

2010 CBCA JUDGES' REPORT

INTRODUCTION

A total of 455 books were entered for the 2010 Children's Book of the Year Awards, consisting of 395 fiction books, and 60 information books. There were a large number of outstanding titles among them. A notable feature of many of the exceptional fiction entries was a sense of delight in life, expressed through poetic and beautiful representations of place (both in word and picture), humour, and the depiction of characters possessed of resilience, charm, fundamental decency, and in some cases ... a touch of magic.

Fiction entries covered the full range of literary genres - poetry, historical novels, social realism and 'the fantastic' (including fairy- and folk-tale, and science fiction). Few poetry texts were entered. In the main these belonged to the Picture Books or Early Childhood sections. There were, however, two outstanding verse novels entered in Younger Readers (*Star Jumps* by Lorraine Marwood, and *Pearl Verses the World* by Sally Murphy).

Four of the short listed books in the Information (Eve Pownall) section were historical in nature. The fiction books of this genre included several war stories, mostly with European settings, although one of the most fascinating was about teenage-girl entertainers during the Vietnam War (*When the Hipchicks Went to War* by Pamela Rushby). Otherwise a wide range of topics was covered, including the life of Beethoven (*A Certain Music* by Celeste Walters), and the possibly legendary Children's Crusade (*Angelfish* by Lili Wilkinson). Several novels displayed an interesting departure of a semi-historical nature: a modern character was shown as being in an imaginary relationship with a historical character who functioned as a kind of mentor (*Loving Richard Feynman* by Penny Tangey, *Letters to Leonardo* by Dee White, *Last of the Braves* by Archimede Fusillo).

Some of the socially realistic novels did involve themes such as death, mental illness and suicide, but they were generally less confronting than many of the realistic books we have seen in the past. Religion, in the shape of Christianity, was a theme in several books. All but one of these explored abuse issues (of the physical and psychological sort). The exception was a well-written and sensitive exploration of varieties of modern Christian experience (*Winter of Grace* by Kate Constable). There were also gentle stories about friendship and loyalty, and stories about the trials and tribulations of teenage life that were simply laugh-aloud funny.

'The fantastic' covered a wide range of re-castings of fairy and folk-tales, with illustrations ranging from retro to cutting-edge modern, traditional richly-imagined quest- and good-versus-evil fantasies, elegant and convincing time-slip stories, and fantasies of the sort that unite magic with the machine. Several entries echoed currently-popular Gothic themes. The judges were frustrated, as they have been many times in the past, by the fact that a number of very well-written books of this genre did not achieve closure, and therefore could not be considered for short listing.

The 2010 judges have greatly enjoyed reading and celebrating this wealth of excellent books from among the year's entries. Two matters, however, have led to some disquiet. The first is the issue of self-published books. Of the self-published illustrated books entered there were a few – a very few – where the illustrator evidently possessed a measure of skill. But even the best of them fell very far short of the standard of illustration and design in books published by professional publishers. Text, both in illustrated books, and in novels, was even poorer. The range was from the barely acceptable to the almost unreadable. The judges gained the impression that almost without exception the creators of these books simply had no idea of the quality and range in modern Australian children's publishing. Since the number of self-published entries is increasing – it was nearly ten per cent of the total entry this year – judges are spending an increasing amount of time on these generally very inferior books.

The second problem was the uneven spread of books over the judging period in the case of the fiction titles. According to the rules of the CBCA, the primary reading period for the judges runs for nine months: from the beginning of May to the end of January, and the judges are supposed to receive parcels of books of similar size at regular intervals throughout this period. But achieving this ideal depends entirely on the goodwill and organisation of the publishers. If they choose to send in their entries very late in the process, it appears that very little can be done about it. In this judging cycle just over half the fiction entries – somewhat more than two hundred books - were received after the beginning of November. This placed the judges under a good deal of stress, a situation not in the best interests of anybody involved.

OLDER READERS

Slightly fewer books, 75, in the Older Readers' section this year did not limit the scope and variety of genres included. They ranged from steampunk to history; life issues to science fiction; murder to romance; a touch of humour and several intriguing interweavings of these. Steampunk emerged more strongly than in the past and judges would enjoy seeing more speculative fiction of this sort. The large number of quality works made it difficult for the judges to award the final accolades.

The category 'crossover' trend continued with a number of books at both ends of this age group, and was especially noticeable in 'series' novels. Authors used diverse constructions within text types such as SMS, email, letters and diary entries. Main characters, female and male alike, were strong, realistic and portrayed in authentic situations. There was less extreme teenage angst and more sensitive treatment of boys facing life issues. Intelligent deep-thinking girl protagonists were prominent.

Recounts of past eras were told more from a social history perspective than as actual historical events; for example there were boarding school settings and expositions of teenage and family life spanning the 50s to the 70s. The Victorian

period in particular provided the social background for unusual imaginary worlds. From a modern perspective, technology and its implications both good and bad were investigated in humorous and serious tones. The standard of the writing in surfing and sporting books was impressive.

Fantasy of the usual quest variety has developed into a more complex genre. History, technology and also popular culture (werewolves and vampires) have been cunningly combined in fantastical ways to create psychological thrillers, steampunk and dystopian adventures. There was a smattering of domestic violence, bullying, including cyber bullying, murder and abuse.

The judges took particular note that book covers are an important aspect of a book's appeal even with Older Readers and felt that some quality stories were undersold or inappropriately represented by the covers chosen for them. But overall there was an interesting variety and depth in this category.

YOUNGER READERS

The judges were very impressed by the high level of literary and artistic merit evident in many of the 172 books entered for this category, which is reflected in the number of Notables –30 in all. Once again, entries included a wide range of genres and themes with appeal for both boys and girls. Reading levels covered a wide range, from newly-independent readers to those of late-primary age. However, the judges noted a considerable number of self-published books which failed to meet acceptable standards for submission for these awards.

Historical fiction continues to be a popular genre, providing a valuable introduction to important periods and events in history, both in Australia and elsewhere. Other well-represented genres included fantasy, humour and adventure, these latter two often aimed specifically at boys. The judges were particularly impressed by the high quality of two fine verse novels, and a good showing of illustrated longer stories.

Strong or otherwise significant series contenders were well represented. Besides those recognised in the Notables, aspects of Australiana were tackled, tongue-in-cheek, with varying success in the *Mates: great Australian yarns*; refreshing 'bad' fairies turned up in the *Little Horror* stories; indigenous stories were retold in the *WAARDA* series; the popular *Undys* series depicts a positive father role-model; the continuing, mainly high-quality, additions to the humorous *Lightning Strikes* series were also noted. The *Ranger's Apprentice* and *Specky McGee* series continue to grow and appeal to their specific readerships.

The breadth of themes and styles to attract a wide range of readers of both genders was noted, with many books dealing with varying family relationships and structures. Unusually, there were several titles designed to introduce Shakespeare to younger readers, some humorous, and others not. Sport, school and friendship continue to be dominant themes in books for this age group.

Contemporary issues were treated in age-appropriate ways, enabling young readers to recognise themselves and their circumstances, or extending them beyond their own lives and experiences so that they develop an understanding of how those of others may be different.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Early Childhood category encompasses those books deemed suitable for children who are at pre-reading or at early stages of reading. It is a given that most of these will entail shared reading experiences between the very young child and a usually adult reader. Therefore there will be many instances where the reader is able to help expand and elaborate the child's understanding of both text and illustration.

The 2010 awards saw 133 books entered in the Early Childhood category, 120 of which were also entered in the Picture Book category. The quality of the entries varied considerably, ranging from books of very high standard, such as those that achieved short list or Notable status, to some very dubious offerings indeed. The latter were often self-published.

For the very young, there was a variety of board books with realistic story-lines and enchanting illustrations. Perfectly packaged in small format, these books are ideal for small hands.

This year's authors appeared to favour no particular themes but rather a variety of ideas, often based on everyday occurrences in the lives of children. These ranged from life with the family dog, to coping with the death of a beloved pet, to dealing with jealousy and everyday family life. Many stories offered subtle moral encouragement to the very young through positive characters, relationships and actions. There were stories about pirates, animals (often incorporating anthropomorphism), fairytale-type stories and counting books, and also a large number of books in verse format.

Today's Australian authors and illustrators are producing work with an appeal to every child (and the child within us all). Those books submitted for judging revealed a wide range of illustrative styles and techniques – from the very realistic to the quite abstract, while the authors also drew on a vast array of writing styles to enhance the reading experience of the very young.

The judges were very impressed with the overall quality of the submitted books and cannot emphasise enough the importance not only of the short listed titles, but also of those excellent books on the Notable list. When combined, these lists make up a collection of books for Early Childhood second to none. The young children of Australia are indeed fortunate to be the recipients of the wealth of talent that exists among our authors and illustrators.

PICTURE BOOK

Australian picture books are world-class. This has become a tradition and is now an expectation, and the quality is again maintained in 2010. The short listed picture books this year showcase how art can reach a pinnacle in picture book form. Apart from the wordless *The Hero of Little Street*, these short listed books also show how the picture book is further elevated by the synergistic partnership between innovative illustration and exemplary writing.

There are diverse styles and techniques, media, colour palettes and purpose within the short listed picture books. There is a range of humour, exemplified by *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris* and *To the Top End*, and high degrees of sophistication, represented by titles like *Fox and Fine Feathers* and *The Hero of Little Street*. Forms from traditional literature have been re-imagined, such as the fable in *Schumann the Shoeman* and the cumulative tale in *Isabella's Garden*. Visual and filmic techniques such as 'panelling' and 'frame-breaking' are grafted impeccably into the picture book form by illustrators such as Gregory Rogers and Narelle Oliver; and words, and their relationships with each other and their visual texts, are touched with magic by authors such as Glenda Millard.

We need to keep reminding people that picture books can be intended for all ages, not just young children. Picture books for readers of all ages are represented in the CBCA 2010 Notables list, selected from the 140 titles considered for this category.

The 2010 short listed picture books take us on a journey through Australia and around the world; into nature; and on a voyage of the imagination, which ultimately takes us across the 'story bridge'...

INFORMATION BOOKS

Sixty books were entered for the 2010 Eve Pownall Award for Information Books (17 fewer than last year). This does not necessarily mean a decline in publishing because the Awards Coordinators identified several strong titles which were not entered. The books entered covered various Australian subjects including history, biography, society, government, exploration, animals, hobbies and sport. Books on Shakespeare, plagues, Vikings, human civilisation and wildlife in other continents extended the geographical and topical range. While there was something for all age groups, the judges noted that infants and older teenagers were not so well catered for. There were no books about puberty or personal issues, for example. However, it was not difficult to find 20 Notable books and six excellent titles for the Short List.

A total of 29 publishers submitted books. Some of the best were published by institutions and government agencies such as museums, the CSIRO, the National Library of Australia and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Excellence in design, a style appropriate for the target readership and focus on interesting topics for curious recreational readers rather than a direct response to school curricula

characterised these publications. The Judges were particularly impressed by several books which not only provided information but also presented history and science as dynamic and evolving learning activities.

Some of the entries were limited in terms of the Award because the authors addressed adults or only a particular group of children. The three titles in *The ABCs of Australia's Defence* series are specifically for young children whose parents are in Australia's armed forces rather than for a wide readership. Several books combined factual information with fictional sections, though sometimes logically extrapolated from authentic sources. One author noted the differences between her narrative and some of the known facts. The Judges kept in mind the principle that the Eve Pownall Award is for books *which have the prime intention of documenting factual information* during the comparative evaluation process. Some errors of fact including anachronisms and incorrect terminology indicated the need for more careful research and editing.

A variety of illustrative styles and media was used both to provide information and to evoke feelings associated with it: original paintings and drawings; photographs of people, places and artefacts; cartoons and diagrams. Several books used a range of media effectively. In *Polar Eyes: a Journey to Antarctica*, Nicholas Hutcheson's drawings on the endpapers and throughout the text complement the photographs and text perfectly. Most of the texts acknowledged their sources clearly and provided an adequate index, though it was disappointing not to find an integrated index for the boxed set *Significant People in Australia's History*.

The Judges thank the Children's Book Council of Australia for the opportunity to explore such a wide range of Australian information books for young people in depth and commend their selection of six short listed books for the 2010 Eve Pownall Award for Information Books.

CBCA 2010 Book of the Year Awards

OLDER READERS

Winner

METZENTHEN, David

JARVIS 24

Penguin Group Australia

ISBN 9780143010043

255 pages

In *Jarvis 24*, the voice of the protagonist Marc Jarvis is an endearing and humorous one. His character is that of a genuine, caring young adult who is trying to make sense of life, especially girls. When he sees an attractive young woman go into a used car yard he seeks work experience there. This is the catalyst for an array of authentic, moving and uplifting experiences in which we see Marc develop as a teenager on the verge of manhood, while making lasting friendships with his work mates and customers. The surprising relationships and lack of some stereotyped male prejudices create depth. David Metzenthén has crafted vivid, realistic and poignant images for the reader, who can easily identify with the characters and situations Marc becomes involved in. This is a novel with both popular appeal and high literary quality.

Honour Books

CLARKE, Judith

THE WINDS OF HEAVEN

Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781741757316

268 pages

With subtlety and grace, Clarke explores the parallel lives of cousins Clemmie and Fan and their profoundly different life journeys, vividly showing the consequences of parental and social expectation. In Clemmie's success and Fan's 'failure', the disadvantages of remaining in a small country town are realistically portrayed. Fan's humiliating experience in the library, which destroys her last scrap of self-esteem, foreshadows the terrible, climactic events to come. Minor characters are lightly but effectively sketched; atmosphere and setting are equally convincing. Spanning nearly 60 years, delicately threaded with indigenous spirituality and dealing with teenage depression and suicide, this is a sad but ultimately hopeful story, dealing with a difficult topic with great sensitivity and compassion.

MILLARD, Glenda
A SMALL FREE KISS IN THE DARK
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781741756586
226 pages

War comes to Melbourne. The reader is immersed immediately without explanation, as are the characters, in this poetically written reflection on war and its consequences from the point of view of the marginalised. Despite his homeless status, protagonist Skip has an innocent world view. He is an honest narrator who dispassionately tells us about his experiences with Billy, Max and Tia as they find a shaky refuge in a 'No-man's land'. The strength and beauty of this story lie in Millard's talent of gently exploring the many facets of human nature. Her emotive, lyrical writing style has the power to make the reader both laugh and cry and despite inevitable sadness, there is ultimately hope.

Short List

CHRISTOPHER, Lucy
STOLEN
Chicken House
ISBN 9781906427139
301 pages

A troubled young man kidnaps a girl he has watched obsessively for years. He thinks he has 'saved' her. He takes her to his Australian desert home, and introduces her to the world he loves. As the story unfolds the reader gains a strong sense of the emotional damage at the root of the young man's behaviour, and of his essential human worth. The girl's state of mind varies between near-acceptance and understanding of her captor, and a desperate desire to escape. This is a highly convincing, very uncomfortable read.

LARBALESTIER, Justine
LIAR
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781741758726
329 pages

In a convincing use of first and second person narration, Justine Larbalestier draws the reader into a web of uncertainty through the character of Micah, a self-confessed liar. As Micah spins her tales, we are left not knowing what to believe about the events she recounts, nor are we even certain of the genre we are reading – is it mystery, psychological thriller, fantasy, or all three? Larbalestier plays with readers from the very first sentence, in a compelling narrative that leaves them guessing long after the last word has been read.

TANGEY, Penny

LOVING RICHARD FEYNMAN

University of Queensland Press

ISBN 9780702237256

199 pages

Catherine; intelligent, gifted in maths and science, but lacking social confidence and struggling with the angsts of her age, turns to her dead hero, the eminent physicist Richard Feynman, to resolve her fears and doubts and deal with life's big questions. Catherine's letters to Richard, kept in diary format, examine social, personal and philosophical issues that will resonate with this age and type of reader. The simple writing style has captured the voice of this refreshing teenager, producing a story, characters and ideas that are vivid and confronting.

YOUNGER READERS

Winner

HIRSCH, Odo
DARIUS BELL AND THE GLITTER POOL
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781741757163
232 pages

The fortunes of the aristocratic Bell family have long been in decline. But to retain ownership of their run-down ancestral mansion they must make a gift to the city every twenty-five years. Although the nature of the gift is not specified, the expectation is that it will be very substantial, and this time they do not have the means. Young Darius Bell, who simply loves his home, sets about trying to help. He makes a remarkable discovery which he hopes will bring in money. But his scheme does not work out. Eventually a solution is found: one that is both thoroughly realistic and affirms the most fundamental values of life. This is a beautifully-crafted novel peopled by a collection of the most delightfully eccentric characters. Perhaps its greatest virtue, however, is its powerful feeling for place. Darius' discovery provides a moment of sheer magic!

Honour Books

LESTER, Alison
RUNNING WITH THE HORSES
Viking, Penguin Group Australia
ISBN 9780670868339
unpaged

This is an illustrated story for younger readers who love horses, have an interest in history and an appreciation of art. Nina's story about rescuing horses from a worn torn European city is fictional, but based on the famous Lipizzaner horses of Vienna. The simply told but emotionally charged language is powerfully supported by the beautifully expressive charcoal drawings super-imposed upon actual photos. The words engender the courage and compassion of the little girl while the illustrations evoke the grandeur of historic Europe. The sub-plot of Zelda the old, abandoned work horse provides a depth and emotion to this exciting story of bravery, flight and escape. This is much more than just a story about horses.

Murphy, Sally
PEARL VERSES THE WORLD
Illustrated by Heather POTTER
Walker Books
ISBN 9781921150937
79 pages

In verse format, Sally Murphy gives us a poignant story about family, loneliness, loss, grief, and being true to oneself. A lonely child, Pearl loves to write poetry, but her teacher insists that poetry must rhyme, constraining Pearl's creativity. The death of her beloved Granny and the disruption of her secure family unit come as a shock but it is Pearl's tribute at the funeral that affirms her – to herself, her classmates and her teacher. No word is superfluous in Murphy's spare but telling text that flows rhythmically as we share Pearl's denial, anger and eventual acceptance. Heather Potter's gentle illustrations complement a story told by a young narrator we have come to care for.

Short List

FENSHAM, Elizabeth
MATTY FOREVER
University of Queensland Press
ISBN 9780702237027
139 pages

When Bill and his mum move to the country he quickly makes friends with Matty, the quirky, imaginative child of their arty and slightly off-beat neighbours. This budding friendship goes on the back-burner when a child from a wealthy family arrives and Bill is attracted by everything her lifestyle has to offer. Both Bill and Matty however, have a secret and he discovers painfully, that one of the marks of true friendship is keeping secrets. This is a beautifully written story convincing in its detail and characterisation.

MCINTOSH, Fiona
THE WHISPERER
Angus & Robertson, HarperCollinsPublishers
ISBN 9780732286675
312 pages

Twins Griff and Lute are separated at birth and grow up to lead completely different lives. One, living and working in a circus, has the unique ability to hear people's thoughts, while the other has been raised as a prince, with a future leading to the crown. This beautifully written story has all the ingredients we expect of good fantasy – a medieval setting, fantastical creatures, evil villains and an array of wonderfully, endearing characters – all blended into an exciting and highly satisfying read.

STORER, Jen

TENSY FARLOW AND THE HOME FOR MISLAID CHILDREN

Viking, Penguin Group Australia

ISBN 9780670073399

341 pages

Unsettling events are happening; both on earth, particularly in and around Mumbles Fell and in the heavens above. They revolve around a young, unusual girl, Tensy and guardian angels, or in her case, the lack thereof. Tensy and her orphan friends must confront many obstacles in this fast-paced, action-packed fantasy, with its unpredictable twists and turns and its large cast of characters – good and evil, ridiculous and earnest, earthly and heavenly. Ultimately, the redemptive power of love will overcome evil and rescue its victims.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Winner

SHANAHAN, Lisa
BEAR & CHOOK BY THE SEA
Illustrated by Emma QUAY
Lothian Children's Books, Hachette
ISBN 9780733618666
unpaged

Bear and Chook return in this touching and heart-warming journey to the seaside and back. The story evolves with an enthusiastic Bear and reluctant Chook overcoming physical challenges and obstacles to reach the seaside and then return home. There is a role reversal on the return journey which highlights the warm, supportive relationship between Bear and Chook. Each cajoles and encourages the other in the various stages of the journey. This well designed book is a delight to read aloud. The author's skill is reflected in the text, which is constructed using rich, evocative language, with rhythm, repetition and onomatopoeia. Emma Quay has used chinagraph pencil and acrylic paint to create warm, expressive and endearing illustrations that complement the text perfectly. *Bear & Chook by the Sea* offers young readers a gentle lesson in true friendship.

Honour Books

BOOTH, Christine
KIP
Windy Hollow Books
ISBN 9781921136405
unpaged

Kip is a young city rooster with a very fine voice, but no matter how he adjusts his crowing timetable, he annoys at least one of the neighbours. The text has a pleasing repetitive element reminiscent of folk tales and concludes in a happy, satisfying and perfectly believable manner. Well executed and effective design enhances the illustrations, with panels of varying sizes overlaid on the pages along with the clever use of a cityscape frieze running across the bottom of many double-page spreads. In contrast to this generally rectangular presentation, glorious swirls of rainbow-coloured lettering represent Kip's growing voice, encouraging young readers to join in the crowing. There is also some embedded information about keeping roosters in urban areas.

GLEESON, Libby
CLANCY & MILLIE AND THE VERY FINE HOUSE
Illustrated by Freya BLACKWOOD
Little Hare Books
ISBN 9781921541193
unpaged

Clancy's parents are thrilled with their new house, but it is too big for Clancy and leaves him feeling lost and bewildered. Outside, Clancy can make houses that he can cope with from the empty packing boxes. When Millie from next door appears, their imaginations combine in play that includes constructing the houses of the three little pigs. With a new friendship forged, Clancy can finally let go of his toy dog and the new house is deemed to be 'a very fine dwelling'. Gleeson's spare, delicate text is cleverly extended by the warm brown palette of Blackwood's illustrations. Her striking use of shapes, angles, picture size and point of view reveal Clancy's changing emotions.

Short List

BLAND, Nick
THE WRONG BOOK
Scholastic Australia
ISBN 9781741693409
unpaged

This picture book contains a single, extended joke: wisely, the author/illustrator has severely limited the text, leaving the pictures to tell the story and inviting readers to discover details for themselves. In its post-modern self-awareness, the book expects readers to understand the joke and to participate in it as well. The incidental actions of and between, randomly introduced characters and the small boy's growing frustration, will amuse young readers. The use of white space focuses attention on the characters and events right in front of us: background and setting are irrelevant.

DUBOSARSKY Ursula
Illustrated by Andrew JOYNER
THE TERRIBLE PLOP
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9 78067071418
unpaged

The Terrible Plop is a spirited re-interpretation of the old *Sky is Falling In* fable. The lively rhyming text has great child appeal. The rhyme and rhythm are natural and unforced, ensuring successful repeated readings. The stylish retro illustrations employ a limited palette which suits the tone of the verse perfectly, and juxtapositions of landscape and animals, such as foxes picking flowers, make this humorously surreal. The continuous movement in the illustrations maintains the narrative flow, building to a satisfying and inevitable climax.

THOMPSON, Colin
FEARLESS
Illustrated by Sarah DAVIS
ABC Books
ISBN 9780733320255
unpaged

Fearless by name but fearful by nature, this lovable, ditzzy doggie wins hearts with his comical expressions and unintentional bravery. The story outlines humorous ways in which Fearless fails to live up to his name. The story climax sees his friendly disposition mistaken by someone who doesn't play by the rules. Illustrations are accurate depictions of doggie habits; the expressions are clearly readable and the extra inclusions are clever, entertaining and appropriately pitched to the early reader. This is a wonderful pictorial study of a family and their pet.

PICTURE BOOK

Winner

ROGERS, Gregory
THE HERO OF LITTLE STREET
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781741145243
unpaged

The Boy's adventure in this wordless picture book begins in London's National Gallery and continues into the Netherlands of the seventeenth century. As the dog from Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Marriage* leaps out of the frame, the pair escapes into the world of the Old Masters. Along the way many famous paintings are referenced, including *Lady Seated at a Virginal* and *The Little Street*, both by Vermeer. Reminders of the Bear and the Bard from The Boy's previous adventures appear in the artwork. Using a variety of perspectives, framed and frameless watercolour and pen illustrations capture myriad facial expressions and body language. An imaginary journey within a painting has probably never been done as well as this before. Visual humour and the richness of the illustrations will make repeated readings of this timeless title a rewarding experience for all ages.

Honour Books

MILLARD, Glenda
Illustrated by Rebecca COOL
ISABELLA'S GARDEN
Walker Books
ISBN 9781921150333
unpaged

Brilliantly illustrated in a manner reminiscent of eastern European folk-art, this glorious picture book describes the natural cycle of life and growth. As the story moves from spring to summer the colours deepen and larger numbers of brightly clad children rejoice in a garden. Autumn comes with its warm rich hues, and the baby bird hatched in the summer is now well grown. With the arrival of winter, we discover a memorable Jack Frost leaping across the landscape. The accompanying rhymed text, based on the pattern of *The House that Jack Built*, recounts the lifecycle of a flower. Its imagery is vivid and satisfying and joined with the illustrations, it creates an opulent evocation of life and the garden.

OLIVER, Narelle

FOX AND FINE FEATHERS

Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia

ISBN 9781862918061

unpaged

A subtle palette borrowed from nature captures the setting of Queensland's Border Ranges, where Narelle Oliver has embedded a fable-like story in an ecological cautionary tale. Oliver adds richness to this simple narrative with superb linocuts – ranging from cameos to double page spreads – that are full of detail, movement and visual interest. Lyrebird's vanity attracts Fox, bringing Nightjar, Coucal and Pitta, as well as Lyrebird himself, into danger. Although Nightjar cannot display the skills or splendour of the other birds, it is his camouflage qualities that prove most valuable in the face of danger. Notes about the setting, the four bird species and the feral fox add informative value to this beautifully produced book.

Short List

DANALIS, John

SCHUMANN THE SHOEMAN

Illustrated by Stella DANALIS

University of Queensland Press

ISBN 9780702236211

unpaged

John and Stella Danalis have collaborated to create a work of art. The text is rich and lyrical; a feast of vocabulary, clever alliterations and colourful adjectives. The narrative works at various levels and elicits a personal interpretation. The illustrations are appropriately bright and vivacious or subtle and subdued, with the sharp impact of the one photographic-style illustration a perfect complement. The bold designs, colours, patterns and textures create sensuous illustrations that entice the reader. This high quality, beautifully designed picture book rewards ongoing exploration.

HARVEY, Roland

TO THE TOP END: OUR TRIP ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Allen & Unwin

ISBN 978 1741758849

unpaged

The tour guide on this hilarious romp across Australia is Uncle Kevin, the expert on most forms of travel. The reader is pleased, although somewhat surprised, that he actually survives the trip! The text is hand-written and swoops and dives across the double pages ... and then reappears somewhere unexpected. The watercolour illustrations convey perfectly the great variety of Australian scenery, and are crammed with detail. And you can be sure that if you are told that something doesn't exist (eg bunyips), there they will be somewhere in the illustrations!

HOBBS, Leigh

MR CHICKEN GOES TO PARIS

Allen and Unwin

ISBN 9781741757699

unpaged

Bright colour contrasted with muted tones, produces a memorable character who could be labelled ludicrous, but who is really naively endearing. Mr Chicken wanders through this book accompanied by his diminutive companion Yvette, also spotlighted by bold colour. From first to final end paper and in all the scenes between, we are treated to a series of quirky but faithful depictions of Paris landmarks. The varied collection of softly toned and black pen drawings, spanning single double and fractional pages, humorously spotlight Mr C's impact on the public.

EVE POWNALL

Winner

MACINNIS, Peter

AUSTRALIAN BACKYARD EXPLORER

National Library of Australia

ISBN 9780642276841

191 pages

Readers of this magnificently presented book will gain substantial knowledge of and insight into eighteenth and nineteenth century exploration of the Australian continent. More than a chronology of exploration and explorer profiles, it considers the nature and purpose of exploration, examines the motivation of Australian explorers and describes the nature and methods of exploration and survival. Approximately forty expeditions and associated personnel including women and Aboriginal people are covered in this extensively researched and thoroughly documented history. The 'backyard' of the title refers readers to their backyards to imagine the era and simulate methods of survival and exploration as clearly described and illustrated in the various project sections eg. making a water filter, estimating distance through thumb measurement. The book is aptly designed with a generous and judicious selection of contemporary source material including diary excerpts, cartography and artworks.

Honour Books

PATRICK, Tanya

POLAR EYES: A JOURNEY TO ANTARCTICA

Illustrated by Nicholas HUTCHESON

CSIRO

ISBN 9780643096103

76 pages

Polar Eyes is not only a very personal journey to 'The Unknown Land of the South' diarised by the author as the narrator, but she manages to take every reader with her, as her sense of awe, wonder and curiosity pervades the text and includes the reader in her experience of this remote and fascinating continent. The desire to share her visitation is clearly evident throughout this fast-paced, layered format, offering stimulating visual variety and interest, coupled with wonderful photography, interviews with scientists undertaking ongoing research and data gathering and suggestions for engaging in your own experiments. This is an extremely fresh and appealing book on a topic not only of Australian, but world significance.

YALATA & OAK VALLEY COMMUNITIES with MATTINGLEY, Christobel
MARALINGA THE ANANGU STORY
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781741756210

This well-crafted collaboration between Christobel Mattingley and the indigenous Anangu people, passionately recounts, through a frank and honest text, a disturbing period in Australia's history. Initial pages convey the Anangu's affinity with the land that was their lifeblood for thousands of years, before being turned upside down for decades through a gradual, yet complete takeover for atomic weapons testing. The text is humanised by a collection of original photographs and bright, bold artwork portraying their interpretations of events, as well as personal recollections and individual anecdotes. This imaginative blending combines the historical facts with a deep empathy for the people who, by their writing and art, display hope for the future rebuilding of their communities

Short List

CLODE, Danielle
PREHISTORIC GIANTS: THE MEGAFUNA OF AUSTRALIA
Museum Victoria
ISBN 9780980381320
72 pages

This stylish, well resourced study of the megafauna of Australia in the Pleistocene, provides a fascinating glimpse of the giants from our recent ancient past and explains how scientists 'resurrect' these creatures based upon such a paucity of fossil evidence. The different megafauna are divided up into accessible sub-groups for ease of identification and recognition, with a useful breakdown of the class, subclass etc., along with related species and their relative sizes and weights. The illustrations are well executed, and the photographs of similar modern animals and fossils are attractively presented.

M IS FOR MATES: ANIMALS IN WARTIME FROM AJAX TO ZEP
DEPT. OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS in association with the AUSTRALIAN WAR
MEMORIAL
ISBN 9781877007392
58 pages

Animals delight all ages, and the stories and captions in this very absorbing and interesting publication will give a new insight into the many different animals which had a place in our war involvements over the years. Browsing the photographs and personal artefacts included throughout the alphabetical format of this book will have obvious appeal for younger readers, but the content, source list and crossword also presents a unique and useful resource for older readers to the lesser known aspects of war and the animal-human relationships during Australia's wartime campaigns.

REEDER, Stephanie Owen

LOST! A TRUE TALE FROM THE BUSH

National Library of Australia

ISBN 9780642276865

110 pages

Among the many incidents of lost children perishing in the Australian bush, the case of the Duff children is perhaps the best known and one that, fortuitously, had a happy ending. The three young children of a Victorian farming couple in the Wimmera district were lost for nine days and nights in the winter of 1864. Extensively informed from primary and secondary sources and liberally illustrated with contemporary art, this aptly designed book movingly imagines the circumstances of the stoic children as their plight develops. Includes inter-chapter period background information.