bridie realises she has developed a deep love for Rhys. This understanding helps her see that her stepfather—who loved her mother before her father died—was not the dishonest or cruel man she originally thought, but simply a person helping a friend in need, and that love can rise out of a place of hurt. Bridie is able to forgive herself for falling for another's man, make peace with her stepfather and start a new life in Australia.

This is a lavish tale with an interesting mix of faith and a deep respect of God along with fairy tales, based

on Welsh history and bardic lore. There are many characters with rich backstories, taking readers on an engrossing journey through all the hardships, ups and downs you might expect from a period drama: sickness, death, distrust, and family struggles and reconciliation. Students interested in Australian immigration from a difficult time in history will both enjoy and learn from his great story.

**Major themes:** immigration, boat journeys, death, curses, fairy tales, romance, love, coming of age, Welsh history, family

**Content Notes:** 1. Reference to superstition: Neptune and luck (p149), chanting/healing/calling on God referred to as magic (p159), group of women talking about how they conceived with mystical help (p184), Sian refers to corpse candles (p231). 2. Sexual references: Bridie starts her monthlies (p172), Bridie's mother talks to her about not getting pregnant or sexually tempted now that her monthlies have started (p175), Bridie imagines very briefly her friends having sex (p184). 3. Both women in dangerous labour, description of blood. Sian and her baby die. [Chapter 27-28].



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



## Sparrow

**Author:** Scot Gardner  
**ISBN:** 978-1760294472  
**Published:** 26/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

### » PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

One, two, three, breath. When a juvenile detention exercise off the coast of the Kimberley goes wrong, sixteen-year-old Sparrow must swim to shore. There are sharks and crocs around him but the monsters he fears most live in the dark spaces in his mind.

He's swimming away from his prison life and towards a desolate, rocky coastland and the hollow promise of freedom. He'll eat or be eaten, kill or be killed. With no voice, no family and the odds stacked against him, Sparrow has nothing left to lose. But to survive he'll need something more potent than desperation, something more dangerous than a makeshift knife. Hope.

### » OUR REVIEW

Two brothers with the same painful upbringing take to the streets. One takes up paint sniffing, gets involved with gangs and expresses aggression. The other—Sparrow—no longer speaks. That doesn't stop him from making friends wherever he goes. People like old Sharky recognise his sweet nature and keep an eye out for him.

After his friend Elsa is hurt, Sparrow goes looking for his brother only to stumble on his dead body. Discovered with his brother's blood on his hands and unable to speak up for himself, Sparrow is charged with his murder and sent away with other juvenile offenders. While en-route, one of the other prisoners sets fire to their boat and Sparrow is the only survivor (or so he thinks).

Life on the streets was hard but now marooned in the Top End, Sparrow faces an even more dangerous fight for survival. When he finds another survivor, Abby, dangerously ill due to a taipan bite, he determines to care for her. Sparrow may not be able to make sure she lives but he can make sure she's not alone.

When it comes down to a choice between saving Abby's life or being captured, he chooses to save her and

sets off a beacon. She is rescued and he is inadvertently left behind.

Abby doesn't forget Sparrow and as soon as she can she returns to find him. With septicemia from an injured leg that must be urgently treated if he is to survive, Sparrow has to face the truth that it isn't dying he is afraid of, but living...

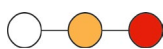
While this book touches on some difficult topics and life has been harrowing for both Sparrow and Abby, it is not a dark and grim story. Ultimately Sparrow's light shines through, making this a wonderfully engaging story with great characterisation. Highly recommended.

**Major themes:** street kids, broken families, poverty, kindness, choices, drugs, gangs, friendship, courage, restoration, love

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: shit x 7, bitch x 3, bastard x 1, prick x 1, f\*\*k (p123, 124, 136, 178, 181, 182, 201, 203, 204). 2. Elsa goes missing and is found beaten and burnt with cigarettes (p92-3). 3. Sparrow's brother is killed in a fight (p133, 136-7). 4. Dead body (p25). 5. Sparrow witnesses a drug deal (p164-5). 6. He kills a baby pig to eat (p169) and then is gored by its father (p171). 7. Sparrow watches Abby pee which enrages her and she attacks him (p177-8). He is filled with shame. 8. Abby goes skinny dipping (p196). She sees the burn scars on Sparrow's back and he tells her his mother and brother did them with a cigarette lighter. She kisses them (nothing further). 9. Abby tells Sparrow she ended up in juvenile detention after bashing her foster sister with a hockey stick. The back story is that the girl was making her life hell. When she was 12 she hid her mother's vibrator under Abby's mattress. They were going to send her back to the refuge for it. Then she intentionally went after Alex, Abby's very gentle boyfriend and got pregnant to him, before telling the police and her parents that he raped her. He was convicted. 10. Sparrow's mother had AIDS and was very ill. His



brother smothered her with a pillow [p203].



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



## The Undercurrent

**Author:** Paula Weston  
**ISBN:** 978-1925498233  
**Published:** 31/07/2017  
**Publisher:** Text Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Eighteen-year-old Julianne De Marchi is different. As in - she has an electrical undercurrent beneath her skin that stings and surges like a live wire. She can use it - to spark a fire, maybe even end a life - but she doesn't understand what it is. And she can barely control it, especially when she's anxious.

Ryan Walsh was on track for a stellar football career when his knee blew out. Now he's a soldier - part of an experimental privatised military unit that has identified Jules De Marchi as a threat. Is it because of the weird undercurrent she's tried so hard to hide? Or because of her mother Angie's history as an activist against bioengineering and big business? It's no coincidence that Ryan and Jules are in the same place at the same time - he's under orders to follow her, after all. But then an explosive attack on a city building by an unknown enemy throws them together in the most violent and unexpected way.

Paula Weston, author of the much admired Rephaim series, returns with a standalone work - a near futuristic

thriller that is utterly and undeniably thrilling. Great writing, heart-burning characters, probing questions about where technology is taking us - and a plot that zips and zings like an electrical current itself. This is a great young-adult writer at the peak of her powers.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This very readable thriller is set in the near future when big corporations own and control most things, including the army. Eighteen-year-old Julianne De Marchi lives with her mother, Angela, a well-known activist and journalist who headed up the Agitators, a non-violent group protesting against bio-engineering and big business namely Paxton Federation. Julieanne's father, Mike died in action overseas. Things have been quiet for Angela for the past two years after Jules was accused of burning down a school wing funded by Pax Fed. Someone filmed Jules releasing an electric charge which started the fire and is now blackmailing Angela, forcing her out of the Agitators who have since been taken over by more violent protestors.

Jules has a secret. She has electric current running under her skin which she doesn't control very well especially when she is stressed. Angela's journalist work has also dried up. Things are so desperate that Jules attends a job interview at Pax Fed Tower in Brisbane's main street. The situation turns nasty with protestors outside. Then a truck rams the building and the power is cut. Jules is caught in a lift with Ryan Walsh, a member of an experimental military unit secretly sent in to protect her. Their relationship grows as the action intensifies.

The Paxton offspring, Bradford and Peta, contend for the top job as their father's health declines. They both hire private military units to help them achieve their goals which includes killing Julianne and destroying all the evidence of past experiments on soldiers, including

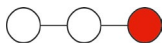
Jules' father. It is these experiments which caused Jules' powers. Bradford's interest is in genetically modified food stuffs (purportedly to feed the poor but its really about profits) while Peta wants to create a super army. In an attempt to protect her, Ryan takes Jules back to his parent's farm in South Australia, where they are struggling to hold out against Pax Fed farms. Angela rejoins the Agitators to find out what's planned at a nuclear plant protest.

There are dramas as Ryan reconnects with old mates and his family. The protestors are also in upheaval as their leader reveals his true motives and sets out to involve Angie. However Angie finds a new crusade when she teams up with Ryan's army against Pax Fed.

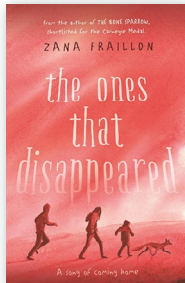
The story portrays a world where so many characters are forced into doing things they don't want to because of financial need and their reliance on big corporations. Even the worst baddie has a sad story behind his actions. This is an exciting action-packed read with an extensive cast of interesting characters.

**Major themes:** corporate corruption, activism, experimentation, sibling rivalry, super powers, family secrets, privatised military, forced decisions

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: f\*\*k x 12 [p12, 27, 29, 30, 82, 87, 107, 115, 114, 137, 140, 147], dickhead x 4, shit x 12, bloody x 5, bitch, bastard etc. 2. Vague reference to first sexual experiences mostly focused on her accidentally shocking second boy as reason for avoiding future encounters. [p79] 3. A frenzied pash outside a club at Ryan's brother's birthday party which ends in an electric shock. Some detail. [p264-6]. 4. They have sex, some detail. Ryan manually stimulates Jules to orgasm before putting on a condom and having sex. [p284-6] 5. A local man brings drugs to Tommy's party. He offers it to Tommy as a present. Tommy's father attacks him. [p268] 6. Tommy and Gemma have sex (implied, no details) as Tommy's birthday present. [p278]



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



## The Ones That Disappeared

**Author:** Zana Fraillon  
**ISBN:** 978-0734417152  
**Published:** 27/06/2017  
**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Around the world, millions of people - including many children - are victims of human trafficking. These modern-day slaves often go unseen even in our own cities and towns, their voices silent and their stories untold. In this incredible book, Zana Fraillon imagines the story of three such children, Esra, Miran and Isa. The result is powerful, heartbreaking and unforgettable. Esra, Miran and Isa work for the Snakeskin gang, tending to plants in the dark and airless basement of a house they are not allowed to leave. They've been told that they belong to the Snakeskins, but Esra knows that she belongs to no one - and she is determined to find freedom.

This is a SKELLIG for this generation; beautiful, magical and with Zana Fraillon's incredible talent for combining important global issues with extraordinary storytelling.

### >> OUR REVIEW

Eleven-year-old Esra, her friend Miran and 7-year-old Isa are illegal immigrants forced to work for a local gang known as the Snakeskins in exchange for their survival. Everything 'costs' and is added to the

debt they have to work off.

Three months after they arrive in the basement, an electrical fire offers the chance for escape, but the damage it causes to the gang's plantation means Orlando, the terrifying gang boss, will never stop hunting them.

Esra and Isa get away, but Miran is caught by the police and taken to hospital. After being befriended by Skeet and his pet toad Croakus, the children set out to find Miran. Skeet sees himself as the hero in the story, only there to help them. But as they hunt for Miran, and the Snakeskins hunt them all, Skeet realises they are not the only ones in need of a friend. And when the opportunity for freedom comes, they will have to decide whether to run towards the sunshine or give voice to all those left behind.

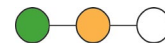
This incredible book is beautifully written, heart stirring and evocative. Through the characters we see the ways in which vulnerable children are trapped into lives of slavery. A touch of magical realism embodied in the Riverman (an almost Frankenstein like creature) who helps them find Miran lifts it from what could have been a dark story, as does the love and friendship between the children.

**Favourite quote:** *They can take everything, but they can never take our stories.* [p210]

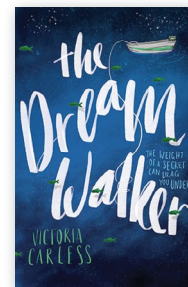
**Major themes:** refugees, boat people, broken families, slavery, disadvantage, friendship, loss, separation, corruption, gangs, drugs, exploitation, child labour

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: buggie x 10, bloody x 20. 2. When a gang member goes crazy on discovering the mess in the cellar, Esra stabs him to stop him hurting the boys any more. Miran fights the police to give them a chance to escape. 3. Esra remembers seeing Orlando shoot a girl who tried to escape—he made them watch as a warning not to try and run [p68]. She remembers her family escaping their war-torn home in boats. Her grandmother wouldn't

leave her home and was later shot by a soldier who thought she had a bomb under her dress. It was a book of photos. Her brother's boat wasn't seaworthy (as so many weren't) and he drowned when his life jacket failed. She has since been forced to sew those dodgy life jackets for the gangs, knowing it was vests like that that killed him [p79]. 4. Miran is intentionally poisoned in the hospital to shut him up. He nearly dies. 5. Silviu is killed for helping them.



**Recommended Age:** 13 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## The Dream Walker

**Author:** Victoria Carless  
**ISBN:** 978-0734417473  
**Published:** 27/06/2017  
**Publisher:** Hachette

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Sixteen-year-old Lucy Hart has been counting the days till she can get the hell out of Digger's Landing - a small Queensland fishing hamlet home to fifteen families, a posse of mongrel dogs, and Parkers Corner Store [no apostrophe and nowhere near a corner]. But just like the tides Lucy's luck is on the turn, and as graduation nears her escape plans begin to falter; her best friend, Polly, is dropping out of school to help pay the bills, and Tom has been shipped off to boarding school, away from the flotsam of this place. And then there's Lucy's nightlife, which is filled with dreams that just don't seem to belong to her at all ...

When the fish stop biting, like they did when her mum was still around, Lucy realises she isn't the only one with a secret.

## >> OUR REVIEW

This tale is set in a very small fishing town in North Queensland during a dry year when there are no fish. The threat of government officials with the power to cancel fishing licences hangs over them.

It is 16 year old Lucy's last year at school and in that year, she experiences the first anniversary of her mother's death by drowning, possibly suicide, the death of Tom, the boy she loves in a car accident and the death of her dog, Glen.

She and her best friend, Polly, have been saving to escape to the City but Polly is forced to leave school to join her father at the local meat works. However, Lucy has a secret, She seems to have inherited her mother's ability to dream walk i. e. walk into other people's dreams. She even visits her dog's dreams when he dreams of her mother.

The most frequent thing she sees in her dreams is a drowning boy. She doesn't control this ability well but it sets her apart and links her to some mystery surrounding her mother. The story revolves around relationships and some rather odd characters. The community is a very closed one with little regard for change or education and, with the current stresses, it is like a pressure-cooker.

Lucy helps her grieving and silent father with the fishing. She shares her hopes and dreams with her friend Polly. She looks forward to Tom coming home from his year away at a private school not fully understanding his need to 'go up North' to learn new and better ways. This brings him into conflict with his family. Lucy doesn't know about Tom's confusion about his sexuality.

There is also conflict with Gavin, the school bully who rules the town with his tribe of siblings. His family scapegoat is the youngest, Sadie

who at 10 years, leaves home to live in Glen's kennel. Lucy attempts to teach his alcoholic father, Syd to read.

Various other characters seem to have some strange connection to Lucy's mum. Gavin turns the town against Lucy and her father, accusing Lucy of using magic to destroy the fishing. Mr Sheriff and Mrs Parker protect Lucy when the town takes Lucy's father and Glen out to drown them. Lucy and Sadie rescue him as Lucy realises the drowning boy in her dreams is her father and her mother has been walking in her dreams so she will know where he is. The fish drought is explained as Lucy's Mum being forced to 'dream' the location of fish which then resulted in the Creek being over fished. However, the official explanation is the local croc who is caught and blamed. The rains come and Gavin is arrested for illegal netting.

A strange tale of growing up in a very small community in tough times - a reasonable read that's not as grim as it may sound.

**Major themes:** grief, dysfunctional families, small town life, fishing, dreams, buying, growing up

**Content Notes:** 1. Polly experiments with magic. [p13, p222] 2. Mild infrequent language: arseholes x 1, shitty x 1. 3. 'Thank you, Jesus' [p107], 'thank Christ' [p164], 'for Christ's sake' [p244].



**Recommended Age:** 14 to 17 years  
**Suitable class novel:** NO  
**Good read rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Literary value rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★



## The Things We Promise

**Author:** J. C. Burke  
**ISBN:** 978-1760290405  
**Published:** 22/02/2017  
**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin

## >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

*There are two things you need to know about me. The first is that I remember life by what I was wearing. The second is that I think too much...*

It's the early 1990s and all Gemma can think about is looking perfect for her first school formal. Gemma's brother Billy - New York's up and coming hair and make-up artist - has made her the ultimate promise: he's returning home especially to 'create magic' on her and two friends for their end-of-year formal.

Gemma's best friend, Andrea, is convinced it'll be their moment to shine; Gemma hopes it's the night Ralph will finally notice her... But when Billy arrives home from New York, Gemma's life becomes complicated. Her family's been keeping secrets; friendships are forged and broken; and suddenly the length of her formal dress is the least of her worries...

Set in a time of uncertainty and fear, *The Things We Promise* is a beautifully told novel that sings with emotion, humour and heartbreak.

## >> OUR REVIEW

Gemma is in Year 11 at school and looking forward to her first school formal in the middle of October. However, everything falls into disarray when her brother Billy arrives home unexpectedly and Gemma not only finds out that his



partner Saul has died of AIDS but that Billy is HIV-positive.

This changes Gemma's world. Billy's HIV-positive diagnosis soon turns into AIDS and he spends time in and out of hospital with his mother Maryanne and Gemma visiting daily. Gemma is present when Zane, a friend she meets in the hospital, dies from AIDS. This is dealt with sensitively. Ultimately Billy develops lymphoma but decides not to have chemotherapy as he knows that death is the ultimate outcome.

Billy and Gemma left home when he found out that Billy was gay and caught him in bed with another boy. Andrea and Gemma have been best friends forever but as Billy's illness progresses they grow apart as Andrea's mother and grandmother don't want her to have anything to do with Gemma and her family because they fear she will catch the virus.

In between the story of Billy and his fight with AIDS are the usual teenage dramas – the love story, the disagreements with friends and the partying. As the story develops the school formal, where Gemma was 'going to shine', becomes less important and ultimately Billy's funeral is held on the day of the formal.

The major theme of the novel is HIV/AIDS and how it has such a devastating effect on the patient and their friends and family. Another major focus is the theme of sexuality, how some people can accept homosexuality and others can't. Overall the acceptance of homosexuality is presented as the right way to think.

The setting of this novel is in an Australian city, at Gemma's school, her home, and locations around her home with snatches of life in New York. The story takes places in the early 1990s during the pandemic of the AIDS virus casting a pall over an entire generation of young gay men

and others affected by blood contact. It captures skilfully the uncertain times and the fear of AIDS and the public repulsion of people touched by it.

It is a story superbly told, laying bare raw emotion and heartbreak, but also humour. It explains explicitly the symptoms of the disease, the treatment given to patients and the shortened lifespan of those suffering from it. It also explains how friends and relatives of the patients have repercussions on their lifestyles and the life of their families because of the ignorance around the disease.

**Major themes:** fear, humour, heartbreak, friendship, secrets, AIDS, sexuality, homosexuality, death, family, sadness, uncertainty, historical, romance, grief, teenage sexual experimentation

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: pissed x 10, bloody x 1, dick/dickhead x 4, shit x 13, slut x 1, bastard x 3, slag x 1, f\*\*k x 3. 2. Numerous crude references to homosexuals/homosexuality, eg. 'poof', 'poofster-hater', 'bumhole', 'willies', 'queer', 'Jamma Longdickupyourbum x 1, 'fag', 'camp', "Aunties help guys come out", "Limp-wristed, pillow-biting, doughnut-punching bum bandit" [p10] 3. Sexual content/innuendo: "Doing it in your house" [p93], "I hear you like it hard" [p139] "erection" [p139] "She's done it with three boys and I'd still only had the one" [p. 13] "I felt it go in all right – over so quickly – unsure if I was still a virgin" [p. 13] "Just wanted to get my first screw out of the way" [p. 13] Good sex – Billy and Saul [p. 14] Condom [pp. 28, 30, 43] "fingered Andrea" [p. 53] Transvestite [p. 60] 4. Kissing – Ralph and Gemma [p. 279]. 5. Substances: Smoking [p120], drinking alcohol/getting drunk [p45, 150, 258, 261]. 6. Racism ["gook" p32]



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



## Third Witch

**Author:** Jackie French

**ISBN:** 978-0732298531

**Published:** 1/07/2017

**Publisher:** Harper Collins

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

A searing story of passion, betrayal, battles and love, this is Shakespeare's Macbeth stripped of superstition, and its power and beauty refined into fewer words where good balances the evil and there is a happy ending – for some.

### >> OUR REVIEW

The inimitable Jackie French transforms Shakespeare's Macbeth into an engaging medieval tale of a girl naively caught up in her mistress's lust for power.

Annie Grasseyes lives in the village with her mother and old Agnes, who took them in after Annie's father failed to return from the war six years before. Agnes kept them from starving and also helped Annie get a job as a maid at the castle when she was 12-years-old.

Lady Macbeth is determined to see her husband recognised and honoured as he deserves. She asks Annie for Agnes' help to make that happen, but it will take more than just a potion. The three women agree to meet Macbeth on the heath and 'charm' him to strengthen his purpose. In reality it is just words they'll speak but the risk to their lives if identified as witches is very real.

Annie's words on the heath have greater consequences than she ever dreamed. When Macbeth's lust for power leads to murder, Annie shares his guilt. While he is ultimately

crowned as king, it's a reign that will not last. When the ultimate moment comes, the earl she was to marry is nowhere to be seen, and it's the local smith who has loved her all her life who saves her ... but at what cost?

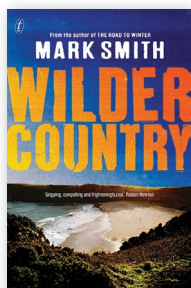
A masterfully crafted, enjoyable read that will also inspire a greater appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare's original tale.

**Major themes:** greed, political machinations, manipulation, friendship, family, survival, war, death, insanity, loyalty, love

**Content Notes:** Non graphic violence.



**Recommended Age:** 12 years +  
**Suitable class novel:** YES  
**Good read rating:** ★★★★★  
**Literary value rating:** ★★★★★



## Wilder Country

**Author:** Mark Smith  
**ISBN:** 978-1925498530  
**Published:** 28/08/2017  
**Publisher:** Text Publishing

### >> PUBLISHER DESCRIPTION

Finn, Kas and Willow have survived the winter of storms. Severe winds and cold have kept the Wilders at bay. Now that spring has come, everything has changed. They're being hunted again, and they won't be safe while Ramage wants their blood. But Finn and Kas made a promise to Rose - to find her baby and bring her back. And finding Hope means finding Ramage.

A *Wilder Country* is the exciting, action-packed sequel to Mark Smith's highly acclaimed *The Road to Winter*.

### >> OUR REVIEW

This conclusion to an intense, post-apocalyptic story sees the relative protection afforded by the wild winter weather abating. For Finn, Kas and Willow it means leaving the safety of their seaside home and venturing into Wilder country in search of baby Hope and Willow's parents.

Meeting some No Landers gives them an opportunity to catch up on news, but what awaits them in the Valley changes everything; the Wilders have taken everyone captive. The men have been chained and forced to work in the fields and the women and children are used as slaves. As there are only a few guards, Finn and Kas use their wits to turn the tables and free everyone. No one's sorry that a few of the Wilders are killed in the process.

After leaving Willow behind, Finn and Kas stupidly fall into a trap and are handed over to Ramage's men. Thankfully, he's away sorting out the uprising in the Valley, or they'd be dead already. Things are looking grim, but a surprise No Lander attack frees them both, as well as a number of children. They quickly find Hope and once more head for the relative safety of Angowrie and a place to call home.

This is an intense read, as befits the setting and the circumstances, with precious few peaceful interludes amongst the constant violence. Throughout it all there is a growing bond developing between Kas and Finn which blooms into love by the end of the book. Their desire to find Hope (Rose's baby) is the driving force and although noble, it forces them through a lot of heartache.

All in all this is a gripping story with no sugar coating. If there really was an apocalypse, it's likely the same types of violent behaviour would be seen in many of those trying to survive. They'd probably swear like troopers too!

**Major themes:** viral outbreak, survival, slaves, anarchy, rescue, friendship, love, violence, fear,

exploitation, reunion, hope

**Content Notes:** 1. Language: shit x 21, f\*\*k x 12 [p 41, 66, 71, 105, 110, 113, 169, 171, 119, 148, 255, 289], Jesus x 2 [249, 259]. 2. Kas is captured and its clear (although not graphic) that rape is intended. She's dragged off to a shed and there is silence—what happens in that silence is unknown, but Kas eventually breaks free by stabbing her attacker and then kills the other man by beating him over the head with a block of wood as she howls 'nobody hurts me' [p43-44].



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

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