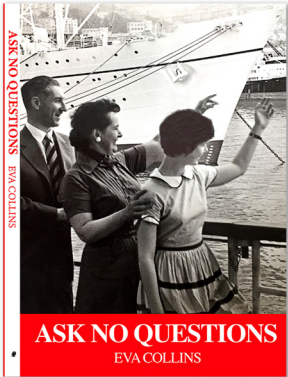


The CBCA 2023 Book of the Year Shortlist Books

Older Readers Category



Ask No Questions

Eva Collins

Published by Puncher & Wattman - ISBN 9781922571342

Ask No Questions is an excellent example of less being more and a true instance of 'don't judge a book by its cover'. The story is complex and anxious, dealing with seriously distressing themes but rendered so accessible through the gentle and simple blank verse poetry. The description of being a stranger in a strange land is strongly accurate and evokes an extra layer of emotion. The final return is a fitting rounding off for this journey that so many Australians will have experienced.

Completely Normal (and Other Lies)

Biffy James

Published by Hardie Grant Children's Publishing - ISBN 9781760508746

An authentic, sensitive story of love and grief in all types of relationships, and the power of true friendship. This story feels utterly real in so many ways, whether it's the cavalier and off-the-cuff humour in the face of despair, or the genuine friendship and family interactions in their swings and roundabouts. The conceit of the situation is unusual but authentically explored, and the characters are presented through their thoughts and actions, not coarse language or extreme behaviours - they are all very normal and believable. The inclusion of social media as a plot element provides a realistic atmosphere without overshadowing the main themes. The positive representation of counseling for not just major issues but just general "life" is extremely valuable, and not something often seen in young adult fiction. It was gratifying to see characters come to understand how the behaviour of themselves and others has an impact, even in the face of such strong emotions (which are never dismissed).



The Greatest Thing

Sarah Winifred Searle

Published by Allen & Unwin - ISBN 9781761067655

This gorgeous graphic novel depicts a semi-biographical retelling of the creator's own journey in high school, dealing with sexuality, gender, eating disorders and body image, mental health and self-harm. While it sounds overwhelming and dark, it somehow maintains a sense of joy throughout, with the engaging art style leavening the themes that underpin the story. The characters leap off the page and the book somehow manages to be both entirely realistic while still dealing with big issues with sensitivity and hope.



THE CHILDREN'S
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SINCE 1945 — YOUR CONNECTION TO STORY

The Children's Book Council of Australia
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Stanley Place, South Brisbane 4101

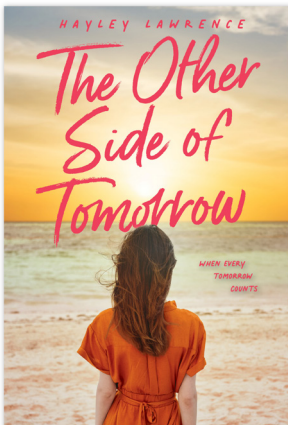
Awards enquiries: awards@cbca.org.au
Merchandise enquiries: merchandise@cbca.org.au



Neverlanders

Tom Taylor (text), Jon Sommariva (illustrations)
Published by Penguin Random House Australia - ISBN 9781761049071

A beautifully presented work, with dark, funny, insightful writing supported by dynamic and powerful images. The story is well-paced, chronicling the journey of a contemporary “found family” tale embedded within the metatextuality of a fantastical Peter Pan narrative. Readers of all ages will appreciate the clever, action-oriented storyline and gloriously rich illustrations, while discerning readers will unpack the hints of the adults’ destruction of the world, parental failure, gun violence and domestic violence to add a more serious dimension to the fantasy plot. The characters are believable, and thematic elements of belonging and forgiveness are presented authentically and skillfully. A stunning book with a potent message wrapped up in a ripping good yarn package.



The Other Side of Tomorrow

Hayley Lawrence
Published by Scholastic Australia - ISBN 9781760976453

This beautifully written novel manages to perfectly balance ongoing grief and sadness with the ordinary everyday-ness of life in a positive way. Authentic characters and character development support a storyline that feels genuine and realistic in its arc, with its rapid pace mirroring the onset of the disease and deterioration of the main character. The themes of family, love, loss, grief, death, and life after death are gently explored without preaching, and these serious elements are set against the aspects of first love, adventure and friendship. The author handles the intense emotions of the story deftly and without artifice - every laugh and tear the reader experiences is earned. While the story is told almost entirely through Abby’s eyes, voice and feelings, it is flagged quite early on that the outcome of the book is inevitable. Absolutely heartbreaking and real.



What We All Saw

Mike Lucas
Published by Penguin Random House Australia - ISBN 9781761045936

This thrilling, gripping and tense story holds attention from the very beginning. It discreetly but clearly examines several themes; the persecution of women, the power of class, the futility of war, the value of strong family values and the disadvantages of being poor. These themes are deftly woven together and taken to a logical and believable conclusion. Narrated from the omniscient perspective of an adult, the story is retold through the eyes of the younger characters adding depth and credibility to the dialogue and actions. The description of the main setting is eerily convincing and the characters are authentic neighbourhood kids. This is a haunting but fun story which interlaces a multi-layered historical record over several generations and ends with a startling finale.

