

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA
BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD NOTABLES LIST

NOTABLE

Australian Children's

BOOKS



2024



A useful guide including all critiques
from our panel of 2024 CBCA expert
judges, arranged
by category.



THE CHILDREN'S
BOOK COUNCIL
OF AUSTRALIA

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the various lands on which we work.

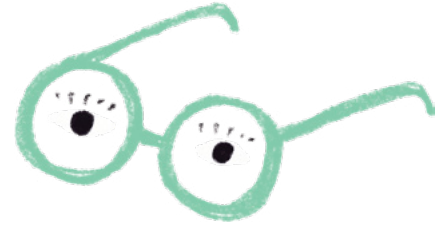
We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and recognise and celebrate the diversity of First Nation people and their ongoing culture and connection to Country.

We particularly honour, celebrate and support the first storytellers of this great continent.



**2024 CBCA BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS
NOTABLES LIST**

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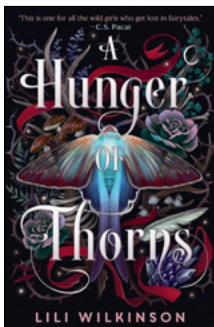


BOOK OF THE YEAR:

OLDER READERS

Entries in this category may be fiction, drama or poetry and should be appropriate in style and content for readers in their secondary years of schooling. **Ages 13-18 years.**

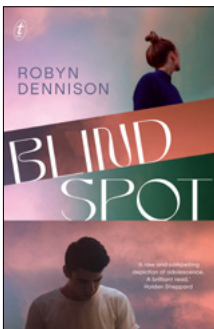
Note: books in this category are for mature readers and some may deal with particularly challenging themes including violence and suicide. Parental guidance is recommended.



A HUNGER OF THORNS

Lili Wilkinson
A & U Children

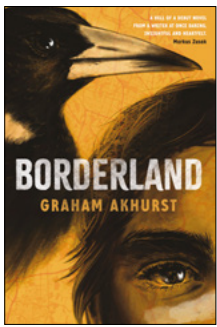
This darkly atmospheric book draws the reader into a metaphorical exploration of the challenges of living in a highly industrialised world, told through the lens of an interrogation of female power and persecution in the historical and contemporary context. While utilising a magical realism setting to present highly contemporary themes, the clearly drawn characters allow the reader a deep understanding of the psyche of young people, and the novel is firmly grounded in family and peer group dynamics. Though building on the recognisable young adult trope of the “strong female protagonist”, Wilkinson has cleverly subverted this tradition through world-building and interesting characterisation, making this immersive story a powerful and original novel for the upper end of the readership.



BLIND SPOT

Robyn Dennison
Text Publishing

This book is an impressive debut - sophisticated writing delivering an unflinching exploration of challenging themes: sexual assault, eating disorders, absent parents, alcohol and drug use, and navigating sexuality and relationships. A standout element of this novel is the characterisation. The main character, Dale, is authentic and sensitively rendered - he is anxious, uncertain and wracked with guilt over failing to intervene when he witnessed a sexual assault at party. You desperately want him to do the right thing, but he makes his own choices, inviting empathy from the reader. The language is crisp and concise. The story is delivered in an accessible and conversational tone, with keen observations providing vivid descriptions of the characters and setting. The serious themes and open ending of this novel will appeal to the upper end of the readership.

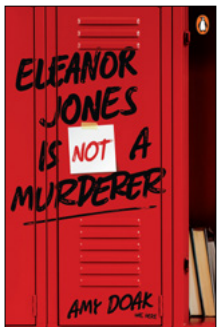


BORDERLAND

Graham Akhurst

UWA Publishing

With demonstrably local storytelling furnished through a strong First Nations voice and purpose, this gothic horror debut has a lot to say. Told with sparse writing that draws the reader in and maintains a grip, Akhurst paints a vivid picture of the Queensland outback through the eyes of a city-born Indigenous teen experiencing his first connection to his Country. Facing both supernatural and all-too-human challenges, the characters are thrown into a subtly creepy adventure that provides the reader with chills and heart-pounding action alongside a strong coming-of-age journey. With a unique concept and much to unpack in the pages, this is an excellent example of authentic Australian storytelling for the upper secondary range of the readership.



ELEANOR JONES IS NOT A MURDERER

Amy Doak

Penguin Random Australia

This book is immediately loveable, with quirky characters and a compelling, realistic drama at the heart of the mystery. The first-person point of view evokes a strong sense of the unique personality of the main character turned amateur detective, Eleanor Jones. The use of language conveys her strong sense of humour and independence. It is enjoyable to follow Eleanor’s journey over the course of the book, from guarded new kid to making true connections with trusted friends. This book would appeal to the younger end of the readership, particularly for fans of A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder. While it does feature some serious content such as stabbing, hospitalisation, drug abuse and drug dealing, the focus on themes of friendship and family relationships, and the absence of serious romance, lends a wholesome aspect to this book.

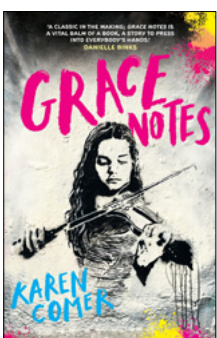


ETA DRACONIS

Brendan Ritchie

UWA Publishing

In what reads as an allegory for COVID, the lyrical, introspective style of this novel depicts a half-formed moorlessness that will speak deeply to young people whose lives changed so drastically in 2020. Anchored with a strong sense of place, the atmospheric tone is bleak, but ultimately offers a hopeful note. Elora’s character rings rawly true; at times, she’s thoughtful and reflective, and in the next moment, achingly young and unworlly. This is a very literary story but with a character-driven focus that appeals, with coming-of-age themes that quite literally showcase a young person’s changing reliance from family to the wider world. The actions of the characters are believable and authentic - people respond in strange ways in a crisis, and a slow apocalypse, one in which you literally have no control over anything but how you choose to live your life, would bring out the extremes of these behaviours.

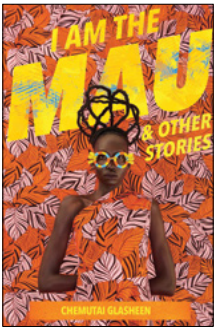


GRACE NOTES

Karen Comer

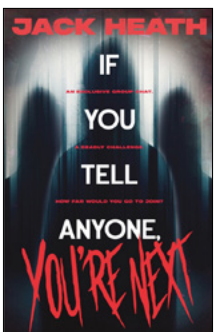
Hachette Australia (Lothian Children’s Books)

This beautifully written debut captures all the light and shade of COVID lockdowns, exploring the wider impact of the pandemic and how it affected different age groups. As one would expect from a verse novel, the prose is spectacularly lyrical in a manner so deeply authentic to the story it is impossible to put down. Well-constructed family dynamics are cleverly revealed through the sparse writing, but it is the authentic coming-of-age portrayal of protagonists Grace and Crux that is the selling point of the story. They are adorable and delightful and almost too good to be real, yet still inherently teen in their worldviews. This book is a gorgeous exploration of art and creativity from the perspective of central characters who are searching to discover meaning and purpose through both, opening thoughtful, original discussion around street art and the meaning of music that is highly suitable for the readership.



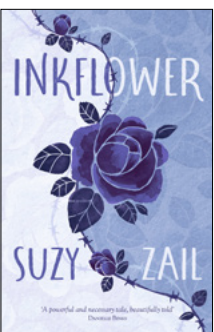
I AM THE MAU
Chemutai Glasheen
Fremantle Press

The 11 short stories in this book provide insight into a broad spectrum of Kenyan experiences, such as the diaspora of Rwandans after genocide, child homelessness and the battles of the Ogiek peoples for their ancestral home. Strong characterisation is shown through the development of Salinda in "An infusion of masala tea" - a confronting portrait of a woman in an abusive relationship that deftly depicts her growing determination to defy her husband to reclaim her life. In "Beading", 11-year-old Naisula excitedly watches her mother make her a beaded bracelet, naive to the knowledge this means she is promised in marriage. The setting in this story clearly evokes village life, with vivid descriptions of huts, roasted goat meat and the scorching heat. This anthology provides much scope for student discussion and further research. It would be valuable as a focus book for secondary classrooms. The author seamlessly blends Kenyan language into her writing, including a glossary indicating what dialect the word comes from.



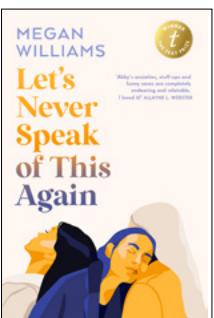
IF YOU TELL ANYONE, YOU'RE NEXT
Jack Heath
Scholastic Australia

An exciting thriller that was at times genuinely scary. The plot zips along at a great pace, full of enjoyable twists and turns and leading to a satisfying ending. The depiction of the bullying and blackmailing behaviours of The 17, the secret social media group, is deliciously nasty and dangerous, making for compelling reading. The character of Zoe is well developed, particularly through the tone of the writing, with a sense of a strong, determined personality coming through that sets her up as a believable detective. This book would appeal to fans of *One of Us is Lying* and suitable for even the younger end of the readership. While the depiction of social media bullying is disturbing, the language is age appropriate, often humorous and the hint of romance doesn't overtake the main narrative of solving the mystery.



INKFLOWER
Suzy Zail
Walker Books Australia

The dual timeline narrative is deftly handed by the author, using simple chapter headings to clearly delineate Emil's experience as a young boy sent to Auschwitz and his teenage daughter Lisa's life in the 1980s in Australia. The two timelines work together to explore themes of survival, secrets, and the transformative power of truth and storytelling. The historical setting is brought to life with incredibly vivid descriptions - the horror and violence of the Holocaust is balanced with small acts of kindness and a heartbreaking hyperfocus on food. The characterisation of Lisa felt authentic and relatable - her response to her father's story and diagnosis of Motor Neuron Disease was to initially turn away from her friends and escape into the arms of her boyfriend. This book would appeal to mature readers keen to learn about the Holocaust and take on a devastating, powerful story with the potential to make you cry.



LET'S NEVER SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN
Megan Williams
Text Publishing

A highly readable coming-of-age debut novel that captures some of the traditional hardships teens experience. The narrative follows the central character Abby, over a year as she navigates change and her own insecurities. Told in a modern diary-esque style, the novel explores the challenges of relationships and dealing with tragedy and loss. The themes of friendship and growing up are conveyed in a realistic and relatable manner through the character's relationships; and family plays a central part of the story, exploring intergenerational connections and sibling dynamics. The use of humour to balance out some of the serious themes, makes it a compelling read with a lot of warmth that will resonate with a broad young adult readership.

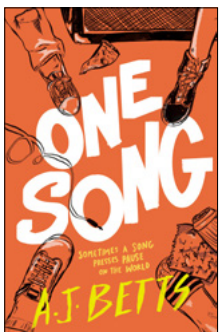


NIGHTBIRDS

Kate J. Armstrong

A & U Children

In this beautifully presented debut novel, the reader enters a well-constructed, lush fantasy world and finds echoes of the 1920s prohibition era, except it is magic rather than alcohol that's forbidden here. An original idea, it encompasses the dangers of a unique magic system alongside a strongly feminist journey to power. Within an entrenched system of political and societal collusion, the characters' exploration of their power and capacity is firmly at the centre of the story, providing distinctive and engaging portrayals for the reader to follow through the novel. The sophisticated writing draws in popular coming of age tropes of found family and friendship in a fascinating blend highly suitable to older readers.

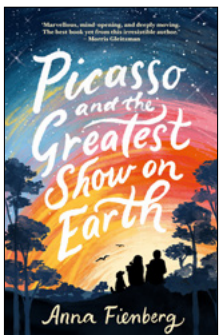


ONE SONG

A.J. Betts

Pan Macmillan

Bound together through a love of music and a shared goal to break into the music industry, the story unfolds around an eclectic cast of characters, across a weekend of chaotic creativity. Told through Eva's eyes, the characters navigate the uncertainty of what's to come in the next chapter after high school and discover more about themselves and each other. Setting the story over a short time frame in a confined space with a looming deadline adds to the tension, creating a sense of urgency, and keeping the momentum going. Quintessentially Australian and modern with the nod to the existing Triple J competition, the storyline offers both cringe-worthy and laugh-out-loud moments, with a fast-paced plot that will appeal to the middle and upper end of a young adult audience.

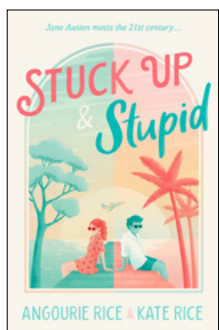


PICASSO AND THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Anna Fienberg

A & U Children

Thoroughly readable and heartfelt, this novel sits at the younger end of the readership, crossing into middle grade. Delving into big themes that are gently handled, the story balances the heartbreaking and the hopeful making it a beautiful read. Filled with memorable characters all carrying their individual burdens, the novel explores the impact of loss and separation on families and how we move forward. The intersections of science and art and the healing powers of animals and creativity are also central elements to the storytelling. The lyrical language adds to the mood of the story and will appeal to a wide audience.



STUCK UP AND STUPID

Angourie Rice and Kate Rice

Walker Books Australia

A wholesome and light-hearted debut rom-com, cleverly reimagining Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in a contemporary, Australian setting. The novel plays on Austen's storytelling, transferring the major plot points and character traits into a modern story while still managing to be an original work. This narrative explores unhinged family dynamics, and a slow burning enemy-to-lover romance. The classic premise is transformed through modern themes, from working out what to do post high school to ideas of conservation. The story also covers darker issues around abuse in a sensitive manner. The Hollywood appeal paired with an idyllic Australia setting brings a modern twist to the classic and will attract the upper end of the young adult readership.

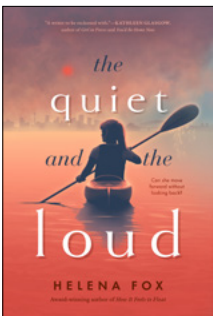


THE ISLES OF THE GODS

Amie Kaufman

A & U Children

This convincing secondary world fantasy cleverly juxtaposes traditional high fantasy with a more industrialised setting, using three distinct perspectives to braid together the overarching story. Underpinning a narrative of high-stakes political intrigue alongside more prosaic machinations from the not-quite-adult protagonists, Kaufman utilises the concept of semi-embodied gods to challenge ideas of organised religion in thoughtful ways appropriate to the audience. Containing some quite brutal violence, the author does not shy away from consequences for poor decisions, and there are real ramifications for the characters' choices, which adds to the engaging style of the book. The three main characters are distinctive in their growth, and secondary characters are rich in their depictions, allowing the reader to immerse in the world and the events of the story.



THE QUIET AND THE LOUD

Helena Fox

Pan Macmillan

A multi-layered coming of age story that explores big themes, grounded with some solid characters and a realistic setting. There is a lot to unpack in this story with issues of climate change and trauma impact sitting at the fore. Elements of mental health, alcoholism, friendship and first love also form a large part of the storyline with a solid LGBTQI+ focus. These elements are all masterfully weaved into the plot and are given space and relevance. The use of art throughout the story is significant as it counters some of the big issues discussed by offering healing and empowerment. The story is balanced with well-drawn primary and secondary characters, exploring the dynamics of friendship and family. The language is rich, making this a vivid and real read that will resonate with the upper end of the young adult readership.



THE SINISTER BOOKSELLERS OF BATH

Garth Nix

A & U Children

An entertaining romp, the author delivers fantasy worldbuilding and storytelling at its finest. Art student Susan and magical fighting booksellers, Merlin and Vivien are swept up yet again in a dangerous adventure against Old World entities. The use of language is masterful in creating a strong sense of place, for both the real and fantasy worlds. The 1980s Bath setting is vividly brought to life through detailed descriptions of clothing, objects, food and places, clearly demonstrating a wealth of research but delivered in a charming, humorous and entertaining manner. The fantasy world building is just as richly described, referencing local mythology. The meeting between Susan and Sulis, the goddess of the thermal springs that feed the spa baths, evokes an unnerving, dreamlike sense of otherness and danger. This book would appeal to the readership which enjoys a sophisticated myth-based fantasy adventure with a splash of romance and authentic historical details.



THIS TIME IT'S REAL

Ann Liang

Walker Books Australia

A fun rom-com featuring two teens that are thrown together through a modern blogging mishap that creates a viral situation. Eliza's character is loveable. Motivated by her desire to be seen as a writer, she finds herself in an unusual situation, that leads her to an unlikely romance. The high stakes plot is grounded by believable family relationships, especially through the sibling and mother-daughter connections. The background setting of an international school and the history of Eliza's multiple moves give the story weight, centering the narrative. With strong themes, of culture, identity and misplacement, the story offers more than just romance, as friendship is also central to the story exploring how we connect to people. This is an absorbing, fun read that will appeal to the middle to higher end of the young adult readership.



TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME

Leanne Yong
A & U Children

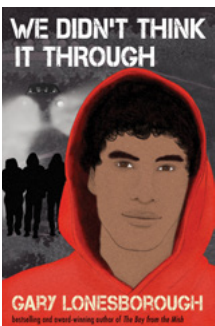
A charming “enemies to first love” story that targets the readership beautifully in a thoroughly PG style, despite being about slightly older teens. Although gaming is central to the premise — which in itself is wonderful for the intended audience — the reader needs no knowledge of the field to delight in this character-focused book. The rapid-fire dialogue and humour complement well-drawn family dynamics that consider what it can mean to grow up Australian-Malaysian, the responsibility inherent in being the eldest sibling, and the issues of living up to parental expectations. With captivating pop culture nerdery sprinkled liberally throughout, this debut novel is primarily driven by internal conflict, examining the little-discussed theme of how challenging it can be to “peak” in high school and framed by the gentle romance.



WE COULD BE SOMETHING

Will Kostakis
A & U Children

A nuanced exploration of family, relationships, writing and finding your way. This novel is a discovery of family, culture, and identity. Young Harvey is coming to terms with his parents’ fractured relationship, whilst also settling into a new city, exploring his sexuality, and discovering what his future holds. Segmented into two storylines that parallel the stories and paths of father and son, the two weave together to reveal the similarities and differences as both characters find themselves at pivotal points in their life. The language differentiates the two story lines, and the setting of the family café evokes a strong sense of place, capturing culture and the Greek-Australian heritage, as well as the nostalgia of lost youth and new pathways. Absorbing and timely, this will appeal to the middle to upper end of the young adult readership.



WE DIDN'T THINK IT THROUGH

Gary Lonesborough
A & U Children

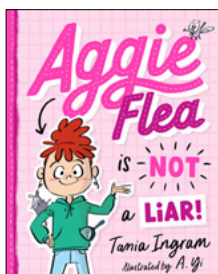
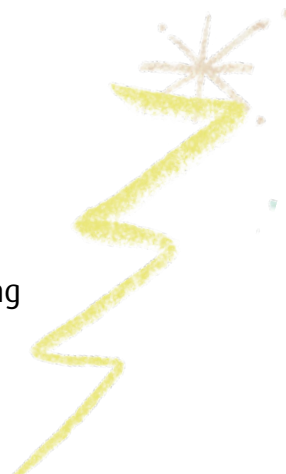
This story is confronting and realistic, highlighting important issues of ongoing racism and prejudice towards Aboriginal youth and the challenges of the youth justice system. The plot is effectively constructed to build a nuanced and rounded sense of character for Jamie. The car chase scene is written with dramatic effect - Jamie and his friends are swept up in a series of questionable decisions leading to a wild, dangerous pursuit by police in a stolen car, with Justin Bieber blaring - but the fun quickly turns into fear, with devastating consequences. Flashbacks develop the reader’s understanding of Jamie’s home life and family dynamics. In addition, free verse poetry artfully expresses his complex feelings in juvenile detention, showing his growth and transformation. He learns to process his reality and express himself honestly, forging a sense of hope for the future as he nurtures his creative talent. This book is a powerful and compelling read, with great potential as a classroom novel for the middle to upper end of the readership.

BOOK OF THE YEAR:

YOUNGER READERS

Entries in this category may be fiction, drama or poetry and should be appropriate in style and content for readers from the middle to upper primary years. **Ages 7-12 years.**

Note: some of the titles in this category may only be suitable for readers who are in the upper primary years as they contain mature themes, including violence. Parental guidance is recommended.



AGGIE FLEA IS NOT A LIAR

Tania Ingram

Illustrated by A. Yi

Scholastic Australia (Scholastic Press)

This book is a triumph of writing and illustration for younger readers. Aggie has a big imagination but she's not a liar! Is Aggie's new neighbour a vampire? Aggie's a fan of the Princess Zombie (the graphic novel within) and the way the comic meshes with Aggie's real life is clever. Aggie's voice is spot-on and it is backed by the clever choice of which word in the text to highlight. The designer has used both size and colour in different instances, which opens up the text and makes it more accessible. The illustrations add much to the book, and the insertion of a graphic novel within the text is effective and adds another layer to the story as it reflects the themes. Packed with humour and warmth, this is a book of substance with strong growth for the protagonist.



BEING JIMMY BAXTER

Fiona Lloyd

Penguin Random House, Australia (Puffin Books)

A cleverly crafted, powerful and engaging read, this book expertly juxtaposes the protagonist Jimmy's perception of life with the understanding offered by its adult characters. Like many child carers, Jimmy is old beyond his years, his narratorial voice is evocative of rural Australia. The plot provides Jimmy and the reader with the opportunity to learn and grow. His strength of character, vulnerability, love and determination empower him and simultaneously enable the reader to find joy and hope even in the darkest of experiences. This text delicately integrates and balances humour in a way that engages the reader without compromising its authenticity. An arresting read that sensitively addresses challenging themes, including, domestic violence, mental health, life on the run and death, in a hope filled way.



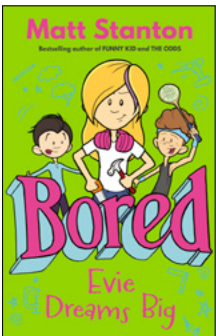
DIRRARN

Carl Merrison and Hakea Hustler

Illustrated by Dub Leffler

Magabala Books

A moving and sensitive story of Mia, a Jaru girl from the Kimberley, who battles homesickness and bullying while attending boarding school in the city. The book's delicate exploration of code switching and Mia's deep connection with family and Country will connect with and extend readers' experience of the world. This short, powerful novel includes a glossary and incorporates Aboriginal English, Jaru, Noongar and Kriol language making the text accessible to all readers. Strategically inserted, detailed grey scale illustrations offer the reader an opportunity to reflect on the text. Delving into the hearts and minds of people living two ways, while emphasising the importance of Country in the lives of First Nations Australians this text invites all readers to explore their relationship with others and with Country.



BORED: EVIE DREAMS BIG

Matt Stanton

HarperCollins Publishers (ABC Books)

The third book in the Bored series, this book is a skilfully-crafted read that stands alone and offers something for all ages within the Younger Readers category. Needing her own space, Evie is determined to build her own house on an empty block. Evie's friends, family and neighbours are well-developed characters with distinct opinions on Evie's plan. Introductory pencil illustrations, humour, wit, short and punchy chapters combine with well-constructed sentences that enable the reader to explore themes of determination, risk taking, teamwork, family and friendship. Evie has a strong voice, while her determination and moments of self-doubt may help the reader understand more about themselves and the world. It is a delightful read with a powerful underlying message.



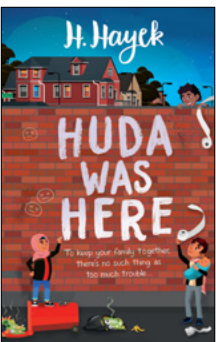
HARRIET HOUND

Kate Foster

Illustrated by Sophie Beer

Walker Books

Three stories in one volume, each with a predictable pattern, characterisation, and format make this book supportive of neurodiverse readers whilst simultaneously informing the wider audience of neurodiversity. The protagonist, 8-year-old Harriet, has a superpower that enables her to summon dogs from a rescue shelter to help solve problems. Harriet's autism is foregrounded, with stimming a central part of her superhero transformation. Her desire for routine and repetition are echoed in the design and development of each story. A simple plot and setting, the inclusion of dot point fact sheets, paw prints and bold pencil illustrations combined with a colourful cover, featuring Harriet's magic sensory pyjamas, extend the text. This all comes together making this a delightful book for young readers.



HUDA WAS HERE

H. Hayek

A & U Children

A layered and engaging novel that captivates the reader from its intriguing prologue through to its positive, heartwarming conclusion. Centred on Lebanese Australians, Akeal and his younger sister Huda, it is a fast-paced, stand-alone sequel, told from the perspective of Akeal, through clearly labelled dual narratives. Huda's strong-willed determination respectively combines with Akeal's sensitive loyalty to deliver wondrous episodes of suspense, humour and misbehaviour, revealing their love for each other and for their family. This novel creatively and simultaneously explores multicultural Australia, family life, corruption, community, hardship and determination in the context of living as part of a minority group. Humour pervades this delightful story, lifting it to deliver a relatable, skilfully crafted, age-appropriate and engaging mystery adventure.



MEET ME AT THE MOON TREE

Shivaun Plozza

University of Queensland Press

A beautiful exploration of the process of grief, the magic of nature, and life going on after loss. The death of a husband and father prompts a family to make a tree change to a rural property. His daughter Carina searches for a tree grown with seeds that have been into space—a Moon Tree—in the hope that it can transmit a message to her dad. Each character is authentically portrayed, and their interactions help the reader to build an understanding of how people can be affected very differently by the same experience. It is easy to relate to each character and their behaviours. The book deals with challenging and difficult themes sensitively, realistically and optimistically.

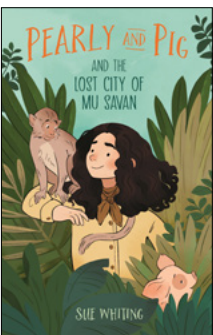


MING & HILDE LEAD A REVOLUTION

Jackie French

HarperCollins Publishers

The concept of ‘herstory’ tracking how girls have changed the world is innovative and intriguing, providing the opportunity to inspire readers as they follow Ming in the third title in the series. In this book, the reader comes to understand how the wool industry in Australia was shaped by women. The plot, setting and characters are cleverly crafted and integrate perfectly to bring living in the past into the hearts and minds of those who live in the present. The power of this novel is in how it handles moral complexity—otherwise ‘good’ characters may hold problematic beliefs while good intentions can have disastrous outcomes. This meticulously researched book is perfectly pitched for the younger reader.

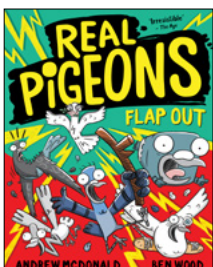


PEARLY AND PIG AND THE LOST CITY OF MU SAVAN

Sue Whiting

Walker Books Australia

A stand-alone book from the ‘Pearly and Pig’ series set in the jungles of South East Asia. Pearly’s anxiety that she may be hindering her parents’ and grandfather’s quest are voiced but overcome with reference to her grandfather’s ‘Rules and Guidelines for Young Adventurers’. Pearly consistently embeds these guidelines in her actions and self-talk. They provide clear and specific support that could be incorporated by any reader living with anxiety or self-doubt. The book is skilfully crafted, using wit, multilingual speakers and descriptive, well-constructed sentences to extend the reader’s knowledge of writing and of their world. Maintaining a consistent tone throughout and with relatable characters, this book successfully explores themes of respect, anxiety, self-belief, challenge and letting go.



REAL PIGEONS FLAP OUT

Andrew McDonald

Illustrated by Ben Wood

Hardie Grant’s Children’s Publishing

This book blends the best features of graphic novels and conventional narrative and has multiple entry points, making it one of the most accessible novels for younger readers. It is very well put together with strong characterisation, backed by hilarious illustrations. The design is less constrained than that of a graphic novel, and the language shows a similar quality approach. The action keeps coming, even though it appears the real pigeons are just flapping about and fighting crime. Disguised as lighthearted and silly fun, this book offers deep themes such as sticking together, good /evil, and selflessness. The illustrations are cleverly crafted and integrated with the text adding much meaning and context to the plot.

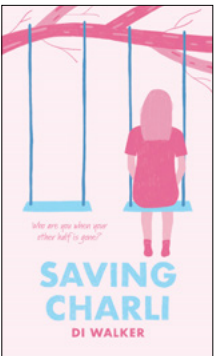


RUNNING WITH IVAN

Suzanne Leal

HarperCollins Publishers

A timeslip novel that effectively transports the reader between today's world and living in Europe towards the end of WWII. The protagonists battle issues that young people encounter in contemporary society, for example, separated parents, death of a parent, blended families and bullying. These sit comfortably and are not diminished by the issues related to living in Nazi occupied Europe. The major plot, the befriending of Ivan and Olinda, is poignant and well-researched. The subplots of living in a new family situation and learning to run, give depth to the context as they facilitate transitions of time and place. Revealing aspects of history and exploring themes of changing family circumstances, friendship, loyalty and war, make this book an interesting, engaging and cohesive read.

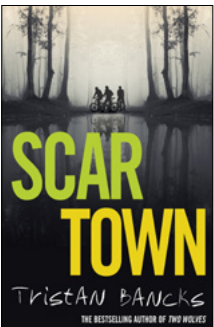


SAVING CHARLI

Di Walker

Scholastic Australia

This is a moving story about grief, regret, and the support of friends. The book shifts perspectives between friends at the end of the life and then death of Charli's chronically ill twin Freya. While the book is centred on Charli and her complex feelings towards her twin, the characters of her friends Queenie and Blair are fully realised and distinct. This approach enables the reader to identify with a particular personality or see something from another's point of view, helping the younger reader on their own life journey. The heavy topics discussed in this book are addressed appropriately for readers aged nine and above, and this book provides a safe place to explore, question and reflect.

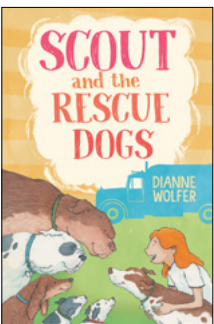


SCAR TOWN

Tristan Bancks

Penguin Random House Australia (Puffin Books)

This book tells a classic story in a thrilling and accessible way for readers aged 10-14. It commands the reader's attention from its enthralling beginning, throughout an action-packed plot development and a dramatic conclusion. The setting of the drowned town is evocatively described, creating a foreboding mood that enhances the plot of the novel. The young protagonists are well-developed and have authentic responses to events, while the flaws of the adult characters are realistic, allowing readers to explore and extend their thinking about difficult relationships and situations. The mystery and thriller conventions are expertly balanced with Will's character development as he navigates loss, criminal activity, corruption, and loyalty to family and friends.



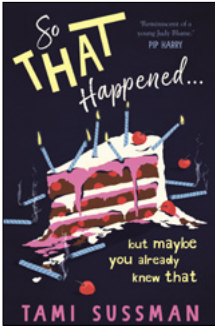
SCOUT AND THE RESCUE DOGS

Dianne Wolfer

Illustrated by Tony Flowers

Walker Books Australia

Realistically set during the 2019/20 bushfires, this book journeys with Scout and her dad as they deliver donations of dog food to animal shelters throughout southeastern Australia. The bushfires and the geographical details related to their travels are accurately presented. Grieving the loss of her mum, sparked by their travels, the people they meet and a school friendship project, Scout develops a website to connect shelter dogs with truck drivers needing company. Responsible internet use, described throughout the text is commendable and age appropriate. Including creative design features, this fictional narrative is heartwarming and uplifting, dealing sensitively with topics of parental loss, environmental threat, bullying and separation balanced by optimism and the love Scout shares with her father and with animals.

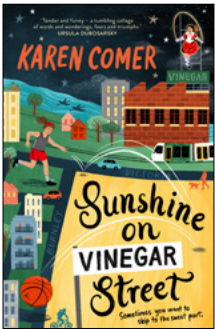


SO THAT HAPPENED... BUT MAYBE YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT

Tami Sussman

Walker Books Australia

Natalie or 'Nutty' is preparing for her bat mitzvah and hoping she gains the maturity to deal with all the changes in her life. Nutty has a strong and authentic voice that is relatable even if readers have no experience of Judaism or neurodiversity. A number of heavy issues are explored through Nutty's eyes: antisemitism, prejudice, mental illness, economic challenges, housing insecurity, sexuality and gender norms. Nutty's family bonds and friendships with other members of the Jewish community help her to navigate the changes around her and even make positive changes of her own. The book skilfully extends the reader's experience and understanding of life, including a glossary to support readers unfamiliar with Nutty's culture.

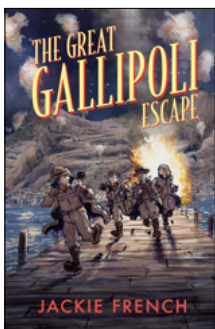


SUNSHINE ON VINEGAR STREET

Karen Comer

A & U Children

A lyrical verse novel that explores the life of 12-year-old Freya, who is from a 'two home, donor-conceived, created with love family'. The novel explores the struggles she experiences in their new home under the Skipping Girl sign. Readers journey with Freya as she copes with fears, new beginnings, being left out and changes in family, friendships, school and living arrangements. It is a well-constructed, cohesive novel which skilfully combines precise and sophisticated language, creative font and layout and Skipping Girl and basketball motifs to produce a touching and accessible read. Freya's authentically portrayed experiences address age-appropriate content related to puberty education, anxiety and inclusion in a way that leads to the ultimate realisation she can belong in more than one place.

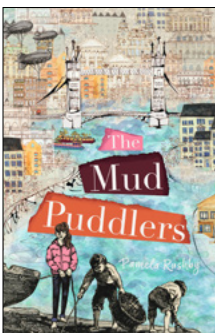


THE GREAT GALLIPOLI ESCAPE

Jackie French

Angus & Robertson (HarperCollins Children's Books)

This story is an immersive, often confronting, but always enjoyable read. As the end notes explain, the book is based on first-hand accounts of the Gallipoli campaign, and it successfully conveys the trauma of months of fighting (and waiting) in the trenches. Sixteen-year-old Nipper's optimism, loyalty and sense of fun keeps the reader engaged with the narrative. Some moments in the story are darkly humorous and some heartbreaking, but details are always age-appropriate and never gratuitous. The cleverly crafted text includes source material at the beginning of each chapter that deepen readers' understanding of Australian history of conflict. This enables readers to understand more about themselves and their world. The cover artwork, text, font and layout result in a beautifully presented hardcover.

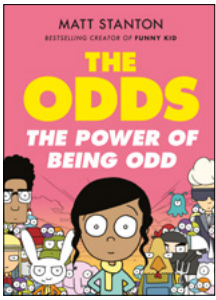


THE MUD PUDDLERS

Pamela Rushby

Walker Books (and subsidiaries)

Readers and the novel's protagonist alike are drawn into the history of London as Nina participates in mudlarking in the Thames with her Aunt Bee. The forgotten artifacts she discovers enable Nina to travel back in time, in an elegantly constructed mechanism of time travel that is notable amongst timeslip novels. The focus on Nina's family bonds and growing confidence in her own abilities is age-appropriate, with her adventure during the Blitz providing a thrilling climax. The language and the writing style used are precise with clever inclusion of words and phrases that add to the strong sense of time and place. A hope-filled, fast-paced read pitched well to the younger reader aged 9-12.

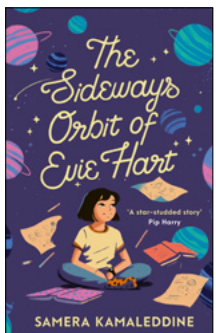


THE ODDS: THE POWER OF BEING ODD

Matt Stanton

HarperCollins Publishers (ABC Books)

This cleverly created graphic novel, the third in the Odd series, features simple, bold and creative illustrations to explore the world of imagination, and each person’s unique capabilities and possibilities. Through the fun, upbeat story line each character explores their motivation — can this help them get back to their own worlds? Kip and the Odds have to discover whether the easy safe path is best, or whether they should face the challenge of escaping. The stunning illustrations extend the text and bring extra energy and emotion to the story and use varied styles throughout, complementing the theme of the possibilities of imagination. This interplay between text and illustration is skilfully crafted with cleverly balanced style and layout enhancing engagement, accessibility and comprehension of the text for the audience. It stands-alone and is age-appropriate for any age group in this category.

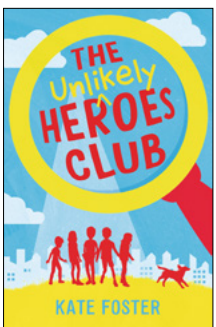


THE SIDEWAYS ORBIT OF EVIE HART

Samera Kamaledine

Angus & Robertson (HarperCollins Children’s Books)

This book expertly intertwines Evie’s study of space with the plot of the novel, enabling Evie to learn more about herself as she learns about Earth and the universe. Fond of rules and prone to anxiety, she is challenged by changing friendship dynamics, changing circumstances of her family and transition to high school set against the background of the everchanging night sky. Evie has a strong voice and secondary characters are well-realised, with their voices, hopes and fears challenging Evie and the reader to think deeply about themselves and others. With a visually inviting cover featuring Evie amongst the planets, this is a quality book that will appeal to many readers in the Younger Reader category.



THE UNLIKELY HEROES CLUB

Kate Foster

Walker Books Australia

Contemplating the world from the perspective of 11-year-old Oli, the reader of this book vicariously joins Oli, his family, peers and therapists as they participate in a holiday program. The program supports young people to build social skills and develop friendships with other neurodiverse preteens. However, they learn the best from their team effort to rescue a stray dog, which adds mystery and intrigue. The love and struggle of families living with autism are presented in a way that is humorous whilst being painfully close to the truth. This book affirms autism and provides a nuanced view for those seeking a better understanding. Its design features are age-appropriate and engaging. A delight to read, it sensitively explores inclusion, respect, challenge, acceptance, family relationships, and neurodiversity.

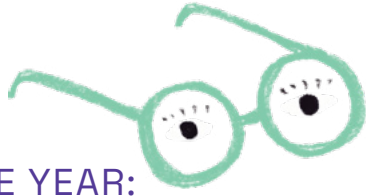


UNCLE XBOX

Jared Thomas

Magabala Books

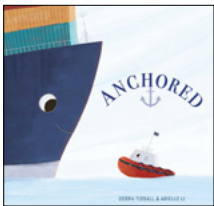
A well-paced and authentic book that follows the ups and downs of 12-year-old Dusty who is dealing with poverty, racism, changing family circumstances and understanding of himself and others. When Dusty’s stepdad moves out and takes the Xbox, he misses it a lot! He gets on with things, earning pocket money from odd jobs to buy his own Xbox. But he has some great revelations — surfing in real life is better than playing with the Xbox, and some of the traditional storytellers may have been just as magnetic as any Xbox. The dialogue is interspersed with Aboriginal English and combines with seamlessly portrayed cultural and cross-cultural experiences, adding to the context and plot. Dusty learns what is important in life and his connection to culture and Country. An excellent depiction of family life and love lifted by the humour which comes from deep characterisation.



BOOK OF THE YEAR:

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Entries in this category may be fiction, drama or poetry and should be appropriate in style and content for children who are at pre-reading or early stages of reading. **Ages 0-6 years.**



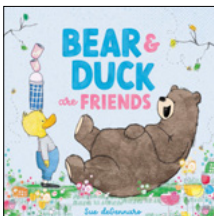
ANCHORED

Debra Tiddball

Illustrated by Arielle Li

Exisle Publishing (EK Books)

Depicted with sensitivity and empathy, this gentle book explores separation anxiety and associated emotions. The characters are well-defined, with Tug and Ship having a clear relationship and different roles, reflecting that of a parent and child. Tug's insecurities and concerns are acknowledged and conveyed in a highly effective sequence of illustrations that echo the taut text. Softly blurred, circular framing of key images suggests the safety and security of a "warm hug" during difficult times. Tug's self-talk invites discussion. Carefully selected words such as 'pushing', 'pulling', and 'prodding' in both the beginning and end of the story reflect the concept that life goes on. The well-realised conclusion references the title with the closing image featuring the two characters separate yet connected.



BEAR & DUCK ARE FRIENDS

Sue deGennaro

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Little Hare)

Perfectly pitched to young readers, this gentle story about friendship creates opportunities to discuss fears, challenges and being open to new experiences. The highly accessible text is thoughtfully presented in different ways, with changing size and direction adding interest. The delightful illustrations show movement of the characters and perfectly reflect the text, offering sequences of action and moments to pause and reflect. Rhyming phrases and simple sentences blend seamlessly, with occasional alliteration and a smattering of more complex vocabulary. There is a lovely role reversal in that the bigger, stronger animal is fearful, thus opening the door to important conversations about stereotypes. The satisfying resolution reveals the two friends readying themselves for the next challenge.



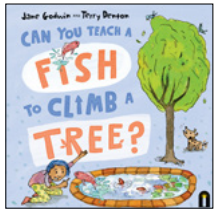
BIG DOG IS A BIG HELP

Sally Rippin

Illustrated by Lucinda Gifford

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Little Hare)

Rambunctious Big Dog can hardly contain his excitement as he and his family head off on a camping trip whilst the newest family member, Little Dog watches his every move. Big Dog's exuberance spills out from the high-energy mixed media illustrations, many of which feature humorous sequences playfully juxtaposed against the text. Design elements have been carefully considered, with good use of white space to counterbalance the high energy antics of the dogs. The endpapers visually lead the reader into and out of the narrative and match the high energy mood and movements, as does the title page. A warm take on acceptance, challenges, celebrating individuals and finding one's place in a family.



CAN YOU TEACH A FISH TO CLIMB A TREE?

Jane Godwin

Illustrated by Terry Denton

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Bright Light)

Children will initially find the series of posed questions in this imaginative book, both preposterous and comical, a great device to engage them in reflections and discussions about self-acceptance, diversity and understanding others. Quirky, loose ink and watercolour illustrations, abounding in small humorous details, enhance the succinct narrative inviting children to follow the unfolding visual stories and create their own. The pace builds with the increasing silliness in the first half, which is followed by a more considered, thoughtful second half, cleverly incorporating fascinating facts about remarkable attributes of various animals (and human babies). Powerful yet with a light touch that feels fresh and unique, this interactive picture book will sit well in homes, libraries and educational settings.



DUCKLING RUNS AWAY

Margaret Wild

Illustrated by Vivienne To

A & U Children

After squabbling with her mother, Duckling declares that she is running away and never coming back. Toddlers may empathise with the intensity of Duckling's frustration, evident in her resolute body language and definitive reply as she declines her friends' invitations to play. The repeated phrase "I'm running away" invites participation and highlighted words (whether they are nouns, verbs or phrases) are used for emphasis and an added literacy tool. Delightful, saturated colour illustrations of baby farmyard animals complement the simple, repetitive well-spaced text. Through images alone, the reader senses the impending night, possibly recognising before Duckling that soon it will be dark and she will want to go home. The ending, while predictable, is heart-warming, reassuring and satisfying.



GRACE AND MR MILLIGAN

Caz Goodwin

Illustrated by Pip Kruger

Marshall Cavendish International

This gentle, beautifully told story explores themes of friendship, loss, grief and healing. The carefully crafted text reveals genuine friendship between the two main characters, their shared joys and their love for constant companion, Charlie, the goat. There is use of repeated phrases, humour, alliteration and rich, descriptive language. The narrative transitions sensitively, allowing readers to realise the passing of Charlie in their own time. A gentle pace offers opportunities to pause and reflect, whilst the use of the progression of the days of the week effectively conveys the passing of time. The pairing of the text and dynamic, sensitive illustrations is faultless and deftly edited throughout. The final double spread is wordless, depicting the cycle of life.



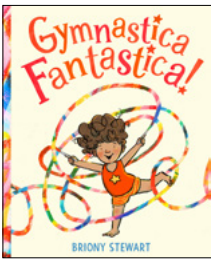
GURRIL, STORM BIRD

Trevor Fourmile

Illustrated by Jingalu

Magabala Books

This traditional story of the Yidinji First Nations People of Cairns is retold in a direct and succinct style that builds in pace and intensity to a powerful climax and sobering conclusion for the protagonist. Visually, this picture book is an absolute delight! The front cover, with Stormbird spreading his wings across a blue, starry night and a silver, embossed title set the tone and standard for a beautiful read. New illustrator Jingalu floods every page with vivid, saturated colours on double page full bleed spreads, with white used sparingly and only for highlights and text. With its dramatic text and highly engaging illustrations, this picture book has broad appeal.



GYMNASTICA FANTASTICA!

Briony Stewart

Hachette Australia (Lothian Children's Books)

An enticing invitation opens this vibrant picture book, as a vivacious young child confidently demonstrates their gymnastic prowess, bouncing, cartwheeling and flipping their way across the pages. Their dog, a silent but invested observer throughout, provides a lovely contrast. This book conveys so much energy and life which children will connect with immediately. The young child's voice permeates the tight, joyful rhyming text which includes a rich assortment of verbs, nouns and adjectives. Pencil, ink, crayon, gouache, and digital illustrations are filled with zoom in action and movement matching the equally energetic text. The endpapers are perfect bookends, as twirling ribbons, held in the child's left at the start and right hand at the end, appear to capture the story.



HAIR!

Mike Dumbleton

Illustrated by Lucinda Gifford

Little Book Press

Silly and funny, this rhyming tribute to the diversity of hair and hair-styles offers opportunities for light-hearted discussions about individuality, acceptance and positive self-image. The simple rhyming text flows well and is supported by large diverse images showcasing hair in many forms. The bright and amusing digital illustrations add to the humour and extend the text. Discussion about personal features and our differences and similarities may ensue from a sharing this narrative. The vibrant cover, busy endpapers and the overall acceptance of hair in all manner of style will engage readers time and time again.



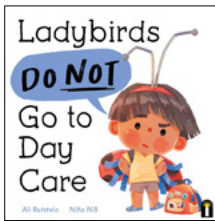
IN THE ROCKPOOL

Andrea Rowe

Illustrated by Hannah Sommerville

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Little Hare)

Beginning with 'one little rockpool' and ending with 'ten little fingers, ten little toes' this gorgeous large-format board book is an engaging and perfect way for introducing early counting to younger readers. With a suggested rhyme and songlike quality, the text's gentle rhythm propels the reader along with the children as they observe various sea creatures. The spare text features evocative verbs that perfectly match the action in the glowing illustrations which are sure to engross readers with their seek-and-find quality. High production values from the glistening foil cover to the sturdy pages add to the book's overall appeal.



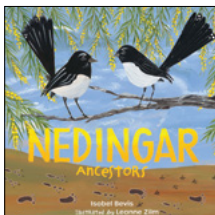
LADYBIRDS DO NOT GO TO DAY CARE

Ali Rutstein

Illustrated by Niña Nill

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Bright Light)

This is an engaging story about a boy who is feeling anxious about his first day of day care. Ravi uses his wonderful imagination and love of ladybirds to help to manage his fluctuating emotions. He knows all the characteristics of ladybirds and these are cleverly interwoven throughout the story. The book offers the opportunity to empathise, share worries and discuss strategies to relieve anxiety. The relationship between mother and child is beautifully portrayed as patient, playful, supportive and understanding, yet also the adult gently encourages her child to face his fears rather than give in to them. The final illustration of other children also dressed as creatures is such a reaffirming moment for Ravi.



NEDINGAR: ANCESTORS

Isobel Bevis

Illustrated by Leanne Zilm

Fremantle Press

This visually striking dual-language book gives a wonderful explanation of First Nations Country and Ancestors through a conversation between a mother and her child. The thoughtful text is well-spaced with the Noongar language followed by the English translation. The text is written in the first person and enriched by vivid and detailed acrylic illustrations of a playful Willy Wagtail chick and its mother, as they move about the bush that they share with other native animals against stunning backdrops of local flora. The story gently progresses with the mother's reassurances accompanied by the exquisite illustrations depicting small families of animals, echoing and subtly reinforcing the theme of the role of family in passing down language and culture from generation to generation.



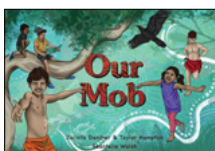
ONE LITTLE DUCK

Katrina Germein

Illustrated by Danny Snell

HarperCollins Publishers

Children acquainted with the traditional rhyme, Five Little Ducks, will be delighted with this inventive and surprising picture book about a mother duck who has forgotten how to quack! The familiarity of a farmyard setting is used throughout and the amusing farm animals are the heroes of this story. Page design and an engaging illustration layout together with the endpapers subtly connecting to wallpaper inside the duckhouse, combine with the lively, humorous text to create a cohesive and enjoyable reading (or singing!) experience. Every element of this book has been carefully considered, from the narrative pace to the visual humour, providing countless opportunities to revisit and retell stories, and to discuss and explore concepts such as sequencing and counting.



OUR MOB

Jacinta Daniher and Taylor Hampton

Illustrated by Seantelle Walsh

Ford Street Publishing

Fourteen Aboriginal children proudly introduce themselves, their Country, communities, experiences, activities and traditions in this book. Written in the first-person, each double-spread stands alone. Opening with the child's greeting in coloured font, young readers are prompted to participate. The language is simple, economical and age-appropriate, imparting snippets of information that are readily digested. It provides a wonderful opportunity for children to learn about aspects of Country & cultural daily life. Hyper-realistic digital illustrations fill the double spreads. Importantly, the children are depicted with varying skin tones, helping to deconstruct the myth that all First Nations people must have dark skin, hair and eye colours. Some additional information relating to language and Country is provided at the end.



RUBY'S REPAIR CAFÉ

Michelle Worthington

Illustrated by Zoe Bennett

New Frontier Publishing

Sustainability, friendship and the importance of community shine in this topical picture book, championing the actions of Ruby in an effort to save the family business. Young readers will applaud Ruby's resourcefulness and initiative, crafted in a plausible way. Simple yet descriptive text is interspersed with occasional alliteration and rhyme, seamlessly woven together. Design has been well-considered, with endpapers that tell the story in two simple, powerful full-page spreads, utilising a landscape format which carries the reader through the town from decline to revitalisation. The heart-warming resolution is skilfully depicted over several detailed double pages of vignettes. A series of small, framed illustrations, full of movement and activity, are accompanied by a few words leading to the satisfying final page.



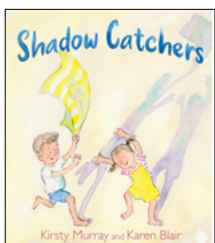
RUN PUPS RUN

Kerri Day

Illustrated by Nicky Johnston

Windy Hollow Books

Pure joy from start to finish, this exuberant invitation to join in the fun of a day at the beach with a family of young children and three pups is impossible to refuse. Short familiar words, skilfully used in the sparkling rhyming text, provide young children with an opportunity to attempt to read and recognise them independently. Gentle watercolour, ink, pencil and pastel illustrations in varying page layouts from double-page spreads to cinematic vignettes extend and enrich the succinct text. Mood has been carefully considered and there is a palpable shift in energy as the day draws to a close and energy levels drop. With an irresistible chorus, this engaging read-aloud is sure to delight and will demand repeated re-readings.



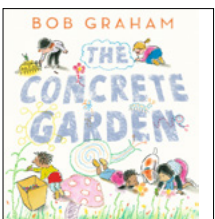
SHADOW CATCHERS

Kirsty Murray

Illustrated by Karen Blair

A & U Children

From the creators of Puddle Hunters comes another story that sings of the joy of a childhood pleasure, chasing shadows. Imaginative play and connecting to the natural world are key themes. The children's energy and excitement are palpable as they catch, feed, console and unexpectedly lose their shadows at midday. The sense of wonder and playfulness is reflected in the rich narrative, containing a sprinkling of similes and metaphors along with descriptive adjectives and verbs. The illustrations, created in soft lines and watercolour, are perfect for the ephemeral shadows and soft, golden light. Themed endpapers assist in depicting the passing of time from morning to night. A book that is sure to resonate with young readers, prompting animated discussions from children and adults alike.



THE CONCRETE GARDEN

Bob Graham

Walker Books Australia

An exuberant group of children spill out from the confines of a grey apartment block, finding joy in a simple box of chalk. The power of creativity and strength in community shine. Every aspect of the book is utilised, the narrative is extending to all elements of the peritext. Each character is named, creating a personal and connected feel for the reader. Language is simple and succinct, yet at times rich in imagery. Gentle, sensitive illustrations in watercolour, pencil and pastel capture moments of connection, artistry and occasional upsets with warmth and humour. A diverse range of characters are represented, living and playing together in a microcosm - a hopeful and much-needed view of how the world should be.



THE LITTLE THINGS

Penny Harrison

Illustrated by Hannah Sommerville

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Little Hare)

This gentle picture book draws the young reader's attention to the small, simple pleasures and treasures that may be found in a day. The narrative is gently paced, ensuring a calm and slow read, matching the tone of the book. Rhyming couplets, sprinkled with occasional alliteration, lend a consistent rhythm. Sensitive but playful, the text describes tangible everyday events connected to nature, family life or creative play. The colour palette and softened edges of the illustrations further enhance the mood. This story reflects a strong understanding of and appreciation for supporting a young child's sense of agency and independence by depicting various scenarios and ways that they can help themselves and others. It is a delight to read aloud.



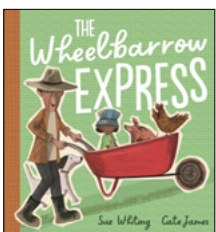
THE TREES

Victor Steffensen

Illustrated by Sandra Steffensen

Hardie Grant Explore

This informative and engaging book is a wonderful introduction to the connection First Nations people have with Country, their Elders and how caring for trees as Elders of Country is of vital importance. Uncle Kuu guides a diverse group of children through different habitats, including rainforests and grasslands, and introduces the Tree Elders of Country who describe ways in which old growth forests and trees have protected and helped First Nations people to survive and thrive over generations. Themes of respect for Country, conservation, the importance of transferring knowledge and culture resonate throughout the clear and concise text which is complemented by detailed full colour mixed media illustrations at times referencing dot painting and depicting both native flora and fauna.



THE WHEELBARROW EXPRESS

Sue Whiting

Illustrated by Cate James

Walker Books Australia

A heartwarming celebration of the loving bond between a child and grandparent is shared in this timeless narrative. Readers may be familiar with a wheelbarrow ride and will enjoy joining Tom and Pa on their last day on the farm together, journeying on the wheelbarrow express, collecting mementos and revisiting favourite spots and memories. The language is simple and accessible for young readers, with onomatopoeia and some verbs emphasised in a different font. Crucial to the narrative, the farm setting is gloriously reflected in the soft colour palette of blue, greens and browns. Avoiding sentimentality, the narrative alternates between the pair's genuine banter and playful descriptions of farmyard activities, and closes on a reassuring and satisfying note.



THESE LITTLE FEET

Hayley Rawsthorne

Illustrated by Briony Stewart

Allen & Unwin, (Albert Street Books)

Reminiscent of "Ten Little Fingers", this is a nostalgic ode to a newborn baby and their future life and potential. It is recounted in a lilting, lullaby rhyme, which is a delight to read aloud. Connecting this theme with the five senses and potential experiences is fresh and authentic. The narrative prompts the reader to touch the baby's feet, hands, eyes, ears and mouth whilst reading. Illustrations are emotive and intimate, allowing small insights into the lives of different and diverse families, and the full-page framed portraits and touching vignettes are suggestive of a family photo album. The place for the baby's footprint to be added lends another layer to the sentiment of the book.

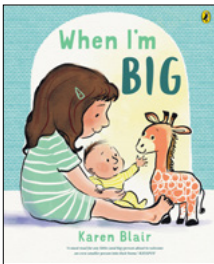


WE'RE MOVING AWAY

Niña Nill

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Bright Light)

The setting of a loving home, wherever that may be geographically, is the basis for this story, as a family says goodbye to one place and moves to another country. Themes of change, worries, resilience, belonging, family and new beginnings are all sensitively explored within a gentle, supportive framework. Detailed spreads visually documenting the belongings that a young boy packs and leaves behind will encourage young children to linger, observe and engage in conversations about the story. Design elements are strong and have been given careful consideration – the front cover is tactile, endpapers significantly connect to the story, the book is a good size for small hands, text is clear, economical and well placed.

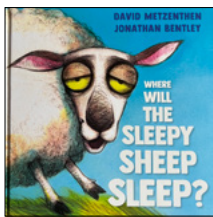


WHEN I'M BIG

Karen Blair

Penguin Random House, Australia (Puffin Books)

The endearing cover and delightful endpapers set the scene beautifully for this tender picture book about welcoming a new baby and growing up. This is a humorous story where a little girl “literally” imagines all sorts of different scenarios as she is told she is a big girl now. The building crescendo in tone, from amused imaginings about the quirky benefits of being big to anxious thoughts about fitting in anywhere, is skilfully realised through the spare text written in the first-person voice and the visual focus on the main character throughout. The child's voice is authentic and heart-felt and the final sequence is sensitively and satisfyingly handled through to the last page and line.



WHERE WILL THE SLEEPY SHEEP SLEEP?

David Metzenthen

Illustrated by Jonathan Bentley

A & U Children

Using rich language infused with wordplay, tongue-twisting humour, alliteration and assonance, this book is a pleasure to read aloud and will invite reader anticipation and participation. The repetitive rhyming text, when asking and answering each question, is an important learning tool for early learners' word recognition. Humorous, lively pencil and watercolour illustrations fill each double page spread as Sheep journeys over hills, down valleys and through paddocks in search of the ideal resting spot. The highly expressive illustrations convey the passing of time as the sky gradually darkens and Sheep's eyes become more hooded and dazed as he tires. Endpapers reflect the sheep's starting place and resting place, and the title page sets the tone with humour and energy.

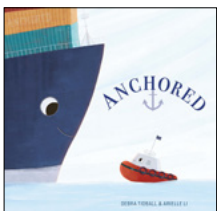
PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR



Entries in this category should be outstanding books of the Picture Book genre in which the author and illustrator achieve artistic and literary unity or, in wordless picture books, where the story, theme or concept is unified through illustrations. **Ages 0-18 years.**

Note: some of these books may be for mature readers.

The illustrator is listed first in this category.



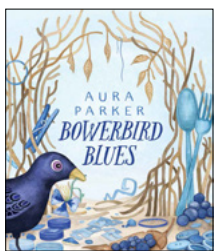
ANCHORED

Arielle Li

Written by Debra Tidball

Exisle Publishing (EK Books)

This gentle, emotional story celebrates friendship which helps weather any storm and makes the world seem brighter. Small Tug learns to cope with the absence of his friend Ship who ventures on long journeys across the deep ocean, discovering that a friend's presence remains firmly anchored in one's heart, regardless of distance. The story's language is evocative and rich, enlivened by literary devices such as simile, alliteration, personification and onomatopoeia. The narrative is elevated by illustrations that skilfully vary in layout and size, bound together by a softly muted colour palette transitioning from the light blue of the skies to the deeper and midnight blues of the ocean. From an appealing cover and attractive endpapers to the overall harmony between written text and illustrations, it is an example of an excellently designed and effective picture book.

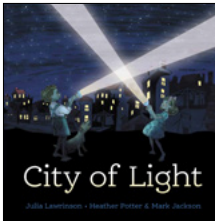


BOWERBIRD BLUES

Aura Parker

Scholastic Australia

This lyrical story follows the journey of a bowerbird on his quest for all things blue, all the while feeling that something is amiss in his life. The bowerbird's collection dominated by plastic caps, straws and tags invites reflection on environmental pollution and its challenges. The story's language is ornate, expressive and rhythmically appealing. Striking illustrations masterfully integrate with the text, significantly enhancing the narrative. The layout and design, including 'Can you find these?' sections at the front and back, engage readers and maintain interest throughout. The endpapers are marvellous, introducing the bowerbird in an urban setting before he discovers what's missing in his life and closing with the bird reclaiming its harmonic existence in a lush forest with a soulmate by its side, illustrating how his life was meant to be.



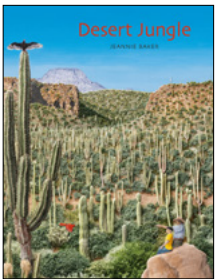
CITY OF LIGHT

Heather Potter and Mark Jackson

Written by Julia Lawrinson

Wild Dog Books

A highly original re-telling of the actions of the residents of Perth who created 'The City of light' for astronaut John Glenn who was the first American to orbit the Earth. The evocative illustrations provide a historical snapshot of 1962 through the furniture, fashion, vehicles and media sources. The delightfully retro-feel of the text is skilfully designed including clever newspaper-style endpapers and a highly engaging cover image. The simple, lyrical text conveys the story beautifully and complements and enhances the visual elements of the narrative. Likewise, the representation of setting through both text and visuals, contributes significantly to the storyline, providing a very strong sense of time and place.



DESERT JUNGLE

Jeannie Baker

Walker Books Australia

This multi-layered book explores the transformative power of nature and highlights the importance of overcoming modern disconnections from the natural world. Inspired by the author's residency in the Sonoran Desert, Mexico's hottest locale, the story tells of a boy who, initially fearing his desert home, learns to appreciate its dangers and natural beauty through his grandfather's guidance. It addresses a concerning trend among children overly attached to gadgets whose detachment from nature causes a phobia known as 'nature-deficit disorder'. The narrative, though concise, employs some sophisticated vocabulary, while the story's depth is magnified through stunning wordless pages and relief collages. These meticulously researched and detailed illustrations invite further exploration of the story's nuanced themes and celebrate the desert's biodiversity dispelling myths of it being a barren wasteland.



DORRIE

Tania McCartney

HarperCollins Children's Books

This engaging biographic narrative of the creator of Blinky Bill is creatively depicted through a pleasing combination of sophisticated prose and captivating illustrations. The language effectively captures the place, character and mood of her imagined adventures, and the highly detailed illustrations provide lovely references to the era, as well as representing quintessentially Australian flora and fauna. The artistic style and chosen colour palette are beautifully executed with the character of Dorrie sympathetically presented throughout this high-quality production. The included peritext provides important contextual information about Dorothy Wall's life. The inclusion of charming endpapers and a textured front cover complete the package of this highly accomplished work.



EVERY NIGHT AT MIDNIGHT

Peter Cheong

Affirm Press

This highly original and engaging book about staying true to one's identity and finding friendship in an unlikely place would be very appealing for the younger reader. Evocative language is used effectively, setting the tone for this whimsical story and maintaining mood throughout. Soft rhythm and effective repetition of phrasing reinforce elements of the narrative with a minimalistic approach used in placement of written text between each double page spread. Illustrative style is creative with colour palette perfectly matched to the written text. Design and layout are imaginative and creative in reinforcing and expanding on the narrative. Visuals provide added elements to the written text e.g. the subtle shadows in some windows towards the end of the book hint at another layer to the narrative.



GOOD MORNING, MY DEER!

Sophie Beer

Written by Mel Amon

Scribe Publications (Scribble Kid's Books)

This book offers a lighthearted glimpse into a typical day in Banjo's life, engaging readers with playful word games involving homophones and homonyms that craft clever dual meanings. The bright and cheerful illustrations complement the text's wit, enriching the humour with visual puzzles that play on words not directly mentioned in the narrative. An illustration of a pie marked with '3.14' cleverly references the mathematical constant 'Pi', challenging the readers' wits beyond mere interpretation of the narrative. The book's cleverness unfolds with each page turn, culminating in the closing endpapers where readers are presented with a visual and written checklist that catalogues the homophonic word pairs encountered throughout the story, inviting readers to engage and reflect on the linguistic creativity they've just experienced.



IF I WAS A HORSE

Sophie Blackall

Hachette Australia (Lothian Children's Books)

Attention is demanded right from the appealing dust jacket and clever endpaper illustrations that communicate the context of childhood growth beautifully. Full of imagination and gentle humour, the main character leads the reader through highly relatable aspects of family life through the perspective of a horse. The delightful illustrations provide outstanding detail and invite the reader to pore over the images. The simple plot is expressed through scarce but rhythmic text, with the exquisite illustrations doing most of the storytelling. The clever representation of home and school settings effectively contributes to the storyline of playful rebellion against the 'constraints' of childhood.



LADYBIRDS DO NOT GO TO DAY CARE

Niña Nill

Written by Ali Rutstein

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Bright Light)

This delightful story follows anxious Ravi as he faces day care for the first time. With his mother's gentle support, Ravi transitions from concocting endearing plots to avoid daycare to finding the courage to go inside, eventually realising this new experience is not as daunting but rather fun after all. The narrative is infused with gentle humour, effectively mirrored in the original, contemporary-feel illustrations that are sure to capture the imagination of young readers. The book's design promotes engagement through varied illustration sizes and text placement. Its striking cover and bright ladybird spots patterned endpapers offer a glimpse into this relatable, charming story, culminating in a satisfying conclusion.



LEAF-LIGHT, A STORY ABOUT CARING FOR EACH OTHER

Trace Balla

A & U Children

This well-crafted, multi-layered story explores a confluence of themes that can inspire discussions about the values of friendship, multicultural community connections, social action, sustainability and wildlife rescue. It also offers a glimpse into the First Nations knowledge of the Djaara country people and their pursuits and shares a captivating dreamtime story of Barramal (the Big Emu). A seamless blend of text and illustrations creates a symbiotic harmony, weaving together a rich array of characters, a compelling narrative arc and converging subplots for an almost cinematic experience. Original illustrations range from framed comic-like strips with speech bubbles to intricate double-page spreads, annotated throughout with textual labelling of landscapes, natural elements and curious observations. This marvellously detailed book offers a lot to engage with for a patient and inquisitive reader.



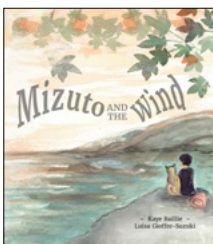
LITTLE TREASURE

Jennifer Goldsmith

Written by Chanelle Gosper

Hachette Australia (Lothian Children's Books)

What a treasure this book is – a delightful tale for younger readers exploring the power of imagination, beautifully conveying the loving bond between a mother and child enjoying quality time at the beach. The language employs effortless rhyme with a lovely rhythm that complements the mood and tone of the themes and limited colour-palette images. The retro styling of the pencil and watercolour collage illustrations are original and full of whimsy, enhancing the sophisticated vocabulary included in the written text. The characters of mother and child are highly plausible and their interactions provide the bulk of the narrative's action. The beach setting is central to the storyline, conveying a strong sense of place and providing a relatable backdrop for the simple linear plot that concludes with a satisfying resolution. The design elements of this production, including endpapers and cover image, are expertly executed and this book will no doubt become a family favourite for many.



MIZUTO AND THE WIND

Luisa Gioffre-Suzuki

Written by Kaye Baillie

MidnightSun Publishing

A gentle narrative about loss, grief and coping. Simple language is utilised to convey the sense of loss following the disappearance of Mizuto's father after a tsunami. The visual effect of flowing language reinforces the movement of the tsunami as it flows across the land with choice of vocabulary reinforcing the meaning. Illustrations are of a high standard. Colour palette is varied and often subdued and having an emotional impact on the reader. From a black and white palette conveying the emotional value of the character's loss, to beautiful colours and greens of acceptance and loving memories. The visual and literary rendering of the story's setting is likewise effective. Author's note at the beginning of the book provides context for the narrative.



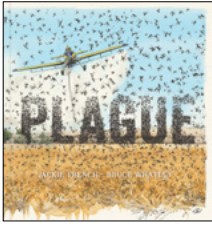
PAPER-FLOWER GIRL

Mateja Jager

Written by Margrete Lamond

WestWords (Dirt Lane Press)

This exquisite, high-quality picture book captivates from the soft, detailed cover and beautiful endpapers through to the very end. Language is poetic and evocative, successfully using a range of literary devices (repetition, rhythm, rhyme) to create mood and atmosphere. Vocabulary is sophisticated taking the reader on a journey with the unfurling story of the girl, her creativity and the giant and his demands. Bolding and changes in size and positioning of the text is utilised effectively, enhancing the message. Artwork is exceptional, at times almost creating an additional narrative thread, at others extending the feelings and actions of the characters. Variations in colour palette reflect the changing mood, emotions and dialogue between the girl and the giant. Use of changes in perspective and positioning is creative and original.



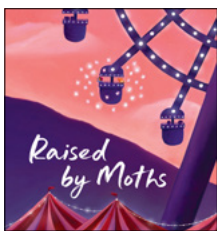
PLAGUE

Bruce Whatley

Written by Jackie French

Scholastic Australia

High-level production with masterful illustrations that support and extend the text, this book explores the theme of environmental sustainability. Narration from the perspective of a locust is original, encouraging empathy towards challenges faced by the species. Language is simple and kept to a minimum on each page, at times allowing illustrations to dominate the narrative and its implications. Inference is strong throughout the text, from the implied meaning of not listening to the wisdom of First Peoples, through to mismanagement of the locust problem and the subsequent impact. Illustrations, created digitally, effectively reflect the narrative and enhance meaning. Beautiful colour palette dominated by natural and earthy tones suits the story's theme and mood very well. Variation in design and layout maximise interest, with author's notes at the back of the book providing factual context.



RAISED BY MOTHS

Michelle Conn

Written by Charlie Archbold

MidnightSun Publishing

An original and heart-warming story of two children who come together by chance on a ferris wheel. It is a subtle exploration of life before adoption that captures the wonder and beauty of a child's imagination. The sophisticated written text is evocative of place, character and mood and marries very well with the limited palette illustrations representing the 'night light sparkle' of the fairground setting. The visual storytelling of a child raised by moths is engaging and stimulates further exploration of the subtext within the narrative. The enchanting and uplifting resolution and coda complete the narrative beautifully.



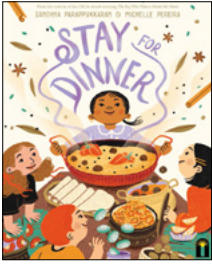
SATIN

Lorena Carrington

Written by Sophie Masson

MidnightSun Publishing

This beautifully illustrated and evocative book sets the mood with subtlety, from the minimalistic cover through to the end. The title cleverly connects the concept of collection of all things blue by satin bowerbirds with the theme of the book, reinforced by the subtle placement of images of the bird on subsequent pages. The development of the storyline uses a sophisticated economy of language, clearly depicting setting, character and intent of the narrative. Illustrations reinforce and enhance the written text. The mainly blue/black colour palette forms a perfect backdrop to the written text and reinforces the message, with the occasional pink and gold accents highlighting the hope within. Gorgeous endpapers create a collage of familiar blue things, complementing the main body of the text.



STAY FOR DINNER

Michelle Pereira

Written by Sandhya Parappukkaran

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Bright Light)

Accomplished storytelling with a simple and predictable plot, satisfying ending and some humour included. This bright, cheerful book explores the theme of diversity through the lens of various cultures' cuisines and dinner table behaviours and customs. Design and colour palette of the textured cover are appealing, contrasting with the soft hues of the endpapers that give a hint of what's inside. Language choices effectively convey the mood of the narrative and rhythm and rhyme, where used, sit naturally within the text. High-quality illustrations complement the written text beautifully, enhancing and expanding on the themes within and portraying the emotions and actions of the characters. This is a well-designed, written and illustrated picture book well-suited to the target audience.



THAT BIRD HAS ARMS

Niharika Hukku and Ronojoy Ghosh

Written by Kate and Jol Temple

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing (Little Hare)

This quirky story oozes originality. It embraces popular culture, such as social media and popularity contests and cleverly explores themes of identity and accepting difference through the main character, Roy, a bird with human-like arms. The use of language is sophisticated and engaging, featuring direct speech of the avian characters alongside more traditional narration. The high-quality, colourful and engaging illustrations represent characters effectively and provide a clever sub-text to the narrative, including gentle humour appropriate for a dual audience. There is pleasing symmetry between the text and visual elements that embodies the mood and enhances the narrative. The plot that follows Roy coming to terms with his difference, as well as others' eventual acceptance of him includes a joy-filled resolution.



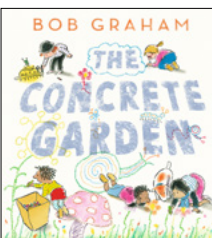
THE BLACK COCKATOO WITH ONE FEATHER BLUE

Eloise Short

Written by Jodie McLeod

Wollemi Press

A delightful narrative that explores themes of identity, friendship and kindness through anthropomorphic Australian characters that embark on an adventurous quest. From its attractive cover and appealing silhouette endpapers, to its heart-warming resolution, this high-quality production is suited to younger readers. The undulating rhyme and almost musical rhythm flows wonderfully, with the clever use of alliteration and repetition adding to its read-aloud appeal. The highly accomplished illustrations, using muted and earthy tones, complement and enhance the written verse and facilitate a joyful celebration of the Australian bush setting. The final page of the book provides readers with further information about black cockatoos in Australia and urges readers to help save the habitat of black cockatoos.

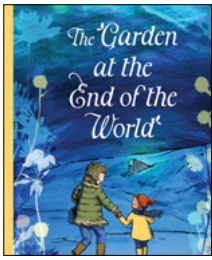


THE CONCRETE GARDEN

Bob Graham

Walker Books Australia

A gentle tale of creativity and community spirit. Vivid, colourful language is simple, yet evocative and well-suited to the younger audience, displaying a mastery of using words to paint images. Minimal text is placed on each page, often allowing illustrations to dominate and provide opportunities for further discussion and exploration. Illustrations provide further inference e.g. housing block portrayed as grey and lifeless in comparison to the colour of the garden drawn in chalk, with the colour from the garden seeping onto the lower levels of the block. Layout and design are accomplished and effective to engage the reader. Simple endpapers reinforce the message of the journey and creativity in visual arts starting with a simple act of making a mark or drawing the first line.



THE GARDEN AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Briony Stewart

Written by Cassy Polimen

University of Queensland Press

A skilfully told story that introduces children to the concept of protecting natural resources and diversity of crops for future generations by storing seeds in the world's largest seed repository. High quality production and design with beautiful endpapers. Illustrations have variation of shot-type and angles, synthesising skilfully with the text and providing complementary information about setting and theme. The colour scheme changes to match the settings effectively. Compositions and angles are varied and interesting, the spread with the Northern Lights dancing across the skies is magnificent. Written text uses sophisticated vocabulary with various sentence types and effective use of noun groups, repetition and figurative language, including similes and metaphors. The settings are represented beautifully and help set the overall tone of hope in the future.



THE LUCKY SHACK

Jennifer Falkner

Written by Apsara Baldovino

HarperCollins Publishers (Working Title Press)

This is a story about hope and renewal, told from the perspective of a personified shack. The story's language is powerfully evocative, weaving sophisticated vocabulary and figurative language imagery through its rhythmical first-person prose. Skilful illustrations reflect the changing mood of the shack as it transitions from inhabited to abandoned. The rich dark blue palette gradually lightens, symbolizing renewal as the shack is revitalised by a new family. The expansive landscape format beautifully showcases its stunning panoramic illustrations, from natural settings to the shack's inviting interiors, encouraging readers to envision themselves cozied up by the fireplace. The cover's breathtaking panoramic view, the endpapers evoking a starry night and seamlessly blending with the book's overall design, beautifully enhance its literary and artistic merits.

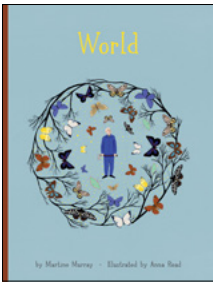


TIMELESS

Kelly Canby

Freemantle Press

Witty, entertaining and visually delightful, this book delves into time and time constraints through young Emit's eyes, whose family always craves more hours in its day. Minimal but sophisticated, the well-thought-out text distils the complexity of the abstract concept it explores, cleverly playing with time related idioms and word puns. Bright, engaging illustrations, as if hand-drawn by a child, seamlessly integrate with the printed text demonstrating excellence in design. Varied layouts and perspectives enrich the visual experience, with key ideas highlighted through vibrantly colourful large text that sometimes becomes part of the composition. The masterfully crafted endpapers, in a league of their own, entertain and encourage further reflection about time and our relationship with it, while echoing a satisfying resolution to Emit's own search for time.



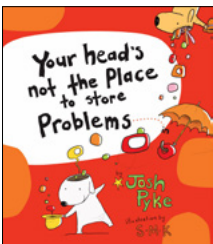
WORLD

Anna Read

Written by Martine Murray

Parachute Press

A powerful fable paying homage to the magnificent 'world' of a single tree and lamenting the perils of urbanisation and consumerism through the growing wisdom of the main character. The aesthetic qualities of the written prose, initially relying heavily on direct speech and later including the narrator's observations, is highly appropriate to place, character and mood. The evocative illustrations rendered in earthy and dark tones show texture and movement and skilfully complement the somewhat sombre tone of the narrative. The effective synergy between the lyrical text and the illustrations stimulates reflection of the significance of trees. The inclusion of information at the end of the book about different types of trees, and the species that inhabit them, provides a useful launching point for readers wishing to explore further.



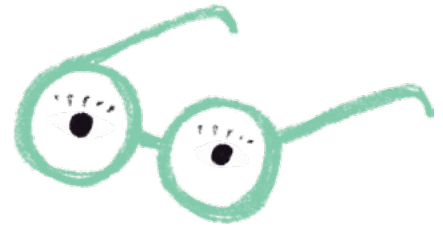
YOUR HEAD'S NOT THE PLACE TO STORE PROBLEMS

Stephen Michael King

Written by Josh Pyke

Scholastic Australia

This whimsical and quirky book about dealing with life and its ups and downs is a delight from beginning to end. Written text skilfully incorporates rhyme, rhythm and repetition of phrasing for effect and to reinforce concepts (a little reminiscent of some Dr Seuss books). Visual imagery of problems and ideas filling brains is clever and portrayed in a way that would amuse the young reader and communicate the message within but not overwhelm. Illustrations effectively support what can be seen as somewhat of an abstract narrative. Illustrative style and strong use of colour are allowed to shine and complement the written text with variations in colour and tone used to reflect changes in mood. Layout and design (both for visual and written text) are varied and effective in maintaining engagement.

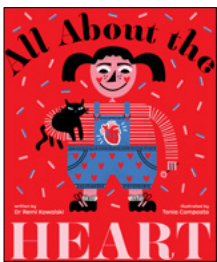


EVE POWNALL AWARD

Entries in this category should be books which have the prime intention of documenting factual material with consideration given to imaginative presentation, interpretation and variation of style.

Ages 0-18 years.

Note: some books in this category are for mature readers and may deal with particularly challenging themes including violence and suicide. Parental guidance is recommended.



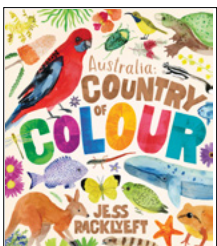
ALL ABOUT THE HEART

Remi Kowalski

Illustrated by Tonia Composto

Berbay Publishing

This vibrantly illustrated book takes us on a journey through all things 'heart' and 'heart-related'. Fun-filled pages are packed with detailed illustrations which complement the simple, clear style of text. Information about the heart is innovatively presented. Factual and scientific information is expressed in a conversational manner which allows for the information to be absorbed without it becoming overwhelming or frightening. The physical details of the heart and how it operates are explored but so are the emotional aspects and the importance of socialising, good diet and exercise. The human heart is not the only one discussed. Curious facts about hearts in other animals are also covered, including the few animals who don't have hearts and the animal which has the largest heart. The production is of the highest standard. No two pages are the same and the reader can delight in time spent exploring the detail on each page. A glossary is included as well as cute endpapers covered in hearts.

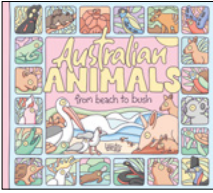


AUSTRALIA: COUNTRY OF COLOUR

Jess Racklyeft

Affirm Press

Presented through the lens of the colour wheel, this magnificent book takes your breath away with its visually stunning exploration of Australian landscapes, flora and fauna. The colours of Australia are magnificently celebrated as the vivid red dirt, endless blue skies, golden sandy beaches and magical green bush land are beautifully recreated. With the turning of each page the reader is presented with new delights as landscapes, animals and plants are organised in colour categories of varying hues. The text draws on scientific knowledge and research which works in harmony with the illustrations to build visual literacy and animal and plant recognition. Strong links between colour and emotion, and of the feelings associated with particular colours are explained as is the importance of caring for Country.

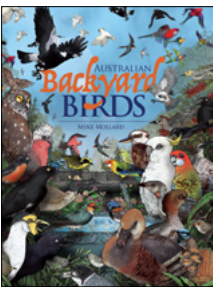


AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS: FROM BEACH TO BUSH

Brentos

Affirm Press

This gorgeous picture book explores Australian animals in an interactive and informative way. Wonderful colour palette of muted pastels and almost childlike illustrations take us on a journey through the Australian wildlife. The book includes a key to demonstrate levels of concern surrounding the animals from 'least concern' to 'extinct'. This key is used throughout the book on each page and contributes to the uniqueness of the book and also the interactivity. Each page highlights a particular animal, however many other animals are featured and readers can spend their time trying to find the animals. The book is organised not just around the focus animal on each page but also areas of geographical features. Mountains, Coral reefs, and Kelp Forests for example. A visually splendid book with a wonderfully effective use of text to impart information. The book also provides ideas for assisting in caring for our wildlife which allows the reader to feel a sense of empowerment.

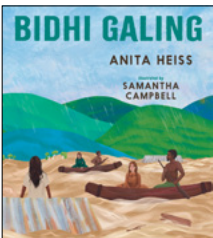


AUSTRALIAN BACKYARD BIRDS

Mike Mollard

Woodslane Press

A jam-packed book of information depicted in pictures and in text. Starting and ending with magnificent end papers there is detail on every page. The detail is easily digestible and the text clear and accessible. Organised around geographical areas of Australia, the reader is able to find information simply. Each page has a full-page colourful illustration and sometimes there is a double-page spread. Identification keys are included and adds to the fun of locating the birds in the illustration. The book also discusses the depletion of certain birds and the causes of the depletion. Sometimes this is due to introduced species. The environment and environment change are detailed when relevant. There is also a chapter on birdwatching and how to do it. This is a great example of modern-day non-fiction and its ability to impart lots of information in an effective way, rather than in large parts of dry text. A stunningly produced, meticulously researched and wonderfully illustrated book.



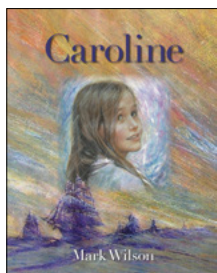
BIDHI GALING

Anita Heiss

Illustrated by Samantha Campbell

Simon & Schuster

Skilfully crafted by renowned First Nations author and academic Anita Heiss, the synergy between word and image is facilitated with captivating illustrations by Samantha Campbell. The true story of the Great Flood of Gundagai in 1852, this narrative unfolds through rich characters and offers a unique perspective on Wiradyuri heroes Yarri and Jacky Jacky. The digital illustrations, rich in blues and greens, immerse readers in the landscape, enhancing the storytelling. The integration of Wiradjuri language throughout, accompanied by a well-executed glossary, adds authenticity and understanding. The QR code for listening to the author and accessing educational resources elevates the reading experience. Bidhi Galing not only explores the historical narrative but also serves as a crucial lesson on the consequences of disregarding indigenous knowledge. The book's relevance extends with parallels to modern floods, making it a compelling and informative read for all ages.

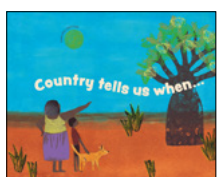


CAROLINE

Mark Wilson

Windy Hollow Books

Artfully crafted by Mark Wilson, contributing a beautifully illustrated and poignant chapter to the recording of Australian history. Wilson's distinctive colour palette, shading, and pencil effects create an evocative atmosphere, which draws readers into Caroline Chisholm's personal narrative. The organisation of paintings featuring character portraits modeled on real people maximises dramatic impact, and strategically spaced full-colour pictures focus attention on crucial events. The use of sepia tones on certain pages guides the narrative flow. Caroline Chisholm's remarkable compassion and resilience unfold through accessible storytelling, capturing early Australian history with authenticity. The inclusion of a timeline detailing Chisholm's achievements adds depth to the narrative. Caroline is a visually striking, historically rich, and emotionally resonant portrayal of an influential figure in Australia's development.

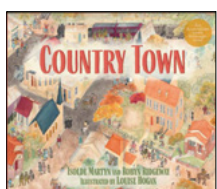


COUNTRY TELLS US WHEN

Tsheena Cooper, Mary Dann, Dalisa Pigram-Ross and Sheree Ford

Indigenous Literacy Foundation

Thoughtfully presented in every aspect, this information picture book seamlessly blends cultural richness and educational value. With a primary focus on Yawuru mob's profound connection with the land, the book masterfully navigates the 6 seasons through vibrant illustrations that mirror the Kimberley's colours. The consistent color scheme and double-page spreads create an immersive experience, complementing the authentic information shared by Yawuru educators. The book's title becomes a rhythmic refrain, emphasising its thematic core. The integration of indigenous language, bold type, and English labels fosters a dynamic learning experience. The innovative offer of the QR code presents bilingual storytelling and pronunciation guidance. The inclusion of a Yawuru calendar at the book's conclusion enhances understanding. *Country Tells Us When* stands out as a visually stunning, culturally rich, and educationally impactful book, which will captivate both young and older audiences with its seamless blend of storytelling and information.



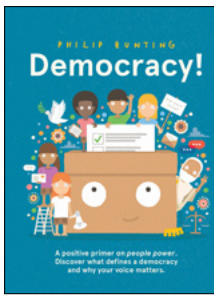
COUNTRY TOWN

Isolde Martyn and Robyn Ridgeway

Illustrated by Louise Hogan

Ford Street Publishing

An absolutely invaluable resource this decade-by-decade history of a fictional Australian country town is extensively researched and beautifully illustrated. The story of the town is very real and child focused. The colour palette is varied and reflects each decade, with intricate detail in every scene. The fascinating changes shown in the town through each decade reflects the changes happening in Australian society. Both text and illustrations encourage interaction, with readers being asked to find particular details in the intricate illustrations and to consider issues raised. We are taken on a fascinating journey which begins in the camp of a First Nations clan and concludes in the present day. Major themes and significant issues including land rights, immigration and climate change are woven into the narrative. Primary sources, including first-hand accounts, bring history to life and stimulate further research. A Timeline provides a useful history of major developments in the town.

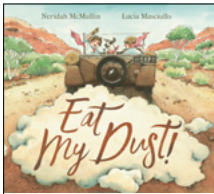


DEMOCRACY!

Philip Bunting

Hardie Grant Children's Publishing

This is indeed a positive primer on people power. Created in consultation with the Museum of Australian Democracy, Canberra, the layout and typography together with the illustrations create a visually stimulating and informative text. The well-researched text takes on a coherent identity which is presented in a very engaging and child-friendly way. Democracy is compared to a plant whose seeds were sown a long-time ago and which each generation has nurtured and protected. Many aspects of democracy are explained in a concise way and easily understood. The iconography on the endpapers provides opportunity for discussion and leads the reader into the information contained in the text. Readers are encouraged to be active participants in government.

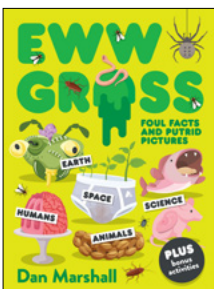


EAT MY DUST

Neridah McMullin and Lucia Masciullo

Walker Books Australia

Standing out as a captivating narrative, *Eat My Dust* delves into a lesser-known chapter of early Australian history. The vivid illustrations convey the vastness of outback Australia, capturing the beauty of the landscape and country sights. The narrative unfolds with a fast-paced, adventurous spirit, encapsulating the determination of Jean Robertson and Kathleen Howell, who defied gender norms in their 1928 quest to break the land speed record. The repeated motif of 'eat my dust' symbolises their fearless departure from societal constraints. The inclusion of archival photos, factual inserts, and historical references enriches the storytelling, providing depth to the remarkable achievements of these two trailblazing adventurers. This book not only entertains but also inspires, making it an exemplar text in its portrayal of courage, historical significance, and the enduring spirit of adventure.

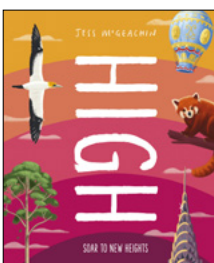


EWW GROSS: FOUL FACTS AND PUTRID PICTURES

Dan Marshall

Pantera Press

With such an enticing title and colourful cover, the promise of foul facts and putrid pictures would invite any child who loves 'things that are grim, gross, odious, offensive and horrid' to delve into the pages. The book is divided into five sections, with the contents page outlining the wide range of topics covered with a heavy emphasis on well researched science foul facts from around the world and outer space. Our guide, Slimon, makes the book highly interactive as he invites us to use the grossometer to rate the most disgusting facts and asks questions throughout and suggests activities and experiments. The text and brightly coloured digital illustrations work beautifully together. Loaded with filthy bite-sized facts making learning fun and interactive.



HIGH

Jess McGeachin

Welbeck Publishing

This hardcover reference picture book unfolds layers of information about what exists above us. The stratified endpapers set an atmospheric scene, and carefully laid-out text boxes ensure an informative and thorough reading experience. The book's dedication echoes the vital theme of environmental care, repeated throughout. McGeachin invites readers to buckle up and soar through sections like 'High Life' and 'High Skies,' fostering reader engagement. Packed with interesting facts, the text's organisation allows for a flexible reading experience. *High* presents a positive message, offering solutions to global challenges, making it an empowering and visually stunning journey through the wonders of our planet.

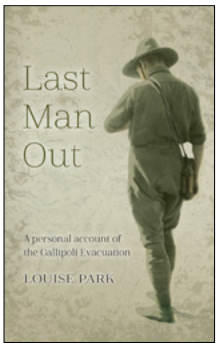


HOW WE CAME TO BE: CREATURES OF CAMOUFLAGE AND MIMICRY

Sami Bayly

Hachette Australia (Lothian Children's Books)

A fabulous fun and informative book by Sami Bayly. Scattered throughout are trademark illustrations of animals drawn with amazing detail and accuracy. There are interesting and quirky facts on each page, along with speech bubbles as Sami Bayly goes on a journey of discovery and 'talks' with the animals. The book is arranged around the five main types of camouflage found in the animal world and this allows for a range of completely different types of animals to be showcased on one page. A beautifully designed and presented book which fits nicely alongside Sami Bayly's earlier award-winning books. The conversation style of the pages adds fun and interaction for the reader to the story and provides a unique way of imparting the information. The front and back endpapers are also included in the book with further illustrations and animals featured.

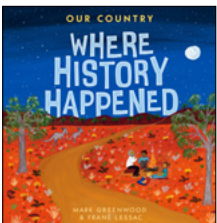


LAST MAN OUT

Louise Park

Wild Dog Books

A biographical account, skilfully narrated by Louise Park, the granddaughter of the protagonist, John Alexander Park. The book's high production quality, coupled with a unique notebook format reminiscent of a Gallipoli soldier's diary, adds a layer of realism and engagement. Park's accessible writing style, combined with coloured photographs, effectively maintains reader interest and enhances the storytelling. The book sheds light on a lesser-known aspect of history, offering suspense through thoughtfully named chapters. The use of primary sources, images, and letters, along with a comprehensive bibliography, underscores the author's commitment to authenticity. This personal chronicle portrays the remarkable bravery and mateship of Gallipoli soldiers, creating a captivating narrative that is both respectful and accessible to young readers. *Last Man Out* is a testament to historical significance, blending quality storytelling with educational value.



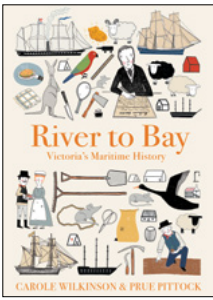
OUR COUNTRY: WHERE HISTORY HAPPENED

Mark Greenwood

Illustrated by Franè Lessac

Walker Books Australia

Another outstanding contribution to the story of our country by this prolific and brilliant duo. Beautifully and comprehensively told in distinctive style and incorporating much significant historical information, this is a colourful feast for the eyes. The front and back endpapers illustrate a timeline of noteworthy historical events, with each location also including the names of the traditional owners of the land. It includes a strong focus on First Nations history and wider aspects of Australian culture, identity and history, including reference to the Dutch (Dirk Hartog), Chinese history, and female history. With three types of side-by-side story it cleverly provides readers with different levels of language and accessibility. The artistic style is very appealing and child-friendly and the reader is invited to visit the many corners of Australia where history is calling.



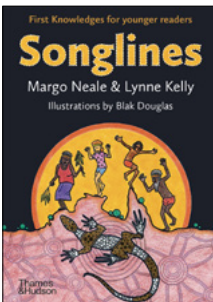
RIVER TO BAY: VICTORIA'S MARITIME HISTORY

Carole Wilkinson

Illustrated by Prue Pittock

Wild Dog Books

Tracing the rich story of Victoria's maritime history, this book is both visually stunning and extensively researched. Rich in content with interesting historical information, the book traces the history of the Melbourne area from the earliest settlement of the Woiwurrung people of the Kulin Nation to present day. The contents page lists significant events in the history of the Melbourne area, describing maritime history from river to bay, incorporating the fateful interactions between settlers and first peoples. The story ends in a positive note with traditional owners committing to the protection of the Birrarung (Yarra). The muted colours and restrictive palette bring to life the environment and lifestyle of the period. The glossary and index are extensive with the visually appealing cover complemented by beautiful endpapers.



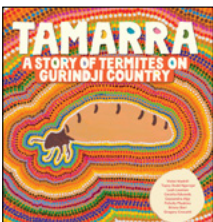
SONGLINES: FIRST KNOWLEDGES FOR YOUNGER READERS

Margo Neale and Lynne Kelly

Illustrated by Blak Douglas

Thames & Hudson Australia

Part of the *First Knowledges for younger readers* series, this is an adaptation for younger readers of the critically acclaimed *Songlines* book. The reader is invited to 'walk together through the oldest, biggest library of knowledge on earth' to gain an understanding of a term often heard, but not easily understood. The book is divided into nine chapters with Dreaming stories linked to each chapter. Your Turn, which concludes each section asks thoughtful questions and suggests activities. The layout and design are organised with real thoughtfulness, intentionally and a considered approach as extensive knowledge of culture is captured. The book provides a deeper understanding of songlines which are more than a navigational path but hold vast stores of information encoded through song, dance, art and ceremony. Knowledge is stored in the land, sea and sky.



TAMARRA: A STORY OF TERMITES ON GURINDJI COUNTRY

Violet Wadrill, Topsy Dodd Ngarnjal, Leah Leaman, Cecelia Edwards,
Cassandra Algy, Felicity Meakins, Briony Barr, Gregory Crocetti

Hardie Grant Explore

A collaboration between Ngumpin (First Nations) and Kartiya (non-Indigenous) cultures resulted in the creation of this glorious book. The Tamarra Project involved over 30 Gurindji Elders, artists, storytellers, scientists and linguists. From the visually stunning front cover to each glorious page after page of magnificent culturally significant paintings, the reader is drawn into the text. The visual organisation of the text, with the three languages featured colour coded, makes the information easily digestible. The glossary provides a guide to pronunciation, with each word featured in colour in the story also listed in the Glossary. A QR code allows the reader to hear the story read in language. The interweaving of culture and detailed information of termites is cleverly done and 'Did You Know?' sections throughout encourage engagement. Truly a labour of love.



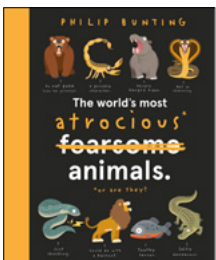
THE FORGOTTEN SONG: SAVING THE REGENT HONEYEATER

Coral Vass

Illustrated by Jess Racklyeft

CSIRO Publishing

The exceptional blending of mixed media and watercolor illustrations with the captivating narrative on the plight of the regent honeyeater make this text so engaging. The uniquely Australian landscapes, represented through evocative visuals, make this publication stand out. The magical story unfolds with ancient bird songs filling the forests, creating a timeless and enchanting atmosphere. Racklyeft’s artistry beautifully amplifies the text, seamlessly incorporating historical elements to showcase the regent honeyeater’s representation over the years. The sad yet evocative journey, coupled with cleverly integrated scientific methods, offers a poignant narrative. The book empowers readers with facts, a timeline, and a glossary, highlighting the environmental impact and human intervention in bird conservation. *The Forgotten Song: Saving the Regent Honeyeater* stands as a visually stunning, educational, and empowering exploration of Australia’s birdlife, encouraging positive change.

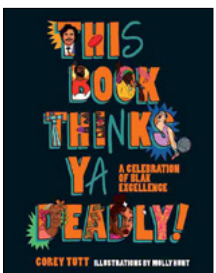


THE WORLD’S MOST ATROCIOUS ANIMALS

Philip Bunting

Hardie Grant’s Children’s Publishing (Little Hare)

Another high-quality book from prolific author/illustrator Philip Bunting. The front cover sets the tone with the variety of animals depicted on it and the quirky ‘side comments’ attached. The inside cover is then covered with many different animals, all ‘atrocious’ in some way. To assist in understanding the animals, there is a detailed contents page and detailed index page both of which are illustrated with cute depictions of atrocious animals. A beautifully clear font is used throughout and gives the information about each animal on the page. Large illustrations are featured on each page, with fun annotations in a different font which highlight some of the more extreme and unusual facts about the animals. The Latin name for each animal is also included under the common name of each animal. The Latin name is then struck out and replaced with a comical ‘pretend’ Latin name. All these features contribute to the interactivity of the book and information, while making it a humorous and delightful experience to read. The sharing of scientific information has been cleverly conveyed in this book in an innovative and appealing way.



THIS BOOK THINKS YA DEADLY!

Corey Tutt

Illustrated by Molly Hunt

Hardie Grant Explore

A comprehensive book of short-form biographies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Highly detailed, and researched the book is divided into chapters of cultural and societal significance and goes beyond simply featuring the usual sporting heroes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. It includes an introduction from the author, an AIATSIS map, acknowledgements and also a section for the reader to fill in about themselves and their ‘deadly’ attributes. This book is on a level rarely seen before in compilation of heroes and important people. Each person featured has a large portrait set beside a page detailing the person’s attributes, significance and contribution to society. The Aboriginal lands they come from are also clearly listed next to their names. A true celebration of ‘blak’ excellence, this book has been produced with the highest production values.



UNIVERSAL GUIDE TO THE NIGHT SKY

Lisa Harvey-Smith

Illustrated by Sophie Beer

Thames & Hudson

A fabulous book of thrilling information about the stars and planets, constellations and generally all things to do with our night sky. The author uses a chatty, conversational tone to explore the detail and facts of our universal sky and includes lots of opportunities for interacting with the text. There are fun facts, website URLs for further investigation and a 'top 5 facts' section at the end of chapters. At the end of the book there is a section of further reading and 'notes for the interested reader', and a list of apps to use for studying the night sky. This is a great book to dip in and out of, or to read cover to cover. The information is innovatively presented and is clear and accessible. Its illustrations are wonderful and all of them show diversity of representation. This is a quality production, authentically researched and written and well-designed with the modern audience in mind.

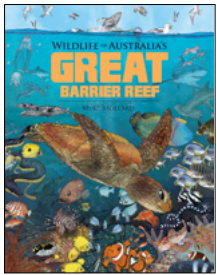


WILDLIFE COMPENDIUM OF THE WORLD

Tania McCartney,

Hardie Grant Explore

A high-quality, glorious production which is quite an undertaking as it covers animals across all continents. The orange/rose gold cover is instantly appealing. Extensively researched with accompanying animals on each page which are numbered and labelled with quirky facts. The table of contents reveals that the book is divided into geographic areas and includes sections on endangered animals and animal rights. The same layout is repeated throughout which makes locating information convenient and accessible and child-friendly. The extensive glossary provides succinct definitions. The endpapers illustrating the signs of the Zodiac differ from front to back.



WILDLIFE OF AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF

Myke Mollard

Woodslane Press

This quarto sized book is a fabulous and visual delight with detailed information throughout each page including front and back end pages. The intricate pictures combine with the accompanying text to provide detailed information. Despite the level of information, every detail is easily digestible and the text clear and accessible. Each page has a full-page colourful illustration and sometimes there is a double-page spread. Identification keys are included and add to the fun of naming the animals in the illustrations. The environment and environment change are detailed when relevant. This is a great example of modern-day non-fiction and its ability to impart lots of information in an effective way, rather than in large parts of dry text. A stunningly produced, meticulously researched and wonderfully illustrated book. Going beyond simply sharks and crabs, this book covers, molluscs, stingrays, crustaceans, birds of the reef, mammals of the sea, reptiles of the reef and much more, revealing the level of detailed research contributing to the book. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are included as are the local names for areas and animals.



WOLLEMI: SAVING A DINOSAUR TREE

Samantha Tidy

Illustrated by Rachel Gyan

CSIRO Publishing

Skilfully combining vibrant digital illustrations with a captivating narrative, this is a text that will appeal to a wide audience. This engaging story of discovery, depth, and environmental triumph unfolds in Wollemi National Park with ranger David Noble. The narrative's intentional and effective start draws readers into the adventure of protecting the 'dinosaur tree.' The appealing cover and joyful depictions resonate with young readers. The tale, complemented by glossary and facts, embraces modern environmental challenges, including bushfires, providing a relevant and heartwarming perspective. The inclusion of an Indigenous viewpoint, a named tree, and a 'true story' aspect adds authenticity. This scientific and environmental success story, akin to a modern-day fairy tale, makes *Wollemi* an enriching and visually delightful read.

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In memoriam

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

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