



The CBCA Book of the Year Awards

# JUDGES' REPORT 2020



## **THE CBCA JUDGES' REPORT 2020**

Category reports written by the CBCA Book of the Year Awards judges:

CBCA Book of the Year: Older Readers:

Jonathan Howard (NT), Karys McEwen (VIC) and Erin Wamala (VIC)

CBCA Book of the Year: Younger Readers:

Margaret McKay-Lowndes (QLD), Jan Pocock (WA) and Ruth Woolven (VIC)

CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood:

Wendy Banister (NSW), Marissa Caluzzi (VIC) and Sandi Parsons (WA)

Picture Book of the Year:

Dr Julie Faulkner (VIC), Nette Hilton (NSW) and Brook Tayla (VIC)

Eve Pownall Award:

Melinda Allan (VIC), Dr Margaret Bromley (ACT) and Lucy Long (ACT)

CBCA Award for New Illustrator:

Dr Julie Faulkner (VIC), Nette Hilton (NSW) and Brook Tayla (VIC)

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The Children's Book Council of Australia is a voluntary organisation established in 1945 to promote children's literature and to encourage children to read. Membership of the eight state and territory branches is open to those interested in children's books: parents, teachers, librarians, students, publishers, authors, illustrators, booksellers and journalists. Membership applications should be sent to CBCA Branches:

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## BACKGROUND

The Children's Book Council of Australia administers and presents the annual CBCA Children's Book of the Year Awards. Each year publishers enter books in the Awards and judges read, review and exchange reports on every title accepted for entry. The judging process is guided by the Awards category titles and criteria as stated in the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards Policy and set out in this publication. This document contains the judges' report on 517 unique titles published in the year 2019 and submitted by publishers for the 2020 CBCA Book of the Year Awards.

The 2020 Notables List was announced on February 25 with 'Night of the Notables' hosted by CBCA Branches in many capital cities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBCA South Australian Branch was unable to host the 2020 Shortlist event so the announcement was made online on March 31 for the first time in the history of the Awards.

The 74th CBCA Book of the Year Awards, consisting of one Winner and up to two Honour Books in each category, was announced on October 16. This marked the beginning of CBCA Book Week 2020 with the theme 'Curious Creatures, Wild Minds'. Access to the Shortlist Judges' Presentation is available from each Branch of The Children's Book Council of Australia.

## CATEGORIES

There are six categories in the CBCA Book of the Year Awards:

### **a. CBCA Book of the Year: Older Readers**

Entries listed in this category are outstanding books for young people aged between 13 and 18 years (secondary school level). Readers require a degree of maturity to appreciate the themes and scope of emotional involvement. Books in this category may be fiction, drama, illustrated text, poetry or graphic novels. Judging considers the literary qualities of the text, editing and book production.

### **b. CBCA Book of the Year: Younger Readers**

Entries listed in this category are outstanding books published for children in the age range from 7 to 12 years (primary school level). Books in this category may be fiction, drama, graphic novels, illustrated text or poetry. Judging considers the literary qualities of the text, editing and book production.

### **c. CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood**

Entries listed in this category are outstanding books suitable in content and style for pre- and beginning readers or children in the age range 0 to 6 years (pre-school and infants' level). These include works of fiction, poetry, wordless, board and concept books. The illustrations reflect the text on the page and often do not add extra meaning to the storyline. The font size and style, rhythm and meter of the text are important. Clear design, layout and editing are also important.

### **d. CBCA Picture Book of the Year**

Entries listed in this category are outstanding books of the genre in which the text and illustrations achieve artistic and literary unity and the story, theme or concept are enhanced and unified through the illustrations. Picture books can be for any age. A picture book can be written and illustrated by a sole creator or a collaborative effort between two or more creators. The text and illustrations work cohesively. The illustrations are an integral part of or extend the action on the

page. The illustrations are either as important as the text or more important and can be enjoyed separately from the text. Illustrators who have taken an existing piece of work and produced new illustrations that enhance that text can only be entered in this category.

#### **e. Eve Pownall Award**

Entries listed in this category are books with the prime purpose of documenting factual material. Consideration should be given to imaginative presentation, interpretation and variation of style. Books are judged on the balance and harmony of language style and presentation, graphic excellence, clarity, appropriateness and aesthetic appeal of illustrations and the overall design of the book. Referencing of sources is important; books may include a contents page, index, bibliography and glossary which enhance the reader's experience. Autobiographies and biographies are entered in this category. The age range for this category is 0 to 18 years.

#### **f. CBCA Award for New Illustrator**

Entries for this category are books where the illustrator is emerging or new to the field of children's book illustration. The entry must be the illustrator's first illustrated book published by a trade publisher where illustrations form a significant part of the book's narrative or information content. The age range for this category is 0 to 18 years. Illustrators who have taken an existing piece of work and produced new illustrations that enhance that text can be entered in this category.

### **JUDGING PROCESS**

Judges are required to read all books entered in their category during the judging period, then discuss and write preliminary critiques on each entry using the judging criteria. An entered book will be judged only in the nominated category against the category criteria.

Books entered for the Awards are assessed primarily for:

- outstanding literary merit, including cohesiveness in significant literary elements;
- language chosen for its appropriateness to the theme and style of the work with proper regard to the aesthetic qualities of language; and
- originality in the treatment of literary elements as they apply to the form of the work. Consideration is given to the quality of illustrations, book design, editing, production, printing and binding.

Judges for these Awards commenced the judging process in May 2019 and finalised their deliberations in February 2020. This year the judging panels met via teleconference and came together for final discussion and report preparation in Melbourne.

## THE JUDGES

### CBCA Book of the Year: Older Readers



#### JONATHAN HOWARD

Jonathan is a secondary teacher who has held many interesting jobs around the world then returned to Australia to TAFE Queensland teaching in the area of English as a second language. He returned to study and combined a Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics with a Postgraduate Degree in Secondary Education. Jonathan now lives in Darwin working full time in the Humanities Department where he teaches middle school students English, History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship. Jonathan is an avid reader and feels that judging in the Older Reader category will help him connect and gain an in-depth appreciation of literature available to his students, thus enhancing his teaching program.



#### KARYS McEWEN

Karys is the Library Manager at both Prahran High School and Richmond High School. She is originally from Western Australia and has a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) from the University of Western Australia and a Master of Information Management (Librarianship) from Curtin University. She is the current President of the CBCA Victorian Branch. Karys also makes zines and writes for Books + Publishing magazine. She is passionate about the positive impact libraries and literature can have on the wellbeing of young people.



#### ERIN WAMALA

Erin has a Bachelor of Education and a Masters of Teacher Librarianship. For almost ten years she worked as the Education Marketing Manager of Penguin Books Australia and was fortunate to be able to share books with teachers and students around the country. Following this, she managed The Kids' Bookshop before finally making the transition to Teacher Librarian at Trinity Grammar in Melbourne. She is very excited to take on the role of CBCA judge and is looking forward to reading many wonderful books and sharing them with her fellow judges.

## CBCA Book of the Year: Younger Readers



### MARGARET MCKAY-LOWNDES

Margaret has worked for many years as an English teacher and Teacher Librarian (in both primary and secondary schools) and now, while semi-retired, has half a dozen schools locally where she teaches on a relief basis. She still enjoys talking to children about their books and reading. She compiles and edits the newsletter for the CBCA (Qld branch) and participates in the Last Tuesday Children's Book Club, a discussion group consisting of retired TLs and aspiring writers who enjoy keeping up with books for children. As well as a Bachelor of Arts in English and History, she has a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship).



### JAN POCOCK

Jan Pocock is the Teacher Librarian at Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School. She has a Bachelor of Education with a major in English Literature and has taught from K - 12 in a variety of schools including rural and remote. She has also worked in a variety of roles from Teacher, Head of Department and Principal. Jan has always had a passion for reading and developing a love of reading amongst children. Her key focus has been finding the book that fits the child, promoting reading for pleasure and encouraging students to open themselves to new experiences using reading and books. She is an avid reader herself and is happy to read anything from picture books to adult novels, any book, any genre. However, she will happily

discard what she isn't enjoying. "Life is way too short, and there are too many amazing books, to read books you don't love!"



### RUTH WOOLVEN

Ruth Woolven has a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and a Master of Information Management (Librarianship). She works as the Librarian at Kew Primary School in Melbourne. Ruth is the Primary School Representative on the School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV) Council and is a member of the CBCA Victorian Branch committee. Ruth is passionate about connecting students to the right books and promoting reading for pleasure.



## **CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood**



### **WENDY BANISTER**

Wendy has a Bachelor of Arts (Library and Information Science) and a Master of Information Studies (Children's Librarianship). She is currently the Children's Librarian at City of Canada Bay Libraries, a public library service in Sydney's inner west. Wendy has worked for over 40 years in all types of libraries. She found her dream job as a Children's Librarian 18 years ago, allowing her to combine her love of children, books, reading and libraries. Wendy provides children's literacy programs and services for children and families in the local community, laying the foundations for a lifelong love of reading and books. She is looking forward to taking part in the judging process.



### **MARISSA CALUZZI**

Throughout her 30-year teaching career, Marissa has demonstrated a passion for literature and loves sharing the joy of reading with her students. She has completed a Master of Business (Information Technology), a Graduate Diploma in Information Management and a Bachelor of Education, all at RMIT University and a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) at Phillip Institute of Technology, with a major focus in Children's Literature in all of these studies. Marissa is currently the Junior School Teacher Librarian at Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School, working with students in the Junior School (Year Prep – 6) and Early Learning Centre (Kinder and Pre-Prep). A key focus of her role is fostering a love of books and reading for pleasure in the students, staff, and the wider community. She is also an enthusiastic and active member of the CBCA Victorian Branch executive committee.



### **SANDI PARSONS**

Sandi lives and breathes stories, as a reader, writer and storyteller. She has spent 18 years working in educational libraries and has a Diploma in Library and Information Studies. Sandi served on the West Australian Young Readers' Book Award committee between 2012 and 2017 and is the critique coordinator for the Australia West region of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). Sandi is passionate about diversity in storytelling and engaging readers with stories. She believes that a teetering stack of books waiting to be read is an essential component of every household.



## CBCA Picture Book of the Year and CBCA Award for New Illustrator



### Dr JULIE FAULKNER

Julie is a senior lecturer in teacher education at Monash University (VIC). A former English teacher, she now teaches and researches in literature and young people's in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. Her research interests include print literature as well as digital literary texts, and all the ways these might be taught and read. She sees literature as a powerful springboard for deeper reading, drawing on complex visual and print language as well as rich vocabulary and, in the case of picture books, crafted illustration. In her teaching, she has worked with preservice and practising teachers to read, analyse and create their own picture and bilingual books. She is

a joint editor of the literacy journal, *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years* which explores reading and teaching practices among middle years children. She is also co-author of *Learning to Teach: New Times, New Practices* (Oxford University Press), preparing for its third edition.



### MARGARET (NETTE) HILTON

Nette has been an author of children's and YA literature for the past 30 years. She holds a Bachelor of Education and has taught primary school for 40 years and continues to work in publishing as an author and emerging illustrator. During this time, she has written over 100 books ranging from pre-school to adult and her work has been recognised by the CBCA Book of the Year Awards (both in the Notables and Shortlist), the NSW Premier's Awards (shortlist), the Queensland Premier's Awards and the Prime Minister's Literary Awards (longlist). Her books have been translated and are available worldwide with two titles still in print after 29 years. In 2014-15 she was the judge for senior poetry in the Dorothea MacKellar National Poetry Competition. She has twice worked as a judge with the NSW Premier's Awards, a CBCA Younger Reader judge

and participates regularly in writers' festivals and literary events.



### BROOK TAYLA

Brook has a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and a Graduate Diploma in Children's Literature. Although she has been passionate about children's literature since childhood, she attributes the depth of her love of literature to having had lecturers at the top of their field – two of whom read picture books at the beginning of every lecture. Brook currently works part-time as a librarian. She is a member of many writers' groups, prominent literary-related associations and reviewer for online children's magazines, blogs and publishers. Brook has a multitude of experience and expertise in her chosen field. In 2019, she was an Eve Pownall CBCA judge which was a new and interesting

area. This year she is delighted to be working in her area of expertise as the Picture Book/New Illustrator CBCA Judge.

## Eve Pownall Award



### MELINDA ALLAN

Melinda is a librarian specialising in children's services. She completed the Graduate Diploma in Information Management at RMIT in 2007 and has held various roles in public libraries across Melbourne. She is currently the Reading Coordinator at Eltham Library, a branch of Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries. Melinda has also completed Certificate IV in Professional Writing and Editing and has written for publications including *Books and Publishing*, *Good Reading*, *Magpies* and the CBCA website *Reading Time*. She is an avid reader and feels very lucky to be surrounded by books every day. As a librarian, she enjoys sharing her love of literature with the library's littlest patrons. At home, she loves reading stories to her baby daughter.



### Dr MARGARET BROMLEY

Margaret's qualifications include Bachelor of Education (English and History), Bachelor of Arts (French and Communication Studies), Master of Education in English (Visual Literacy) and more recently, Doctor of Philosophy. As a teacher in the secondary and tertiary sectors she taught children's literature to college and university students. Since 2007 Margaret has been a voluntary guide at the National Gallery of Australia. For several years she was a reviewer of Literature for Younger Readers for *The Canberra Times*. In 2014 Margaret was a CBCA Eve Pownall Award judge. Margaret is currently a researcher for the *Our Mythical Childhood (OMC) Survey*, developing a database of children's and young adult literature from around the world. Margaret's passion for children's literature was fuelled by her own childhood reading, and eventually sharing literature with her own children and grandchildren. As well as children's literature, Margaret is an avid reader of adult fiction and non-fiction.



### LUCY LONG

Lucy has a Bachelor of Environmental Science with a major in Cultural Heritage Studies. She is currently working for the Federal Department of the Environment and Energy assessing development proposals that are likely to have an impact on matters of national environmental significance such as threatened species and communities, world heritage properties and national heritage places. Lucy has six siblings and a number of nieces and nephews so has read a lot of children's books over the years as well as young adult literature and most other genres as an adult. She achieved her New Year's resolution in 2018 of reading 52 novels in a year, equivalent to one book a week. Lucy has always been passionate about reading and learning, particularly about the science of how things work, birds and nature and the history of Australian huts and buildings. She is looking forward to learning more about the world through judging the Eve Pownall entries.

## JUDGES' REPORT INTRODUCTION

Judges noticed an increase in new creators appearing in many categories (170 in total). Of the 517 unique titles entered, 87 were self-published. This augurs well for the future of Australian children's literature. The judges were pleased to note the high publication quality of entries. Judges noted an increase in Indigenous Australian entries with a mix of contemporary and traditional artwork in illustrated texts. In Early Childhood texts the use of animals to explore human relationships was strong this year. The Older Reader category explored the realities of those living on the fringes of society which may require parental guidance on selections from this category.

## OLDER READERS JUDGES' REPORT

The 63 entries in the 2020 CBCA Book of the Year Older Readers category include many narratives that vividly illustrate the challenges currently faced by young people globally. A large proportion of the novels offer descriptive real and visceral accounts of the realities of those living on the fringes of society. Themes such as domestic violence, poverty, mental illness, grief, racism and disability featured, with many titles using language worthy of merit and crafted with originality. This, combined with insightful characterisation and strong use of literary techniques, offered a stellar group of books to select from.

Genre fiction proved its worth, with fantasy, historical fiction, high school romance, horror and science fiction all contributing to the strong body of literature that emerged this year. *Four Dead Queens* by Astrid Scholte and *Aurora Rising* by Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff are examples that stood out. Because there were many dystopian novels that fell victim to formulaic storytelling or clichéd tropes, the judges strongly recommend more innovation within that genre. The category was also inundated with sequels that relied heavily on prior knowledge of characters and events, which meant the stories did not stand alone.

First-person narratives were a particular highlight this year, and the Older Readers judges are grateful for the authenticity that shone through in many of the stories, including *Ghost Bird* by Lisa Fuller and *Invisible Boys* by Holden Sheppard. Several novels, including *All That Impossible Space* by Anna Morgan and *The Last Balfour* by Cait Duggan, used non-linear narratives that played around with time in a clever way. This year there were strong debuts including Astrid Scholte, Nina Kenwood and Holden Sheppard.

The Older Readers age range has room for narratives aimed at widely different young people, as teenage readers are experiencing a transformative time of growth, both physically and emotionally. The judges were pleased to note that this year there were stories that targeted both ends of the spectrum, and everything in between. *Monuments* by Will Kostakis and *Take the Shot* by Sue White are examples of books with wide appeal for all ages and interests.

All three judges were impressed by the diversity of books on offer, and the Notables list is representative of this. There are authors and characters from varying backgrounds, experience and points of view, covering LGBTQIA+, disabled, Indigenous Australian and other diverse voices. Many authors ventured into culturally diverse topics and issues, regarding multicultural Australia, post-colonial African nations, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Maori ethnicities.

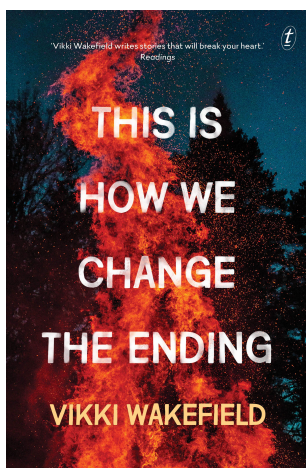
The cover design and production of many novels reflected the content accurately and added to their appeal. However, the majority of books had dark front covers or overly simplistic graphics,

and the judges implore publishers to consider using more vibrant or eye-catching designs where appropriate.

The winning novel, *This is How We Change the Ending* by Vikki Wakefield, epitomises the selection criteria to an exceptional standard, as well as being an important and appealing novel for teenagers. It is engaging and unique, with excellent character development as well as a true sense of place that is embedded in the skilfully mastered language.

Overall, the authors on the Notables list clearly demonstrated their ability to offer insight and accuracy into the lives of teenagers, whether the young characters are touched by inequality and injustice or experiencing other micro challenges that all teenagers face at one point or another. It was difficult to select a Shortlist from the Notables, and therefore it is the judges' hope that the Notable list will be read widely, by teenagers and adults alike. In this year's submissions, there was plenty of writing that will touch the hearts of young readers, imploring them to gain empathy and new perspectives, as well as entertain them and help develop a lifelong love of reading for pleasure.

## Winner



### **This is How We Change the Ending**

Vikki Wakefield

Text Publishing

ISBN: 9781922268136

This is a raw, gritty story with plenty of compassion that will leave the reader with a sense of hope. The skilfully drawn setting, of a suburb in decline with locals suffering from acute poverty, adds another dimension to the initial apathy and hopelessness felt by the complex main character, Nate. The character development here is excellent. Nate is a smart boy beaten down by his circumstances, who has learned to hide his intellect and emotions. A deep love for his younger brothers, stepmother, and even his abusive father, is the driving force in demonstrating how the powerless can be powerful. Wakefield does not

shy away from the realities of destitution and domestic abuse, both physical and emotional. Almost every character is flawed but Wakefield's skill lies in creating empathy without resorting to sentimentality. The tone and pacing are pitch-perfect, and the story will encourage teenage readers to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Ultimately, it is a thought-provoking and uplifting read.



## Honour Books



### **The Boy Who Steals Houses**

C.G. Drews  
Hachette Australia  
ISBN: 9781408349922

This is a heart-warming read for young audiences. This Queensland author uses a diverse range of literary techniques to develop insight into homelessness, domestic violence and the struggles faced by the two brothers in this story. The creative and compassionate story describes a fiercely overprotective brother who goes to great lengths to keep his autistic sibling safe. Despite several obstacles along the way, the brothers find themselves fitting into the warmth and humour of the De Lainey family. The narrative is choreographed perfectly, allowing Sam to

experience some form of social justice, in a life torn by abuse, disability and poverty. Drews' skill lies in encouraging the reader to make an emotional commitment to characters who are flawed and complex while approaching difficult concepts with warmth and humour. The language has a distinct beat and rhythm which will appeal to teenagers and the writing style is engaging enough to reach an audience that is seeking a cohesive yet creative story. This is a novel filled with heart and is the perfect balance between lyrical and readable.



### **Ghost Bird**

Lisa Fuller  
University of Queensland Press  
ISBN: 9780702260230

Told with an undeniably authentic Indigenous Australian voice, this is a haunting story of racism and small-town prejudices, alongside ideas of family history and culture. Through the eyes of sixteen-year-old Tace, after the disappearance of her twin sister, Fuller interweaves familial stories to create a mystery and a thriller that combines action and suspense with lyrical descriptions of the sisters and the tight bond throughout their community. The environment and setting are skilfully woven into the story, giving the reader strong insight into life in rural Queensland and a deep feeling of unease that is essential to maintaining

the atmosphere of the novel. Fuller's use of informal and colloquial language not only makes this book appealing to teenage readers, but also adds a level of sincerity that in no way feels contrived. Stories of culture and history form a strong theme of how past generations pass on beliefs and wisdom to their descendants, and how that can manifest in both positive and negative ways. There is clever interrogation of almost every theme. The book very successfully fills a void in Australian YA fiction.

## Other Shortlisted Books



### **How It Feels to Float**

Helena Fox

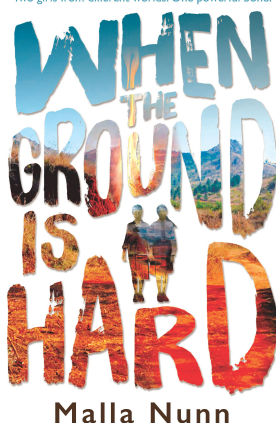
Pan Macmillan Australia

ISBN: 9781760783303

This is a visceral and haunting exploration of mental illness and grief. It is not an easy book to read and trigger warnings should be heeded. It is, however, a compelling and important story. Narrator Biz is coming to terms with her identity and her struggles with mental health, and this is portrayed in a sensitive and realistic manner. Readers may feel confused at times as there is a lack of clarity surrounding Biz's diagnosis. This confusion adds to the tone of the novel and creates a feeling of foggy which works to the advantage of the story. This author provides readers with a web of creative literary techniques that guide the

exploration of the self and mind in great detail. The inter-generational relationship between Biz and Sylvia is particularly enjoyable and offers a sense of hope. This novel takes readers on a complex and personal journey without becoming didactic. It is an impressive debut about a topic that is becoming increasingly pertinent for young adults.

Two girls from different worlds. One powerful bond.



### **When the Ground is Hard**

Malla Nunn

Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781760524814

Set in a boarding school in 1960s Swaziland, this novel deftly explores complex structures of race, class and gender. While the setting of a small country in Africa will be foreign to most readers, the power play between teenage girls is universal and recognisable and the added element of a missing boy moves the book into the mystery genre and will be sure to hold the reader's attention. The setting is evocative, and the author uses rich language to portray an experience of Africa that many readers will not be familiar with. The main character undergoes a significant journey of personal growth and exploration during which she

is forced to confront her own prejudices and question the societal structures that navigate her life. Lyrical prose, excellent sense of place, important themes explored with sensitivity and the author's unique perspective gives us a book with high literary merit and a fresh view of the teenage experience.



### **Four Dead Queens**

Astrid Scholte

Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781760524418

This debut novel cleverly combines fantasy, sci-fi and mystery genres, with a hint of historical fiction. The author expertly builds an inspired and original world, seemingly made up of past, present and futuristic societies, that is completely immersive. The novel utilises clever inventions to guide the narrative, including a chip that stores stolen memories which reveal the plot to assassinate the queens. An array of complex character relationships includes a pickpocket, an upstanding citizen, the leader of a notorious gang and four dead queens. Embroiled in corruption, murder and love, central character Kera must embark on

an adventure to stop the assassin before it is too late. Scholte's exploration of a truly matriarchal society is an original concept that includes a diverse range of representations and questions notions of duty, love, jealousy, ambition and commitment. The use of a non-linear narrative is a skilful literary device which keeps the reader engaged and compelled to move through a multitude of twists and turns that hurtles towards a suspenseful and revealing ending. A book which brings a fresh perspective to the multiple genres it embraces.



## YOUNGER READERS JUDGES' REPORT

It is pleasing to see that there were many entrants (125 books) in this category, with a number catering to the youngest of the Younger Reader target audience (aged around 7 to 8 years). We enjoyed reading across the range of genres represented in the submitted books. From fantasy at its finest, vividly historical settings, fast-paced contemporary narratives to whimsical delights; the children's books published in 2019 for younger readers provided a varying range of interest topics.

We welcomed the opportunity to read high-quality literary works for children giving young readers more access to well-told stories and a consequent improvement in literacy across the board. Some entries, while entertaining, did not meet the criteria of literary merit. Others were marred by spelling and grammatical errors which could have been eliminated by more careful editing.

Trends included the prevalence of characters with medical conditions and specific disabilities, for example *Sick Bay*, *Sensitive*, *As Happy as Here* and *The Thing About Oliver*. The judges enjoyed stories where characters were revealed through narrative devices rather than through a didactic tone.

There was also a greater prevalence of characters from diverse cultural backgrounds incorporated into the stories in a natural way. For example, characters with an Indigenous Australian background who subtly blended naturally into the plot and another in which a character's two mothers who were a natural part of the narrative rather than drawing an overly bright spotlight. The plight of refugees and new arrivals was explored in books such as *A Different Land*, *Detention* and *Songbird*.

The judges noted that stories from the past were strongly represented in the entries, for example *The Great Escape*, and *A Different Land*. Australian history topics, which are included in the Upper Primary history curriculum, were a focus such as the Eureka Rebellion and Gold Rushes, for example *Pirate Boy of Sydney Town* and *Castle Hill Rebellion*. Such books used strong narrative combined with historical accuracy to develop in young readers enthusiasm for historical fiction.

We also noted a trend toward adding informative notes at the end of a text which explain the story or added context. While providing interest for the young reader we felt that this did not always contribute to the overall literary merit of the story.

The acknowledgement of the 'gentle story' as a genuine and authentic piece of literature was pleasing. Books such as *The Secrets of Magnolia Moon*, *Winston and The Wondrous Wooba Gymnastics Club* and *Mr. Walker and the Dessert Delight* were joyful and whimsical. Characterisation was strong in such books – even when the main character was a dog – allowing readers to relate to the characters.

There were exceptional coming-of-age stories, where themes of inclusion, acceptance, grief and dealing with change were sensitively dealt with. *Winston and The Wondrous Wooba Gymnastics Club* was also noted for its humour, as was *Hapless Hero Henry*, and *Pie in the Sky*.

Books using innovative and creative presentations were appreciated. It was refreshing to read books presented in a different way to traditional stories or that had some degree of originality in their presentation, such as the verse novel *The Little Wave*. Publishers are to be applauded for the extremely high quality and presentation of entries such as *The Glimme*, a book which was also notable for the fact that, unusually, it began with the illustrations.

The quality of the Notable list reflects the growth in high-quality literature which is an encouraging sign for younger readers who are sure to find something to interest and delight them.

## Winner



### **The Little Wave**

Pip Harry

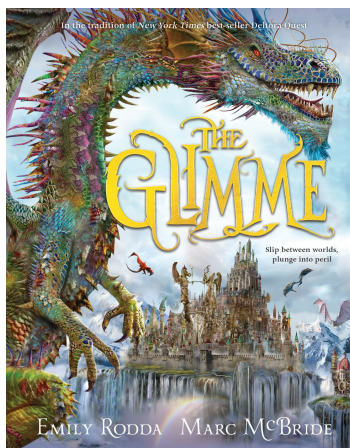
University of Queensland Press

ISBN: 9780702260476

Expertly written in verse form, the story revolves around three plausible, three-dimensional characters who alternate their narration. These primary school children have been given an assignment by their teachers to write to a pen pal and thus the two contrasting settings, a beautiful surfing beach and a remote outback town, serve to highlight the challenges which the children experience. The story flows smoothly with the three plots becoming increasingly interwoven, creating complex layers and parallels: Lottie is dealing with her father's grief and

consequent hoarding; Noah is being bullied by his 'best friend' and Jack is challenged by his family's poverty and his mother's addiction. There are themes of grief, family, bullying and poverty which are explored with an overarching theme of supporting each other through connection. Jack and Lottie have aunts who support the family and Lottie's and Noah's dads connect to provide emotional stability. The plot development is compelling and the inclusion of the pen pal letters is a clever device to add information and enhance the connections. The cover is colourful and appealing.

## Honour Books



### **The Glimme**

Emily Rodda (illus. by Marc McBride)

Scholastic Australia

ISBN: 9781862919570

Fantasy at its finest is found in this gripping read, where the spooky village of Wichaunt and *The Glimme*, a land of dragons 'beyond the veil' are vividly brought to life. Finn and Lori are brave and resourceful and learn to appreciate their family relationships. Teller is the complex, brave hero who nevertheless abandoned his son. The Housekeeper is a magical woman with an amazing secret. The villainous Bravo tricks them all with his subterfuge. Each phase of the quest is written to maximise suspense and excitement. Traditional

themes of good versus evil, family relationships and letting your talent shine emerge effortlessly from the story. The relationship between the author and illustrator is obvious as the beautifully written descriptive prose, with some verse interspersed, is complemented with vivid, appealing illustrations and the two build together to produce a magnificent text. The extent of the detail and the breathtaking beauty of the illustrations are definite stand outs. It is very unusual in that the illustrations were produced before the written text and this has added to the novel's appeal.



### **The Secrets of Magnolia Moon**

Edwina Wyatt (illus. by Katherine Quinn)

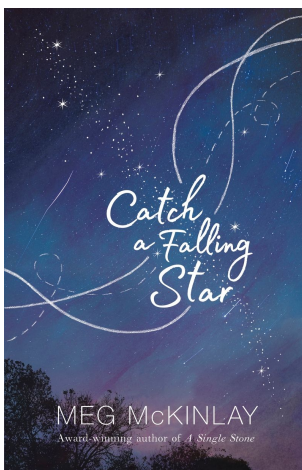
Walker Books Australia

ISBN: 9781760651541

A whimsically delightful story about a nine-year-old girl. Magnolia, who loves Greek mythology and keeping other people's secrets, is navigating changes in her life, such as her best friend moving away and the impending arrival of a baby brother. Magnolia is depicted as a little girl with hopes, fears and worries, but she is also full of love and trust in her adults. The minor characters are plausible and full of kindness and empathy for Magnolia and her best friend, Imogen May, who enjoy hanging upside-down on the clothesline. The themes of family, friendship, innocence and change are explored subtly. Repeated gentle

humour involving periods of time and the personification of the staircase in her family home serve to maintain the joyful mood. Metaphor and imagery are used throughout the lyrical writing and the illustrations complement the text. The cover design and production are of high quality and are immediately eye-catching.

### **Other Shortlisted Books**



### **Catch a Falling Star**

Meg McKinlay

Walker Books Australia

ISBN: 9781925381207

This is an exceptional coming-of-age story which sensitively deals with loss, grief and change. Set in Western Australia in 1979, as the world waits for Skylab to tumble to Earth, the historical context offered is original and fascinating while the plot revolves around Frankie, her brother and her mother. Frankie establishes a strong relationship with the reader, revealing her thoughts and motivations clearly. The reader can understand her grief over losing her father, the difficulties of living in a single-parent home, and the deep responsibility she feels for her

brother. Minor characters provide comic relief. The plot builds gently as the characters anticipate the landing of Skylab pieces. Other points of tension include the increasing conflict between Frankie and her friend Kat, Newt's obsession with Skylab, which leads him to take greater risks, and the emotional build-up of suppressed grief. The strands of the plot are skilfully interwoven and the 'falling' metaphor works brilliantly. While there are many references to science and space stations, the story is ultimately about the human heart.



### **The Dog Runner**

Bren MacDibble

Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781760523572

A fast-paced and compelling narrative set in a clearly established harrowing dystopian world. The reader becomes engaged with the plight of the children, wanting them to survive their challenging ordeal. They encounter a range of obstacles, many in the form of adults with ill intention, as they seek to reunite with their parents and safety. The narrative is the strength of the novel. The characters are authentic; Ella and Emery are brave and resourceful throughout and have much to learn. Both key protagonists are appealing, easily likable and also flawed, which

adds to their authenticity. Ella's voice, as narrator, uses a distinct grammatical style and the language throughout is pared down. The writing is beautiful and strong. The use of descriptive language adds depth to the reading experience. Themes of protecting the environment and valuing Indigenous Australian culture emerge through the action, and the notion of grass seeds as a metaphor for finding one's place is suggested in the last chapter.



### **The Thing About Oliver**

Deborah Kelly

Wombat Books

ISBN: 9781925563818

Tilly lives with her severely autistic brother Oliver and her work-weary mother. Her passion for marine science is signalled early on but her world is turned upside-down when the family moves from a dry rural town to live with an aunt on the tropical coast of Far North Queensland. The setting is vividly evoked through effective description. The change of circumstances creates new tensions for the already challenged family. Tilly is a plausible protagonist whose first-person narration does not slip from reflecting her age and emotion. Young readers will

empathise when her mother is unable to take her to swimming lessons, undermining her goal of becoming a marine scientist, and when Oliver destroys her precious 'aqua journal'. Tilly's love for her brother never wavers, and the depiction of Oliver's autistic behaviour is realistic. The story generates significant emotional response while keeping the writing age appropriate. The plot builds to a suspenseful climax when Oliver goes missing. The characteristics of autism are explored skilfully and sensitively, as are the themes of disability, parenting and family relationships.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD JUDGES' REPORT

There were 135 books entered into the Early Childhood category in 2020. Selecting 20 books for the Notable list was a daunting task for the judges as most books entered were of the highest quality. Books in this category include works of fiction, poetry, wordless books, board and concept books suitable in content and style for the age group 0 to 6 years. The main criteria for judging are high quality literary merit encompassing setting, plot, characterisation, theme, with age-appropriate conventions and style of writing, mood, design elements and illustrations.

A number of books entered were let down by poor editing and production qualities, including choice of small or hard to read fonts or text inappropriately positioned over illustrations. Occasionally the message was deemed more important than the storyline. There were a few entries more appropriate for older readers.

The judges were impressed by the range of topics, themes and concepts explored in this year's entries. Animals, including pets, were a dominant feature, along with themes of friendship, families and relationships, identity, resilience, and environment. The judges were delighted to see books with Indigenous Australian themes and by Indigenous Australian creators amongst the entries, including the outstanding titles, *Baby Business* and *Little Bird's Day*. Despite several books highlighting diversity and difference, only one book featured a main character with a disability. Humour featured strongly and many books used rhyming text, making them ideal for sharing by reading aloud. There were a number of high-quality entries from debut creators, including *The Book Chook*, and *Bat vs Poss*, leaving the judges feeling positive and excited.

A large number of entries featured pets and families, including *Ollie and Augustus*, *Lazy Daisy*, and *When Billy was a Dog*. All included a humorous element both in the text and illustrations. There were also a number of books where characters and setting were distinctly and instantly recognisable as Australian including *Little Puggle's Song*, *Colouroos*, *Australian Baby Animals*, *The Beach Wombat*, and *Sleep Tight Platypup*.

The judges noted these books as being original, innovative and unique in their ideas and concepts: *The Hole Idea*, *You Might Find Yourself*, *I see, I see*, *The Book that Never Ends*, *A Construction of Cranes*, and *Goat on a Boat*. *The Hole Idea* explores delightful imaginative play so often seen with young children digging in a sand pit, looking for treasure. In this case, the treasure is ideas and stories. *You Might Find Yourself* asks readers to consider their future paths, including real life situations, but also imaginative possibilities and philosophical choices. *I see, I see* is designed as a book best shared between two readers, facing each other across the book, as each spread contains a single simple, bold illustration which cleverly supports both the opposite viewpoint and the perspective of each reader, making it a great book for exploring different points of view. *The Book That Never Ends* is a fun and interactive book that invites readers to 'choose their own path' through the book, much like the 'Choose Your Own Adventure' technique, but in a picture book format. *A Construction of Cranes* is a visually appealing book designed to reflect the subject matter and would appeal to early childhood readers interested in construction and cranes. *Goat on a Boat* cleverly presents readers with an age-appropriate and timely story about refugees and border policies. It was one of many books that explored themes of tolerance, kindness, sharing and diversity in an accessible and fun way.

The 20 books selected in the Notables list demonstrate outstanding literary merit, with strong characterisation, settings, plots, and age-appropriate, relevant themes. Other attributes included high-quality production and design elements, with a well-balanced layout of text and illustration. Use of endpapers to enhance the story was a favourable feature in many of the books. The

Shortlisted books in this category are shining examples of high-quality books for sharing with the young child, toddler, or baby.

## Winner



### **My Friend Fred**

Frances Watts (illus. by A. Yi)

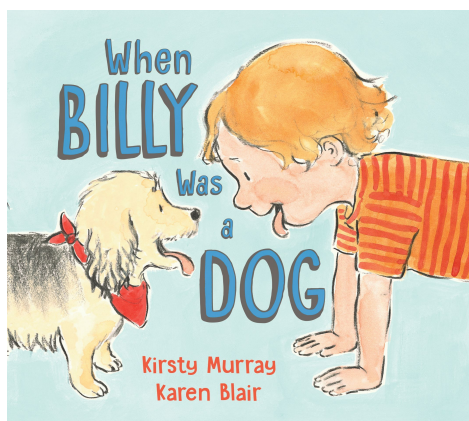
Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781760290948

This book is full of energy and movement while exploring themes of friendship, tolerance, and difference. The strong message of positive reinforcement that we can be very different in how we act, what we eat, how we behave, how we look and yet still be best friends, provides a highly satisfying ending. The short, engaging sentences, with some repetition, keep the pages turning. Together, the text and illustrations combine beautifully to present fully rounded

characters. The writing mimics the cheeky nature of felines, while the illustrations allow the reader to visualise Fred's boundless energy and enthusiasm, highlighting the personality and differences between the two friends. Observant readers may notice the clues to Fred's feline friend on the first reading hidden in the illustrations; however, finding Fred's friend will add to subsequent readings. There is an appealing artistic style in the pastel-toned watercolour illustrations. The design elements of the page layout highlight Fred's exuberant nature and movement, while still allowing white space. The endpapers perfectly bookend the story with all other elements combining to provide a strongly appealing, high-quality book for young readers.

## Honour Books



### **When Billy Was a Dog**

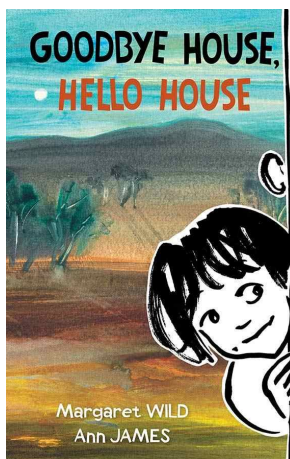
Kirsty Murray (illus. by Karen Blair)

Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781760631826

A great read, blending a relatable story with enchanting illustrations to create a book with universal appeal. With Billy unable to own a puppy he does the next best thing and decides to be a puppy with some laugh-out-loud results. The author and illustrator have worked closely to produce familiar scenes (the dilemma of owning a pet) and make the characters appealing and believable. The illustrator has

mixed charcoal, watercolour and gouache to depict Billy, his family and where they live. Facial expressions and body language portray the characters' range of emotions and feelings. The bright, appealing front cover image immediately attracts and engages young readers. The book's well-balanced layout includes high-quality designed pages, text and illustrations and end papers that tie in beautifully to the story. Young readers will identify with the important themes of family, perseverance and responsibility adding meaning to the story. Dialogue is convincing and believable with repetition of the word 'Woof' inviting participation. Elements of humour present in both the text and illustrations. The heart-warming ending provides a solid, satisfying resolution to a highly age appropriate story.



### **Goodbye House, Hello House**

Margaret Wild (illus. by Ann James)

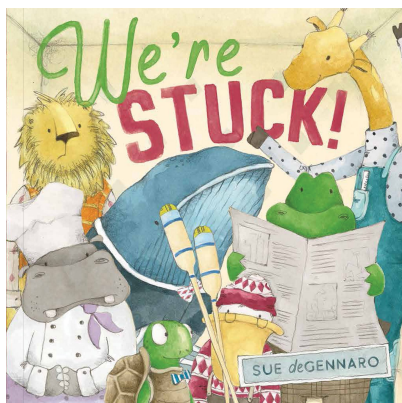
Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781743311103

The wonderful, inviting cover design depicts a child peeking out at readers from behind a door, with a vast, outdoor country landscape backdrop. The front endpapers continue this theme, showing a child looking out at the countryside, with stacks of boxes nearby. Concluding endpapers show the same child in a tree in what appears to be an urban scene, providing a satisfying resolution to this story of leaving one home to create another. The simple and concise text harmonises beautifully with the visually appealing

illustrations. Using a combination of bold black and white line work for the foreground and coloured paint for the background the focus is placed on the main character, Emma. Subtle nuances of feelings are shown through Emma's stance and body language cleverly illustrating the range of emotions portraying not sadness but excitement and looking forward. Readers can see she is a little hesitant and sad about the move, but then they see her embracing her new home with curiosity and excitement, all cleverly shown through the illustrations. It makes a great discussion starter about what it is that makes a home. A gentle, bittersweet story of moving on, incorporating themes of change, family and home, that is pitched perfectly for the early childhood audience.

### **Other Shortlisted Books**



### **We're Stuck!**

Sue deGennaro

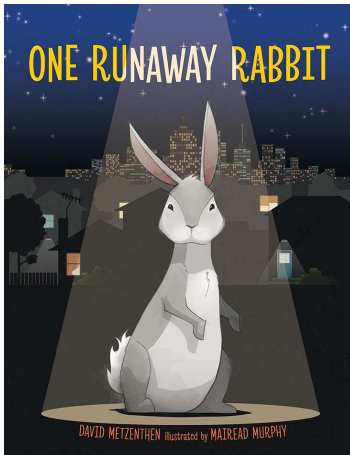
Scholastic Australia

ISBN: 9781760663476

This uplifting, relatable story focuses on themes of friendship, community and belonging. Set in the lift of an apartment building, where the occupants have minimal, cursory interactions, everything changes when the lift breaks down. The occupants find themselves stuck with each other in the lift and they come together to contribute something to the makeshift celebrations to brighten Turtle's special day. Whimsical illustrations use ink,

pencil and collage to give life to the anthropomorphised, quirky characters and add unique details of clothing and appearance. Each character has distinctive clothing or accessories depicting their occupation, inviting participation and discussion by younger readers. The design of the book is wonderful; with an appealing front cover and endpapers that match the lift's interior decor. The front cover illustration is bright, inviting and appealing to the target audience. The first pages cleverly portray familiar domestic scenes while introducing characters we later meet, one by one. Young children will relate to the sense of community and feelings of belonging in this well-written book where text and illustrations harmonise beautifully to tell a charming story.



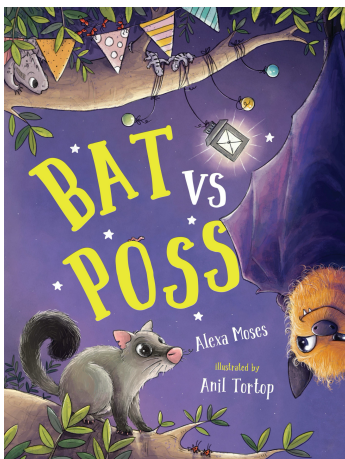


### **One Runaway Rabbit**

David Metzenthen (illus. by Mairead Murphy)  
 Allen & Unwin  
 ISBN: 9781760523558

The dark and moody front cover draws the reader into this book, while the back cover shows the same scene from behind the rabbit, which is clever and interesting. The sparse text combines with the illustrations to weave a tale of curiosity and adventure with a dash of humour and suspense. With no more than three words on a page, and some pages text free, young pre- and beginning readers will delight in reading this story independently. The use of this repeated three-word structure makes the text highly effective and encourages

young readers to use visual literacy and explore the illustrations, adding their own narrative elements to the story. The night setting provides an atmospheric backdrop, adding to the intrigue of a curious rabbit, Lulu, on a suburban adventure. The highly detailed pencil sketches (digitally coloured) are full double-page spreads to immerse the reader in Lulu's adventures, adding to the overall high-quality design of the book. The endpapers provide a bird's eye view of Lulu's journey giving the story a complete beginning and end.



### **Bat vs Poss**

Alexa Moses (illus. by Anil Tortop)  
 Hachette Australia  
 ISBN: 9780734418388

Readers will be drawn in by the visually appealing cover showcasing the two main characters. The scene is set for confrontation as Bat moves in and tries to force the creatures who are happily sharing the tree to move out of their home. The engaging text maintains a rhythm with use of onomatopoeia, making this an ideal book to read aloud. Captivating illustrations (pencil, watercolour, ink and digital) add characterisation, complementing the text to create a delightful tale exploring familiar themes of friendship, teamwork, bullying,

confrontation and sharing. Facial expressions show feelings, emotions and warmth, bringing the characters to life. The use of purple to depict the night leaves a magical/mystical feel creating bright scenes in the night-time setting. Endpapers showing a silhouette of the night-time skyline set the mood and tie in with the story's beginning and ending. Friendships formed as a result of standing up to a bully but also giving a second chance provide a satisfying resolution. Variations in page layout and font colour add interest and quirkiness to the overall story with illustrations and text blending to create an appealing, age appropriate story.

## PICTURE BOOK JUDGES' REPORT

The 2020 CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award saw a total of 168 books entered and judged. The entries were extremely diverse, covered many themes and presented a wide variety of illustrations. A distinct aspect this year was that the entries were overall at a younger level of readers in this category that accepts books for readers from 0 to 18 years of age. This was a complete change to the Award last year that saw many books at the upper age limit.

Entries came from the main publishing houses right through to self-publishers. In general, the books presented were of high-quality production and attention to detail was maintained throughout all aspects of the book's delivery.

Considering the time for the journey of a book from the concept in the mind of the author, through to the end product, it was ironic to see many books that covered topics relevant to Australia's current and devastating climate conditions. Severe drought, bushfires, pollution, endangered species and many aspects of loss were presented. These books handled issues in an honest and informative way and left much for the reader to ponder and hopefully discuss. They also left readers with a sense of hope and the ideal that re-establishment was possible — a crucial conclusion for young readers.

There were quite a few books that presented historical perspectives, including people, inventions, historical events and war. These books also presented the strength of human spirit and the courage to resolve and move forward with dreams, hopes and desires, whether on a personal level or as a collective group. Characterisation is an extremely important element in these types of books that have underlying emotional issues that need to be portrayed to young readers in a sensitive but relatable way. The same could be said for stories that dealt with migration and refugee stories, and this year saw quite a few books based on this theme.

Death is never an easy topic to cover, particularly for younger readers, but this year there were examples of beautiful and subtle stories that handled this extremely sensitive topic with gentleness. Stories included all types of examples, including death of a sibling, of animals, of a parent and perhaps more subtly, of a different than expected future, after loss.

The books that handled these often-confronting themes were the ones that layered messages subtly between the pages and wove in layers that could be picked up at levels that depend on the readers' level of understanding and experience.

In general, most picture books are crafted in one way or another to help children understand the world around them and to have empathy for people, animals and the planet. This is true of any theme presented. Alongside this underlying notion, many books this year that were based around 'Self'. There were books about finding personal superpowers, honouring your own value, knowing your self-worth and appreciating who you are, being adventurous and growing beyond your own boundaries, looking at the world through someone else's eyes, letting imagination be a source of personal growth, standing up for who you are and what you believe in and accepting difference. Slowing down and taking time out in nature, to create and to do things like write letters to engage with others, the world and to get to know yourself through creativity were themes that were also put forward. Personal reflections around these topics were often based on reconnecting with family and friends in basic ways — and these messages were directed not only at child readers but at adult readers too.

The Indigenous Australian stories really stood out this year with a high-level understanding of the important marriage between text and illustration. The number of books that are incorporating

Indigenous Australian language within the text seems to be increasing and this is done in a variety of ways, either inserting words within the text and having a word reference section on the page, presenting the Aboriginal sentence and repeating it in English or by having an index of word meanings at the back of the book. The preservation of Indigenous Australian languages is of extreme importance in a country that has already lost so many. The judges hope this trend increases more and more over the coming years.

‘What makes a winning book?’ ‘What sets one book apart from another?’ These are questions that come with a huge responsibility for judges. Apart from meeting the extensive criteria set out by the CBCA, it can be the smallest inclusions that set one book apart from another. The clever use of endpapers that add to the storyline or give the reader an insight in some way is high on the criteria list and something that appears to be waning with many publishers. However, is such an opportunity to add depth to the story.

Weaving and layering themes and including subtleties that readers need to find is also considered high level. Authors need to honour the intelligence of children and leaving an open-endedness and an opportunity for further questioning, pondering and discussion is imperative. Didactic stories do not, therefore, fair well.

Characterisation is an area that stood out this year. Readers must be able to relate to the characters presented and see the appropriate emotions on their faces and in the body language and actions that they use.

Judging for the CBCA, Picture Book of the Year Award has been a rewarding experience for all judges involved. We would like to honour the talent of our Australian authors, illustrators and publishers. It has been a pleasure to read, judge, discuss and debate the books presented to us this year.

## Winner



### **I Need a Parrot**

Chris McKimmie

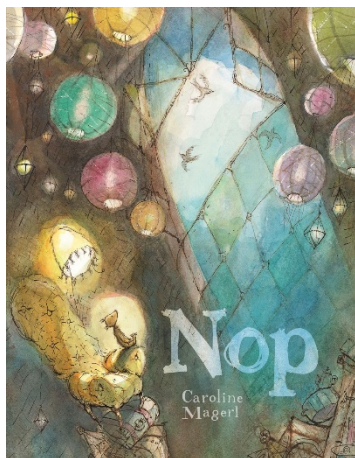
Ford Street Publishing

ISBN: 9781925804287

Chris McKimmie's style is unmistakably his own. This book rewards several readings and affirms the complementarity of the author being the illustrator. McKimmie is a very assured illustrator who is both skilled and witty in execution. McKimmie's bizarre and humorous print text is well suited to the insightful illustrations showing the problems of our desire to keep and cage pets. With very few words and deceptively simple drawings, this book gives readers lots to ponder and discuss. Vivid colours, first person narrative and various media combine to

communicate the understated final message. Child-like and sophisticated at the same time, the story opens with an opening cage to set the tone. The blank double-page spread with the 'aha' moment, which simply says 'Oh.', is genius. To then turn to another double page spread of just the sky with the bird flying is amazing. It further creates a beautiful resolution to the story. This book exploits economy in its exemplification of 'less is more' —so much more!

## Honour Books

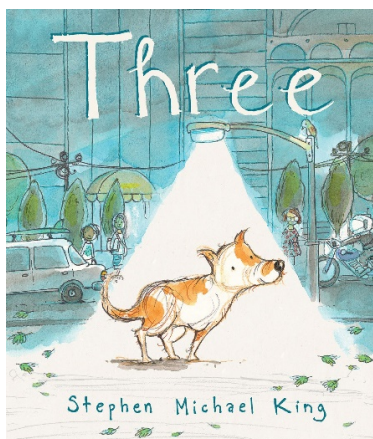


### **Nop**

Caroline Magerl  
Walker Books Australia  
ISBN: 9781760651251

A bear who, having ended up in the Dumporeum is constantly overlooked, falls to his own resilience to start his own journey to find a place in the heart of someone who will love him. The themes, resilience and self-belief, are understated but ring out through the colours and line work on each page as Nop floats above the business and mayhem of the daily Dumporeum to finally begin his own adventure. The cover is beautifully evocative, and it is a pleasure to turn the pages of high-quality paper which remind the reader just

how special books are. This is a dream of a book with text and artwork perfectly matched to bring the right note of joy and melancholy to the reader. There is no time wasted on the sadness of an abandoned bear as his self-sufficiency shines through in the delightful illustrations and expression. So much is painted into a bear with button eyes and a nose and a wobbly little body. This is a compellingly delicate picture book with a real feel for poetic, alliterative qualities of language.



### **Three**

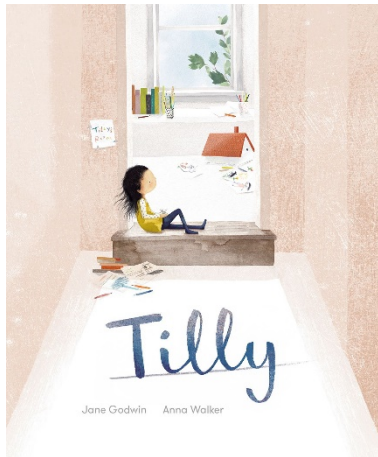
Stephen Michael King  
Scholastic Australia  
ISBN: 9781760664053

This is a delight of a book that celebrates difference by accepting it as a fact of life. A three-legged dog sets out on his journey to discover what might lie ahead. Whether it is love or a home is incidental to the gratitude experienced and explored by the small traveller. His trip, from the city to the country is shown through many viewpoints, wonderful red dots showing the way he has come and the direction in which he is going revealed as the page is turned. On the way many animals are encountered and many legs

are checked as positive or negative additions. The text is economical and precise with the illustrative work either reflecting the words or explaining them. The watercolour, pencil and ink artwork remain clear and bright with the ending almost exploding off the page in a riot of shapes and colours and deliciously exhilarating moments. Each page is full of details to explore with backgrounds full of explanation about the site of the journey and the tone of the place — busy borders for the city and wide, open colour planes for the country.



## Other Shortlisted Titles

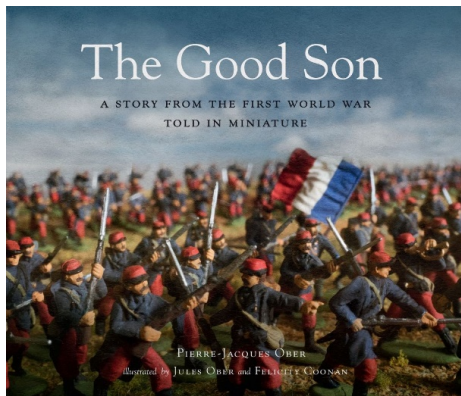


### **Tilly**

Anna Walker (text by Jane Godwin)  
Scholastic Australia  
ISBN: 9781760663728

Exquisite illustrations accompany a beautiful, unusual and intriguing story that captures a small girl's identity through her relationship with treasured objects in a noisy home. Tilly, the youngest and quietest in a family of active boys and one other sister, finds her own space and her own pastimes which give her pleasure and security. These objects are hidden beneath the stair into her room and, ultimately, become lost to her forever when the house is carpeted. The language is simple yet evocative, delving

into the world of the protagonist. The line work is delicate and captures the overall feeling of quietness and subtle appreciation of the world in which the child lives. Colours are muted but the clutter and movement in the house is captured in scattered objects rather than bright colours. The print text is smaller than usual and gathered tightly in open-ended space which, again, is reflective of the nature of the story. This is a book that would be enjoyed over and over again and each time something new would be found or pondered. The production, text and illustrations are of the highest level.



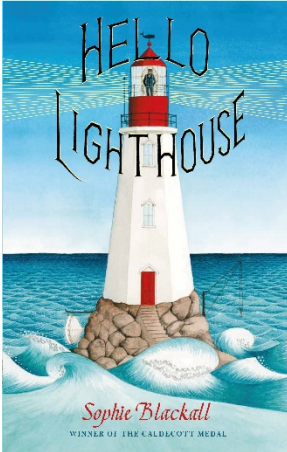
### **The Good Son: A Story from the First World War, Told in Miniature**

Jules Ober and Felicity Coonan (text by Pierre-Jacques Ober)  
Walker Books Australia  
ISBN: 9781536204827

This is an amazing book that deserves recognition if only for the comprehensive collage/photographed artwork.

Describing the challenges of bringing life to stiff 'little plastic men' makes explicit the creative problem solving involved in recreating this broad-sweeping, universal WWI moral

dilemma. The narrative itself, based on a true story, is powerful history, told in a restrained, yet evocative way. Identifying distinct points of tension, it describes grim irony so evident in the context of war, and the human quandaries that emerge from political expediency. Not a picture book narrative for younger readers, the detailed work put into the tiny miniature figurines is compelling viewing. The story is told through crowd scenes, snowy landscapes, isolated figures and maps. Both black and white and colour are used, as well as fire and flickering candlelight. Ober also uses cinematic techniques such as depth of field, out-of-focus shots and muted, shadowy interiors to create atmosphere and verisimilitude. Endpapers lovingly describe the process employed to create an exceptional piece of artwork



### **Hello Lighthouse**

Sophie Blackall

Hachette Australia

ISBN: 9781408357392

The long rectangular design of this book encapsulates a tall lighthouse. The circular narrative in many ways, shows the progressive history of the lighthouse, run by a lighthouse keeper and his family. The circular references embody 'the circle of life' astonishingly well, including the round rooms on the inside of the lighthouse and the changing seasons outside. The illustrations in Chinese ink and watercolour are brilliantly done with layers of meaning, often shown in circularly framed pictures.

The balance of space and text represents high level design, including an impressive fold-out illustration at the end of the book. Readers are drawn into the pages and the wholeness of what can be found with beautifully written prose that almost floats upon the page. 'A note from the Author' at the back of the book gives readers a greater insight into her passion, including information about lighthouses. An outstanding book.

## EVE POWNALL AWARD JUDGES' REPORT

There were 71 entries for the CBCA 2020 Eve Pownall Awards, offering a range of non-fiction perspectives for readers aged 0 to 18, embracing new ways of looking at history, landscape, environment and culture, health and personal well-being.

Several writers explore the idea that history can be challenged or told differently through well-produced narratives. John Dickson and artist Bern Emmerichs' *The Good, the Bad and the Silly* reveal the incompetence of colonial explorers, colonisers' racist attitudes towards Indigenous Australian people and Chinese people on the goldfields, offering 'a tool for history and questioning perspectives'.

In *Yahoo Creek, An Australian Mystery*, Tohby Riddle also offers another way of looking at history, landscape and culture, through his collation of settler coloniser newspaper accounts of the mysterious yahoo, the *berai* or *yuriwirrina* in Aboriginal culture. Peter Williams, Ngiyampaa Elder, affirms that 'These stories are not my stories or your stories, they're *our* stories . . .'. Riddle's haunting moonlit blue-black stencils, cut-out silhouettes and sponge effects echo the mystery of this curious and enigmatic character of the Australian bush.

Bruce Pascoe's *Young Dark Emu: A Truer History* argues that for 80,000 years Aboriginal people were living in established agricultural societies in managed landscapes, reliant on Aboriginal astronomy. Pascoe's diligently researched book presents a powerful argument debunking the notion of terra nullius that positions Aboriginal people as nomadic hunter gatherers.

This year's Eve Pownall entries include exceptional works by writers who have excellent knowledge of their subject and who know how to scaffold their readers' engagement and understanding. Lisa Harvey-Smith's *Under the Stars, Astrophysics for Bedtime* literally takes readers into a new space; her conversational style gives readers time to digest the sometimes complex information. Harvey-Smith's book exemplifies language that is accessible, authentic science writing, as does *A Hollow is Home*, by Abbie Mitchell, illustrated by Astred Hicks, an inspiring exploration of the ecology of tree hollows. The author's perspective embraces hollows around the world and environmental protection of threatened environments, whilst inspiring reader participation as citizen scientists. This book offers well-communicated information through maps, diagrams, and references to further information, as well as captioned and acknowledged photographs.

Also enriching readers' understanding of the natural world is *Searching for Cicadas* by Lesley Gibbes, illustrated by Judy Watson, which effectively integrates a credible storyline of camping with Grandpa to find cicadas in the bush with fascinating factual information. Jeannie Baker's *Playing with Collage* also inspires a closer look at nature, to make abstract artworks from found materials.

Two outstanding books that are themselves each a work of art are those of debut writer and illustrator Sami Bayly, *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Ugly Animals*, 'a celebration of the beauty in ugliness', and Matt Chun's *Australian Sea Life* that presents Australian sea life as beautiful creatures. These are books that readers will cherish for years, for their exquisite, detailed illustrations and lucid, concise writing.

For very young readers Jennifer Cossins' meticulously illustrated *The Ultimate Animal Counting Book* goes well beyond the conventional counting book in its presentation of the size and diversity of fauna throughout the world. Julian Frost's graphics for Idan Ben-Barak's *Argh! There's*



*a Skeleton Inside You!* introduces two zany characters, Oort, a pink cloud, and Quog, a green blob, in a vibrant exploration of human anatomy.

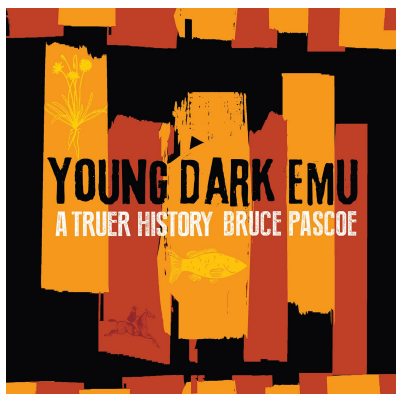
Entries included books that embraced difficult psychological problems for children and their parents or carers, including abandonment, foster homes, and adult mental illness. *Kids Who Did* by Kirsty Murray shows determined children and young people who used their nous, solving real world problems. Courageous young activists enabled girls' education and disability support in their communities as well as helping to eradicate child slavery and child marriage.

Set in the 1920s, the engaging stories of two pioneer aviators Charles Kingsford Smith (*Trouble in The Surf*, by Stephanie Owen Reader, illustrated by Briony Stewart) and Captain Harry Butler (*Born to Fly*, by Beverley McWilliams, illustrated by Timothy Ide) are told through historical non-fiction, while, in the same era, May Wirth defied childhood poverty to become an internationally renowned acrobat and circus performer, actively encouraging girls to break boundaries (*So She Did* by Simi Genzuik and Renée Trembl). *Now and Then*, written and illustrated by Fiona Leavings, offers a wonderful entrée into social history, through the perspective of 8-year-old Jem who lives in the house that was inhabited by Doug as a boy in 1940.

2019, The International Year of Indigenous Languages saw the publication of wonderful, ebullient works by Indigenous Australian writers and illustrators, writing about their own people for child readers. Aboriginal languages, Darug, Pitjantjatjara, Woiwurrung are represented in beautifully produced bilingual texts for readers aged 4 to 18. Jasmine Seymour and Leanne Mulgo Watson's *Cooee Mittigar: A Story on Darug Songlines* introduces readers to the dreaming of the Sydney Darug people, affirming that 'We were strong here/ We are strong here/ We remain strong here'. Throughout *Wilam: a Birrarung Story*, by Aunty Joy Murphy and Andrew Kelly, illustrated by Lisa Kennedy, Language is used naturalistically and rhythmically throughout as the storyteller slips back and forth between English and Woiwurrung. Lavishly illustrated, this story of the animals which live along the Yarra River, Wilam, offers a message of hope, that the river is reclaimable, that children can help nurture the environment and they can take their parents along with them.

Through bilingual Aboriginal publications, readers are introduced to the aesthetics of modern Indigenous Australian art styles, symbolic and realistic. Kunmanara Williams wrote *Kulinmaya! Keep Listening, Everybody!* in Pitjantjatjara and English, telling of his ancestors' and his own fight for official recognition of his Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Land Rights. This biography of text and artwork exemplifies contemporary Aboriginal art as a political force; a significant work for secondary school readers.

## Winner



### **Young Dark Emu: A Truer History**

Bruce Pascoe

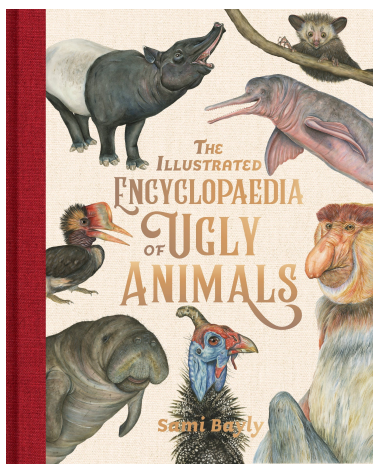
Magabala Books

ISBN: 9781925360844

This book argues that for 80,000 years, Aboriginal people were living in established agricultural societies in managed landscapes, reliant on Aboriginal astronomy. Farming and food supplies were determined by Emu Dreaming, the spaces between the stars of the Milky Way, where the Spirit Emu resides. Citing colonial diaries and artworks describing organised villages and regulated food supplies, Pascoe shows how the decimation of Aboriginal

people and culture ensured that after 1860 all evidence of any prior complex civilisation was eradicated. A passionate environmentalist, Pascoe advocates the cultivation of indigenous plant species, needing no extra water or pesticides, are potentially capable of meeting our carbon emission targets. Visual and textual information is produced on a traditional palette of ochre yellow, red and oranges and charcoal black. Full-page illustrations magnify and enhance detail in the historical photographs, documents, engravings, diary entries and sketches. This beautifully produced book presents a powerful argument that debunks the notion of terra nullius that positions Aboriginal people as nomadic hunter gatherers through an engaging discussion accessible to primary school and young adult readers.

## Honour Books



### **The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Ugly Animals**

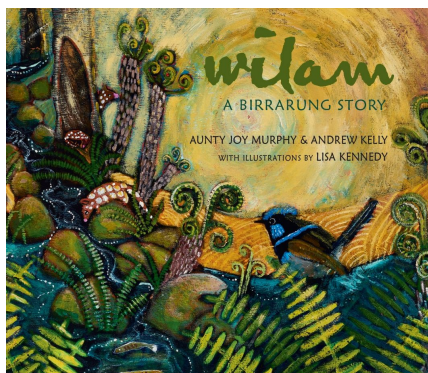
Sami Bayly

Hachette Australia

ISBN: 9780734419019

The well-researched information presented successfully highlights some unusual, highly adapted species that have evolved to have unique but rather unattractive features, many species of which are highly threatened. The book includes a brilliant introduction in which the author advocates for all creatures to be appreciated by challenging readers to test their perception of beauty when reading the book. Each animal is featured on a large double page spread, with information sorted into logical areas of interest, including

description, habitat and diet. This format successfully introduces readers to a unique selection of animals, with information that is both fascinating and engaging. This would most likely encourage readers to further investigation of the topic. Each entry is accompanied by a highly detailed hand-drawn illustration. Illustrations are drawn from the viewpoint that most vividly highlights the unattractive features of each animal, ensuring that readers will be captivated by the drawings and will search for and find beauty in the details. The overall production is reminiscent of an old-world encyclopaedia and is likely to appeal to readers of all ages.



### **Wilam: A Birrarung Story**

Auntie Joy Murphy and Andrew Kelly (illus. by Lisa Kennedy)

Walker Books Australia

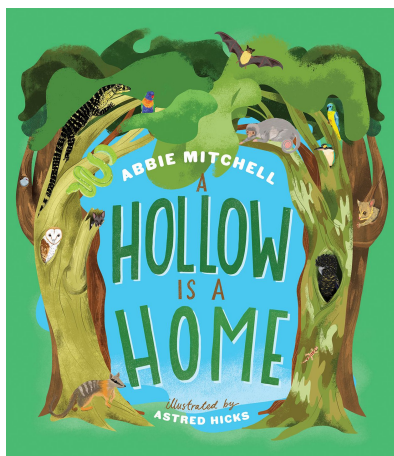
ISBN: 9781925381764

Wilam, meaning 'home' tells the story of 'Birrarung', the Yarra River. Bunjil, the wedge-tailed eagle, creator spirit of the Wurundjeri people, oversees the journey of the Yarra River from the natural habitats at the start of the river down to the urbanised habitats of the bay. Throughout the journey, the flora, fauna and life that calls the Yarra River home are captured in

the details of both the written and illustrated story, with eye-catching accuracy in the illustrations and descriptions of animalistic behaviour. Each read is sure to elicit new findings that previously went unnoticed as readers pore over the beautiful illustrations that reflect modern Aboriginal art styles. Visual and verbal narratives are expertly interwoven, as is the integration of Woivurrung language into the English text. A glossary for translation is provided, with the Aboriginal words set out according to the page they occurred on in the story for easy reference. This format is highly

engaging and encourages re-reading which will further enhance understanding. The overall production is highly professional, with artistic endpapers and a stunning front cover that any young reader would want to explore.

## Other Shortlisted Books

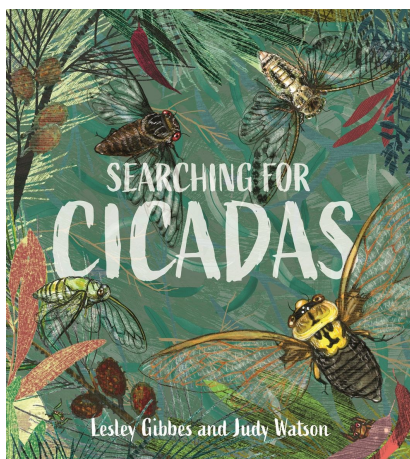


### **A Hollow is a Home**

Abbie Mitchell (illus. by Astred Hicks)  
CSIRO Publishing  
ISBN: 9781486308057

This inspiring exploration of tree hollows and the creatures that call them home is well-designed, beautifully written and bound to become an enduring reference book. The thoroughly researched information enriches readers' understanding of the natural world and our potential role in preserving our wildlife by providing a comprehensive introduction to tree hollows, which are an important ecological feature for so many species. Detailed and varied information is sure to engage young readers by delving into

the topic of hollows and explaining how they form and how animals use and depend upon them. Scientific information is presented in a simple and accessible way, with concepts and terminology well defined and explained. Vibrant illustrations, photographs, maps and diagrams complement the content and bring the information to life, and some fun and practical instruction on finding hollows and how to create a nesting box lend the book an interactive element. Profiles and interviews with scientists working in the area of wildlife conservation may even inspire further investigation into the subject. The book is a fun and informative peek into a hidden, yet vital part of nature.



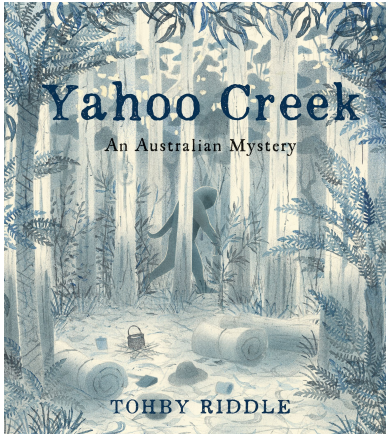
### **Searching for Cicadas**

Lesley Gibbes (illus. by Judy Watson)  
Walker Books Australia  
ISBN: 9781922244420

A beautifully presented introduction into the world of the cicada, this stunning picture book engages and informs young readers through its unique melding of fact and storytelling. The story itself is a simple one; a child and a grandparent explore the bush together, marvelling at the wonders of nature whilst listening for cicada calls and conducting their careful search. In addition to the narrative, each page contains a myriad of interesting facts about the cicada, presented in handwritten passages that mimic

those of a naturalist's notebook. Key information about different species, their lifecycles, calls and colours are intertwined with the gentle storyline. Rhythmic prose immerses readers in the topic with skill and subtlety and the fun of camping and spending time with loved ones is captured in the joyous illustrations. Vibrant artwork in deep, rich hues of greens and blues evoke the Australian bush, and the cicadas themselves are brought to life in stunning detail. As both an exploration of science and nature, and a celebration of the bond between grandparent and grandchild, this is an information book to be shared and treasured.





### **Yahoo Creek: An Australian Mystery**

Tohby Riddle

Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 9781760631451

This book explores the mysterious yahoo through newspaper accounts of white settlers, farmers and their children's encounters with the 'yahoo', 'hairy man' or 'yowie' from 1847-1944 along the Great Dividing Range. Through moonlit blue-black stencils, sponge effects and silhouette cut-outs Riddle depicts the yahoo as friendless, bewildered and frightened, like a wild animal. But children seem to pose no threat to him. The veracity of the reports is always questionable, but people's fascination with the concept of the solitary, wild, hair-covered hominid in the bush endures, even in

the names of places, such as Yahoo Creek. Peter Williams, Ngiyampaa Elder, acknowledging the role of the yahoo, the 'berai' or 'yuriwirrina,' in Aboriginal culture, states that 'to my people he is spiritual figure, but he has a physical body and strong smell like a wet dog'. Riddle's book offers another way of looking at history, landscape and culture, inviting further reading for young readers to follow the leads of his sources and collation of responses to an alien character in the enigmatic Australian bush.

## **CBCA AWARD FOR NEW ILLUSTRATOR JUDGES' REPORT**

The second year of the CBCA New Illustrator Award saw some interesting approaches among the entries. While the number of entrants (42) made it difficult to argue distinct trends, observations can be made about the overall quality and scope of the represented illustrators' efforts.

Essentially illustrations were judged against criteria set by the CBCA which did not, necessarily, include relevance to text. This was difficult as picture books demand a relevance to text but the way forward, in selecting the best illustrators, was facilitated as it allowed illustrators to be considered in the light of their own talent and its place in future works. Outstanding contributors tended to use an interesting variety of media, although a noteworthy book communicated delightful characterisation using only coloured pencil. Included in the mixed media employed were paper products, food dye, gouache, watercolour, acrylic paints, charcoal, ink, grey lead and smudge sticks. Less successful illustrations often relied on digitisation which produced a more generic effect. At the other end of the generic scale, one book described the illustrator's images as 'digitally composed using separate elements created with a variety of techniques including mono-printing, stamping with hand-carved stamps and real vegetation, watercolour and acrylic painted textures and photographed physical elements such as rock and soil.' Books also used a variety of paper stock and, in one case, handsome binding to convey a deliberately older-style, children's encyclopedia.

The criteria call for illustration that enhances and augments the text, which proved a salient marker for distinguishing exceptional participants in this category. However, it is the perception of the artist and their ability to use illustration as a medium in any picture book context that provides the key to their success as a new illustrator. Reflecting a wide range of styles and techniques, the books employed colour and line effectively to add a compelling dimension to the stories. Some did this exuberantly, boldly spilling out across the pages and demanding several readings to catch the minutiae of detail contained in each page. Others used minimal line work, capturing expression and personality through spare choices and economic execution. In one case, a bird was suggested in a galaxy of stars through its absence, leading the eye to contemplate the myriad tiny stars against the inky black endpapers. Imaginative venturing from the storyline often led the reader to move well beyond literal readings of the content.

Similarly, some colour combinations were bright and audacious, exploding off the page as paintings and/or collage. Jungle, gardens, the ocean and Birrarung Marr (the Yarra bank) were conjured up in riotous colour. Streaked red/blue skies reflected drought-stricken farms while earthy tones took us to the bush and had us almost smelling the gum leaves and dirt. Other scenes were gentle and atmospherically depicted, with merging and fading soft tones carrying the reader into dream-like reveries.

Strong illustrators often drew scenes from multiple optical perspectives, creating a different 'angle' on reality. We were treated to a view of the world through a dog's eyes, or a cross section of a circular room on a lighthouse. A map of the neighbourhood offered a bird's eye view of an animal's immediate world.

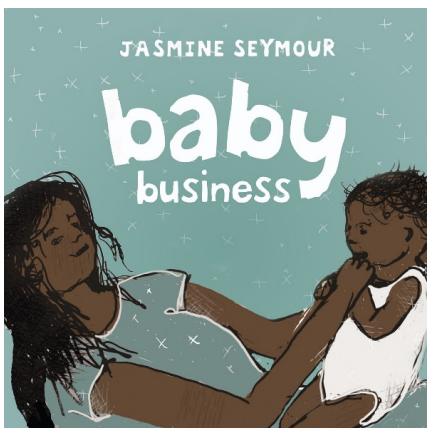
Picture books are intended to be read aloud and so the print needs to lift off the page. This occurs through rhythm and word choice, but also through visual resources, such as iconography and font selection. Several books not only used white space effectively, but also played with different fonts to help the print 'speak' in certain ways to the ear. In books attempting to recapture something of the past, font and colour choices could do much to take us back in time.

Lesser books included those with added invasive detail or were not sufficiently aware of the role colour plays in depiction of mood. Illustrators that didn't use their work to journey the reader forward, to turn the next page and offer a surprise or an expectation, were also letting themselves down. Occasionally the inconsistency was confusing and suggested that closer editorial guidance could have produced a more effective marriage between author and illustrator. Similarly, editors and contemporary illustrators needed to be wary of stereotypical responses and representations that could alienate specific sections of the readership.

Overall, there was much to intrigue among the entries. Skilled illustrators led the eye across the page and allowed the reader time to move among the outlines and shades and invite more exploration. Pages were designed to pull the reader on — each page offered a direction to the next. All aspects of picture book illustration were strong and showed such a wide variety of means to invite readers into new cultures, new ideas, old facts and new ways, it is encouraging to know that illustration in picture books will continue to be revered.

We felt privileged, as judges, to be part of this award and allowed the pleasure of reading so many high quality and often imaginatively risk-taking productions.

## Winner



### **Baby Business**

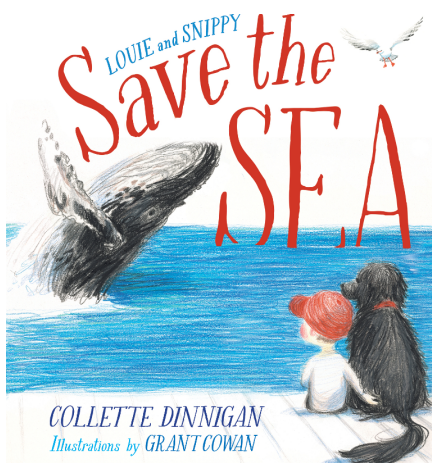
Jasmine Seymour  
Magabala Books  
ISBN: 9781925768671

Jasmine Seymour's visual style feels primal and sophisticated at the same time. The scribbled white lines provide atmospheric effects. The suggestion of smoke is truly a delightful method with the suggestion of the smoke shifting and changing achieved with the appearance of blurred strokes. Also deftly handled are the nuanced skin tones, the varied clothes of the women and the rich honeycomb of the bees.

Although the artworks are digital, they show excellence in the illusion of different art types. There is a lovely connection between traditional and ethereal realism. The simple two-dimensional colour of the women draws them out of the background. This is how we come to understand culture, through line, texture and colour, as well as through language.



## Other Shortlisted Books



### **Louie and Snippy Save the Sea**

Grant Cowan  
Berbay Publishing  
ISBN: 9780648529101

A simple story that highlights the ecological problem of plastic rubbish in the ocean. The illustrations augment and enhance the story premise and with just the use of coloured pencils, the visual result is outstanding. The illustrations are engaging, perceptive, distinctive in style, giving a depth to the story, lifting it to a higher level. This must be acknowledged for a first-time picture book illustrator. Choice of colours is distinctive on each page and special effects make this book a

work of art. In particular, there is a page of mainly blues that depicts a school of fish in tessellation similar to Escher and a page of mainly red tones that is artistically effective. Movement is captured with intensity and characterisation portrays individuality and feeling. This is an illustrator to watch out for.

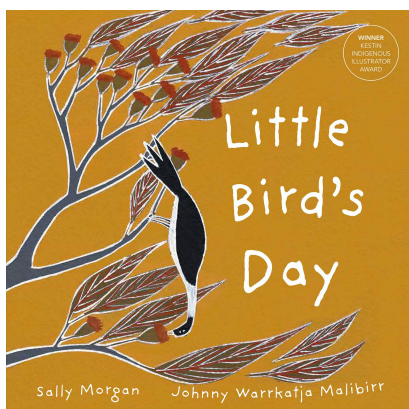


### **Fly**

Jess McGeachin  
Penguin Random House Australia  
ISBN: 9781760892562

A beautiful work moving from subdued colour and figures that are more stilted, to a riot of brightness and new freedom as characters move forward. The indoor/outdoor works constantly to reveal non-text information. The way the scarf has been woven into the story (without written mention) demonstrates high level craftsmanship and understanding. Mum's scarf becomes a part of everything; a symbol of presence and warmth around her child's neck, a bird's nest and finally floating away when Lucy's

experience of growth enables her to own a new one. The stunning double-page spread of all the birds represents the community around Lucy. This is the work of a very capable illustrator revealing more than the text is saying.

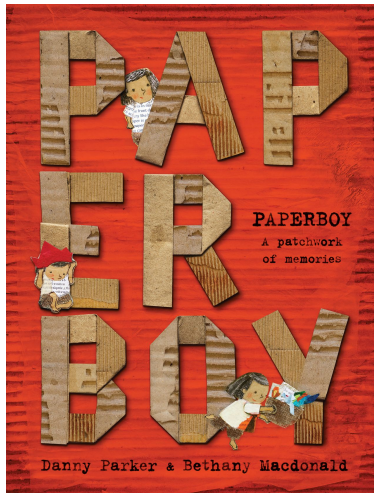


### **Little Bird's Day**

Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr  
Magabala Books  
ISBN: 9781925768923

As text can be minimal and understated and carry huge impact and emotional response, so do these illustrations. They are placed to allow the reader time to move among the outlines and colours and invite more exploration. They are fully entwined with the story through the use of very beautiful, distinctive and culturally appropriate artwork that enhances the storyline. There is the fineness of the galaxy stars in the endpapers with a

distillation here that enhances the impact of the text, both visually and aurally. Pages are designed to lead the reader on — each page offers a direction to the next. A glorious complement to the text.



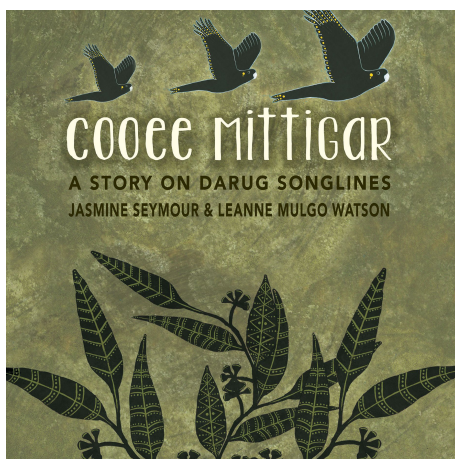
### **Paperboy**

Bethany Macdonald

Dirt Lane Press

ISBN: 9780648023869

The illustrations convey high artistic design. Traces of newspaper print, corrugated cardboard, tissue paper, painted and crayoned illustrations, mesh, string and print text samples create a very layered, textured effect. The work on each page is outstanding as an individual piece and is a pleasure to contemplate. The fragmented story style, open for interpretation, in some way enables the artwork to take the lead. Overall production is high with a well-chosen font. An interesting, creative and unusual book.



### **Coodee Mittigar: A Story on Darug Songlines**

Leanne Mulgo Watson

Magabala Books

ISBN: 9781925936865

Songlines of Darug Country are explored through beautiful prose and stunning artwork. This unique picture book takes readers through the seasonal calendar, incorporating the animals and weather that appear at different times of the year. The reader's experience begins with the sophisticated drawings on a textured cover. The edge-to-edge illustrations throughout the book draw readers into a whole experience, enhanced by warm, earthy tones presented in overlays of

artwork that creates a strong sense of place and the wonders of nature. The effect of the artwork is intriguing and engaging. The illustrator used acrylic paint and digitally composed mixed media to create this effect. The encapsulating tone of this book elicits an enriching experience, best pondered slowly, as readers take in the artwork, the languages and the ambience that is created. The combination of all these aspects and the exquisite colour palettes will have all readers entranced.

## STATISTICS 2020 ENTRIES

**First time creators:** 170

**Indigenous Australian creators:** 25

**Self-published:** 87 titles

**Authors by State:** ACT: 30. NSW: 178. NT: 14. QLD: 45. SA: 39. TAS: 12. VIC: 125. WA: 38.

**Illustrators by State:** ACT: 19. NSW: 73. NT: 8. QLD: 26. SA: 20. TAS: 10. VIC: 73. WA: 23.

**Category breakdown:** OR: 63. YR: 125. EC: 135. PB: 168. EP: 71. NI: 42.

**Publishing Houses:** Approximately 120 (not including self-published entries)

**Themes:** Mental health, animals, survival, identity, asylum seekers, consumerism, Australian history, futuristic worlds, friendship, fairy tales, art, conservation, family, friendships, relationships, fantasy, humour, Indigenous Australian culture

### Entry figures:

Category	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
OR	61	77	63	64	71	78	63
YR	152	128	130	117	128	121	125
EC	95	59	94	89	101	121	135
PB	122	122	131	115	130	149	168
EP	46	48	52	54	41	51	71
NI	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	31	42
Total	476	434	470	439	471	551	604

\*Please note that the 517 entries stated in the Judges' Report Introduction refers to unique titles entered for the 2020 CBCA Book of the Year Awards. The total of the above entries 604 includes those titles entered in multiple categories.

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Jean Chapman • Max Fatchen • Beryl Moncrieff Matthews • Jill Midolo • Narelle Oliver • Jan Ormerod • Eve Pownall • Marion E Robertson • Gregory Rogers • Cassandra Weddell • Maisie Williams, Garah, NSW

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