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SECONDARY FICTION

February 2023

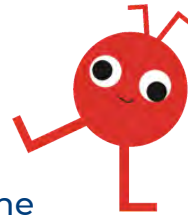
FRITZ AND KURT

By Jeremy Dronfield, illustrated by David Ziggy Greene

Publisher: Puffin / Penguin

ISBN 9780241565742 SCIS: 5433477

\$16.99



BLURB

The incredible true story of *The Boy Who Followed his Father into Auschwitz*, written for younger readers.

When everything is taken away from you, love and courage are all you have left.

In 1938, the Nazis come to Vienna. They hate anyone who is different, especially Jewish people.

Fritz and Kurt's family are Jewish, and that puts them in terrible danger.

Fritz, along with his father, is taken to a Nazi prison camp, a terrible place, full of fear. When his father is sent to a certain death, Fritz can't face losing his beloved Papa. He chooses to go with him and fight for survival.

Meanwhile, Kurt must go on a frightening journey, all alone, to seek safety on the far side of the world.

In this extraordinary true story, Fritz and Kurt must face unimaginable hardships, and the two brothers wonder if they will ever return home . . .

REVIEW

The Kleinmann family were Jewish people living in the beautiful city of Vienna, Austria and their story begins at a time when the start of World War II is imminent. The family consists of Mama, Papa, Edith, Herta, Fritz and Kurt.

They think about leaving Vienna, and Edith leaves for England, but hope for the others is shattered on Kristallnacht in November 1938 when Papa and fifteen-year-old Fritz are arrested and sent to Buchenwald.

The story mostly follows their horrendous journey through various concentration camps including Auschwitz, the awful conditions that they had to endure, and their never ceasing desire to survive and to see their family reunited.

In 1941, eleven-year-old Kurt is shipped off to America alone, after many negotiations on both sides of the Atlantic to help move children out of harm's way. Some chapters follow his story of resettling in America, an indeed becoming a valued citizen who even served in their armed forces.

For over six years Fritz and his Papa survived brutality, starvation and the ever-present threat of death should they upset their captors in any way. But survive to the end they did.

With themes of horror of war, anti-semitism, cruelty and death, the importance of family, the desire to overcome horrific circumstances and still have the ability to hope for a better future, this is a terrific novel which due to some of the violent content will be best suited to readers aged 14 and above.

Reviewed by Rob

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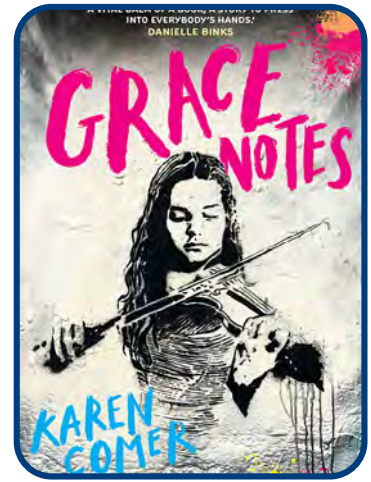
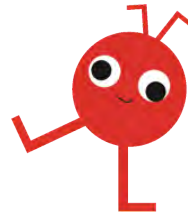
GRACE NOTES

By Karen Comer

Publisher: Lothian Children's Books / Hachette

ISBN 9780734421722 SCIS: 5433531

\$19.99



BLURB

This song has a grace note, a tiny note that's there for embellishment but can easily be ignored, not played. Tonight, I add it in - just because. We can all do with an extra note of grace.

Grace Dalfinch is a talented violinist who longs to play contemporary music in bars, but her mum forbids her. James Crux is an aspiring street artist who promised his dad he wouldn't paint in public until he's finished school.

When Crux witnesses Grace's impromptu performance on a deserted tram, he's inspired to paint her and her violin; and when Grace stumbles across her portrait in a Melbourne alley by an anonymous street artist, she sets out to find its creator. *Grace Notes* is a debut YA verse novel, set in one of the most locked-down cities in the world - Melbourne, 2020.

REVIEW

Written from the perspective of both Grace, who dreams of following in her grandmother's footsteps and being the lead violinist for the Australian Symphony Orchestra, and Crux, who is a talented street artist.

Grace's lawyer mum expects nothing short of perfection from her daughters and will not tolerate her youngest daughter, Grace, putting all of her hopes in the field of music.

Crux practices his art on the garage wall and in the garage. His Dad supports him, but doesn't want Crux doing graffiti and getting in trouble with the police. But when Crux meets a graffiti artist in action and decides to help him, it turns out Crux's art is so good that he is soon working with a group who are commissioned to create street art.

When Crux sees Grace's performance he decides to add an image of Grace and her violin to the huge wall artwork that he is working on, that has been commissioned by the government. The idea of the artwork was to inspire people through the pandemic by depicting front line workers, but Crux knows the importance of art too, and so he decides to add her to his artwork anyway, not knowing it will change both their lives.

Set during Melbourne's lengthy COVID lockdowns, this is a beautiful and easy to read verse novel about the impact of lockdown on a community. We see how art can help people through hard times, and the importance of it in our lives. We see the fear and death caused by a pandemic, and the different ways people deal with unusual and challenging situations. It is a terrific verse novel suited to all teenagers aged 13 and older.

Reviewed by Rob

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SPICE ROAD BOOK 1

By Maiya Ibrahim

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton / Hachette

ISBN 9781399702034 SCIS: 5433612

\$24.99

BLURB

The first book in an epic fantasy series for fans of Sabaa Tahir, Hafsah Faizal and Elizabeth Lim, set in an Arabian-inspired land. Raised to protect her nation from the monsters lurking in the sands, seventeen-year-old Imani must fight to find her brother whose betrayal is now their greatest threat.

In the hidden desert city of Qalia, secret spice magic awakens affinities in those who drink the misra tea. With an affinity for iron, seventeen-year-old Imani wields a dagger like no other warrior, garnering her the reputation as the next greatest Shield for battling the dangerous djinn, ghouls, and other monsters that lurk in the sands beyond city limits.

Her reputation has been overshadowed, however, by her brother who tarnished the family name after he was discovered stealing their nation's coveted spice - a tell-tale sign of magical obsession. He disappeared soon after, believed to have died beyond the Forbidden Wastes, and leaving Imani reeling with both betrayal and grief.

But when Imani uncovers evidence her brother may be alive and spreading their nation's magic beyond the desert, she strikes a deal with the Council to find him and bring him back to Qalia before he can reveal the city's location. Accompanied by Qayn, a roguish but handsome djinni, and Taha, a powerful beastseer whose magical talents are matched only by his arrogance, they set out on their mission.

Imani will soon discover there are many secrets that lie beyond the Forbidden Wastes - and in her own heart - but will she find her brother before his betrayals endanger the fate of all of Qalia?

In this epic and action-packed fantasy, one young heroine navigates the treacherous road between protecting the ones you love and staying loyal to the place you call home.

REVIEW

Imani has grown up in Qalia, hidden in the desert and protected from the monsters who roam outside their walls. Misra is a magical spice that they brew in their tea and it gives the people of Qalia magical powers. Imani has a special bond with iron, which makes her one of their greatest shield protectors, even though she is only 17.

The spice magic must be kept only for the people of Qalia's own use. When Imani's brother, Atheer, is accused of stealing it and showing it to outsiders, she is horrified. Then he disappears and is assumed dead, and she grieves for him every day.

But when evidence is found that he may be alive, Imani is sent by the Council to join the mission to hunt him down. Also joining the mission is Taha, who is a powerful magician too - but who is also the most arrogant and annoying and enthralling person Imani has ever met.

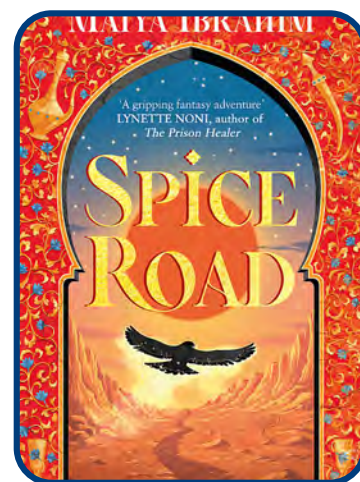
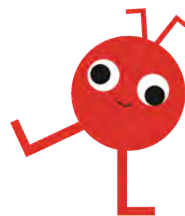
Imani soon realises that not everything she has been told about the outside world is true, and she must decide (and quickly) who she trusts more - her brother or the Council?

As Imani starts to question everything, she slowly discovers what really are most important things to her as she strives to be true to herself and her family.

This is a fast-paced fantasy adventure that readers will love. There is wonderful descriptive writing that brings the setting and the intriguing characters to life, and it is sure to become a favourite.

Perfect for fantasy lovers in Year 9 and up who will be eagerly awaiting the next instalment.

Reviewed by Michelle



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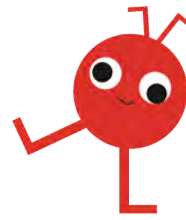
THE POISON SEASON

By Mara Rutherford

Publisher: HQ Young Adult US

ISBN 9781867261544 SCIS: 5433587

\$19.99



BLURB

Outsiders are always given a choice: the Forest or the lake. Either way, they're never heard from again.

Leelo has spent her entire life on Endla, coexisting with the bloodthirsty Forest and respecting the poisonous lake that protects her island from outsiders who seek to destroy it. But as much as Leelo cares for her community, she struggles to accept that her younger brother will be exiled by his next birthday, unless he gains the magic of enchanted song so vital to Endla.

When Leelo sees a young outsider on the verge of drowning in the lake, she knows exactly what she's supposed to do. But in a moment that will change everything, Leelo betrays her family, her best friend, and Endla by making an unthinkable choice.

Discovery could lead to devastating consequences for both Leelo and the outsider, Jaren, but as they grow closer, Leelo realizes that not all danger comes from beyond the lake – and they can only survive if Leelo is willing to question the very fabric of her society, her people, and herself.

REVIEW

Leelo lives on the enchanted island of Endla, which is surrounded by a poisonous lake that keeps everyone else out. The inhabitants all have the magical gift of singing unsuspecting outsiders to their death – outsiders who are sacrificed to their forest, and the forest in turn protects them.

Those without the gift, like Leelo's brother Tate, are exiled from the island at the age of twelve to become outsiders and live in the evil outside world. The only way off the island is by taking the protected boat at the time when the poison in the lake is at its lowest.

Jaren is an outsider. His family has just moved to a village near the lake, and Jaren is drawn to the singing he hears. Leelo has seen Jaren across the lake. When Jaren is trying to escape from a dangerous wolf, he finishes up finding the protected boat and washing up on the island's shore. Leelo sees him, and although it is her duty to kill him on sight, she can't bring herself to do it, and instead decides to hide him away. Jaren seems nice, and Leelo might even have feelings for him...

But there are lots of secrets exposed by their meeting. Why is Jaren not mesmerised by their singing? Is the outside world really so bad? Leelo begins to question everything that the elders have taught her for her entire life, leading to a dramatic conclusion.

This is a terrific novel filled with adventure, mystery, magic and romance that encourages readers to not always believe what they are being told, and to find their own truth. Perfect for readers aged 12 to 16.

Reviewed by Rob

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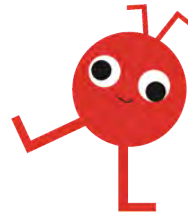
THIS TIME IT'S REAL

By Ann Liang

Publisher: Penguin

ISBN 9781761049804 SCIS: 5433609

\$19.99



BLURB

Get ready to fall in love in this hilarious romcom about a girl who begins a fake relationship with the famous actor in her class, perfect for fans of Meg Cabot and Jenny Han.

When seventeen-year-old Eliza Lin's essay about meeting the love of her life unexpectedly goes viral, her entire life changes overnight. Now she has the approval of her classmates at her new international school in Beijing, a career-launching internship opportunity at her favourite magazine ... and a massive secret to keep.

Eliza made her essay up. She's never been in a relationship before, let alone in love. All good writing is lying, right?

Desperate to hide the truth, Eliza strikes a deal with the famous actor in her class, the charming but aloof Caz Song. She'll help him write his college applications if he poses as her boyfriend. Caz is a dream boyfriend -- he passes handwritten notes to her in class, makes her little sister laugh, and takes her out on motorcycle rides to the best snack stalls around the city.

But when her relationship with Caz starts feeling a little too convincing, all of Eliza's carefully laid plans are threatened. Can she still follow her dreams if it means breaking her own heart?

REVIEW

Eliza has moved around her entire life. After her family's most recent move, she is now attending Westbridge International School of Beijing, the latest in a long line of schools. Eliza has got the whole new school thing down to a routine – put your head down, don't stand out, and find somewhere to eat lunch alone.

When the school tasks them with writing a personal essay to be posted on the school website, Eliza's plans to share nothing with her classmates face a hurdle. Knowing the last thing she wants to do is write something real about herself, Eliza decides to turn her personal essay into a tale of her wonderful - and entirely imaginary - boyfriend and how they fell in love.

The only problem is somehow her essay goes viral. Really viral. And now half the planet knows about her imaginary romance. So when she's offered the opportunity of a lifetime – an internship at her favourite magazine and the chance have a series of her personal essays published – Eliza has to figure out a way to make her fictional boyfriend real, and fast!

Enter Caz Song, her famous actor classmate, who is struggling with a small PR issue of his own. He couldn't possibly turn down a Strategic, Mutually Beneficial and Romantically Oriented Alliance to Help Further Our Respective Careers, especially one that comes complete with a PowerPoint presentation, could he?

With Caz on board as her pretend boyfriend, and their agreement to publicly conduct their faux-romance for six months well underway, it looks like Eliza might just get away her big lie. But six months is a long time to keep up appearances. And it's even harder if Eliza's feelings might no longer be quite so pretend..

This is a hilarious and sweet romance that explores fitting in, standing out, the meaning of home, the power of hope, and learning to show your true self to others. As funny and entertaining as the very best rom-coms, I really hope this is turned into a movie one day. This will be loved by teen readers aged 14 and above, especially those who enjoy a good rom-com!

Reviewed by Kate

Teacher Notes prepared by the publisher are available for this title on our website.

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TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME

By Leanne Yong

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781761063374 SCIS: 5433604

\$19.99

BLURB

Sam Khoo has one goal in life: create cool indie games. She's willing to do anything to make her dream come true - even throw away a scholarship to university. All she needs is a super-rare ticket to a game design workshop and she can kickstart her career.

So when Jay Chua, aka Jerky McJerkface, sneakily grabs the last ticket, it's war. Knowing how their Australian-Malaysian community works, Sam issues him an ultimatum: put the ticket on the line in a 1v1 competition of classic video games, or she'll broadcast his duplicity to everyone. Thank you, Asian Gossip Network.

Meeting in neutral locations, away from the eyes and ears of nosy aunties and uncles, Sam and Jay connect despite themselves. It's a puzzle that Sam's not sure she wants to solve. But when her dream is under threat, will she discover that there is more than one way to win?

REVIEW

A funny and unique take on the rivals-to-lovers story about indie games, defining your own success and dealing with a meddlesome gossip network of aunties and uncles, from debut Asian-Australian author Leanne Yong.

Sam Khoo has a dream - she wants to become a successful indie video game designer. She has poured her heart and soul into developing her game, and she has sacrificed so much to make it into something she can be proud of. Now that she's finished school, she just needs to get her game in front of the right people to kick start her game development career to stratospheric levels of success - the only level of success that might somehow justify not taking up her uni scholarship...

Sam and her best friend, Aneeshka, have already landed spots at an invite-only showcase for new developers, but with Aneeshka off in Sydney to start uni, Sam is left alone to get her game ready. So when the chance comes to attend an exclusive game workshop with the best in the business, Sam knows she will do whatever it takes to get her hands on a golden ticket - even it means lining up at the game store at 4am.

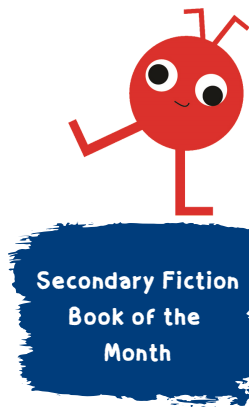
Her persistence pays off and the ticket is all but hers, only to be snatched from her grasp by Jaysen Chua, a fellow member of the close-knit Australian-Malaysian community. Sam knows she could ruin him by telling the Asian Gossip Network about his behaviour, but she decides to instead use this to her advantage - persuading him to put the ticket on the line in a one-on-one video game competition.

Jaysen (aka Jerky McJerkFace) is ultra-competitive, and determined to beat Sam in their competition - even if he has to resort to some questionable deodorant-bombing tactics to do so. But with Aneeshka gone, it's not like Sam has anyone else to talk to about gaming, and Jaysen is really good. So good, he might even beat her...

Can Sam defeat Jaysen, win the ticket, and go on to achieve her game developer dream? Or is success just another puzzle that she's going to have to solve?

This is a funny and authentic look at growing up, first love, the pressure to succeed, learning to fail, and working out what success even means anyway. The family and community relationships are a highlight - Sam's supportive but protective parents and her slightly-more-wild sister, as well as Jaysen's passionate gamer brother, all add a warmth and emotional depth to the story. An ode to puzzles, gaming, forging your own path, and to healthy competition, teen readers will love this.

Reviewed by Kate



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SECONDARY FICTION

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WAIT FOR ME

By Sara Shepard

Publisher: Union Square & Co

ISBN 9781454951421 SCIS: 5433655

\$22.99

BLURB

Drowning in déjà vu...

Who is Casey Rhodes? Is she a no-nonsense realist or a hopeless romantic? A just-getting-by scholarship student or a sometimes-Cinderella dating the cool, cultured heir to a media empire and New York City's most eligible? At seventeen years old and already in her sophomore year at NYU, Casey sheds disguises effortlessly. It's how she navigates school and avoids the second-guessing that's plagued her since she and her boyfriend Marcus got together.

But then Casey starts hearing voices that terrify her so badly she flees to the remote beach town of Avon Shores where she can sort through her thoughts and reset. But the voices only get more intense and are now accompanied by visions of places she's never been and people she's never met, like Jake who's lived in Avon Shores his whole life. There's no way Casey could know him, yet she feels an immediate connection. And, crazier still: he feels it too. Together they search for answers, finding only questions – about their connection, Avon Shores, Casey's memories...And whose voice is she hearing inside her head?

REVIEW

Casey has always felt like she was wearing a disguise, like she's always out of place. Casey is super intelligent and is already in second year university, despite being only 17 years old. So when she finds herself dating Marcus - who isn't just social media famous (although he is definitely is that too), but also real world, super-rich, media empire heir famous - and Casey is suddenly surrounded by New York's elite, it's just another disguise for her to wear.

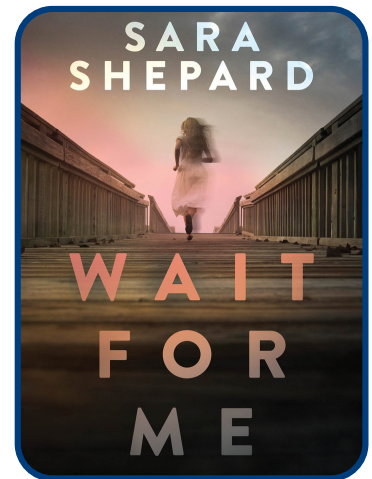
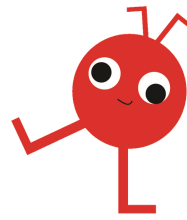
When she starts hearing voices - terrifying voices - that make her feel like she's seeing awful things that have never happened to her, Casey doesn't know what to do, so she runs. She flees the city and finds herself in a quiet beach town called Avon Shores, in the middle of winter. But the voices and the visions only get worse and more realistic - and she's sure she has been to Avon Shores before, and certain that she's met Jake, a boy who has lived in the quiet town his whole life, before too.

But what are the visions she is seeing? Whose memories are they? And are they even real? Or are they just a way for Casey's brain to protect her from the trauma of her mother's death many years before?

As Casey is drawn into an increasingly complicated web, she must figure out what is real and what isn't, before something terrible happens...

From bestselling author Sara Shepard (author of *Pretty Little Liars*), this is a thrilling past-lives mystery story about true love, who you really are, the impact of trauma, the importance of memories, and the consequences that one night that can weave across time and generations. A great read for those who enjoy a romantic thriller, and best suited to those in middle to upper secondary.

Reviewed by Kate



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SECONDARY GRAPHIC NOVELS

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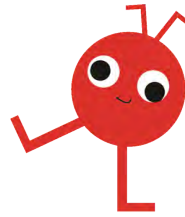
MISSION: YOZAKURA FAMILY, VOL. 1

By Hitsuji Gondaira

Publisher: VIZ Media LLC

ISBN 9781974734665 SCIS: 5433468

\$14.99



BLURB

Romance! A crazy, overprotective brother! And...spies?

Taiyo Asano has been on his own ever since his parents died. The only one who seems to care for him is his childhood friend and classmate, Mutsumi Yozakura. But Mutsumi has a secret – she is the head of a family of spies!

Taiyo Asano is a super-shy high school student and the only person he can talk to is his childhood friend Mutsumi Yozakura. However, Mutsumi comes from a line of master spies with amazing powers. Her oldest brother, Kyoichiro, is obsessed with Mutsumi and out to kill anyone who gets remotely near her – and his next target is Taiyo! The only way for Taiyo to save himself from Kyoichiro's murderous clutches is to marry Mutsumi!

REVIEW

Taiyo Asano has always been protective of his best friend, the beautiful Mutsumi Yozakura, and even more so after the accident that killed all of Taiyo's family. The strange, young and dashing Vice Principal also seems to take a very strong interest in her as well...

But all is not as it appears – it turns out the Vice Principal is actually Mutsumi's older brother, and all of Mutsumi's family have amazing abilities that make them super spies. Unfortunately, Mutsumi does not possess any super abilities, but as she can pass them on to the next generation the family must keep her safe for the future of the Yozakura family line.

Taiyo and Mutsumi are tied by marriage and so begins Taiyo's arduous lessons that will enable him to protect Mutsumi. But with so many out to get them, can Taiyo learn quickly enough?

With nothing but action and adventure set in an underworld of spies and treachery, this is a perfect manga novel that will appeal to all teenage readers.

Reviewed by Rob

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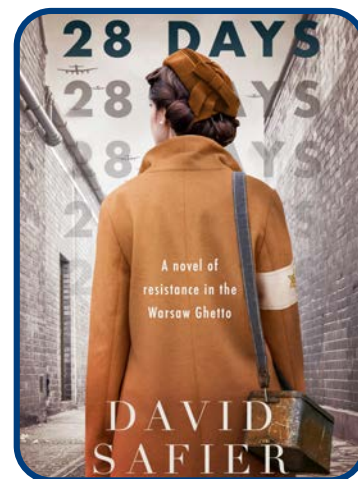
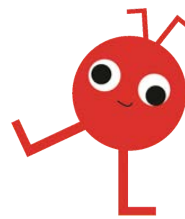
28 DAYS: A NOVEL OF RESISTANCE IN THE WARSAW GHETTO

By David Safier

Publisher: Square Fish / St Martins Press

ISBN 9781250821256 SCIS: 5438706

\$22.99



BLURB

Warsaw, 1942. Sixteen-year-old Mira smuggles food into the Warsaw ghetto to keep herself and her family alive. When she discovers that the entire ghetto is to be "liquidated"—killed or resettled to concentration camps—she desperately tries to find a way to save her family. She meets a group of young people who are planning the unthinkable: an uprising against the occupying forces. Mira joins the resistance fighters who, with minimal supplies and weapons, end up holding out for twenty-eight days, longer than anyone had thought possible. During this time, Mira has to decide where her heart belongs. To Amos, who will take as many Nazis as he can with him into the grave? Or to Daniel, who wants to help orphans in a shelter?

REVIEW

28 Days gives us a look at the life in World War II from an interesting perspective, set in the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw, Poland as seen by 16-year-old Mira.

Mira is smuggling things from outside the ghetto walls to provide for her mother (who is not much assistance since Mira's father died) and for her little sister, Hannah, who is Mira's sole reason to survive. Mira has a boyfriend named Daniel, who gives everything to the orphans that he works with but manages to save a little time for Mira.

When Mira is saved by Amos - after he pretends to be her partner and boldly kisses her - she becomes infatuated. Then she discovers that Amos is a prominent member of the resistance, who are planning to take action against the Nazis. Should she help too?

The ghetto is so overcrowded that many are sent off to concentration camps, many die of starvation and dysentery problems, and many more still are murdered by their evil oppressors. But the fight that takes place in the Warsaw Ghetto shows that it might be possible to stand up to the Nazi war machine...

This novel is best suited to those aged 15 and over, as it depicts the true evil of the time, that is even being perpetuated against young children. It also demonstrates the immense courage and the capacity of the human spirit to hope and fight for survival, even in the worst of circumstances. I found it a real page turner that will be both enjoyed and educational to those 15 and older.

Reviewed by Rob

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SECONDARY FICTION

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BELOW

By David Hill

Publisher: Puffin / Penguin

ISBN 9781776958009 SCIS: 5438710

\$17.99

BLURB

Caught in a tunnel collapse, Liam and Imogen have to use all their wits to survive in this gripping novel.

When you stood deep inside the tunnel, you could hear the mountain groaning overhead. That's what Liam Geary's father had told him, anyway. It sounded stupid, till you stood inside a big tunnel; felt those billions of tonnes pressing in from above and the sides; heard water dripping from ceilings, or even trickling like something's blood behind the concrete walls; sensed the blackness that lay beyond the TBM's blazing lights as it ground its slow way through the stone ahead. Then you knew that a major tunnel like the Puketapu was a place of power, somehow; that darkness and danger lurked all around.

When Liam dares his classmate Imogen to come on a forbidden tour of the railway tunnel being drilled through a nearby mountain, he hopes she'll quit protesting about it damaging the environment - his dad is an engineer working on the tunnel, after all.

Just as they reach the huge tunnelling machine everything goes horribly wrong. When the rocks stop falling and the dust settles, they are trapped, kilometres below ground, in the dark. Water is trickling in and beginning to rise. And nobody knows where they are.

Can they stop arguing and start working together to escape before time runs out?

REVIEW

New Zealand author David Hill has produced another exciting page turner set below the ground when a tunnel collapses.

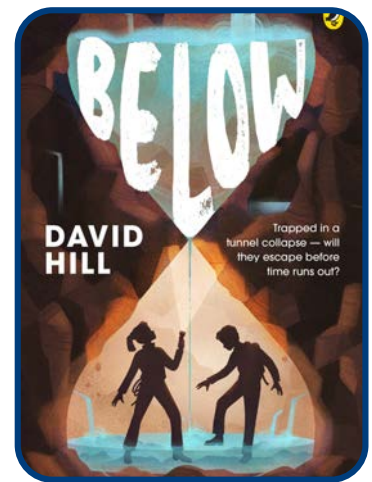
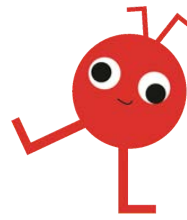
Liam Geary's father is an engineer on the Puketapu tunnel. Liam's nemesis at school is Imogen Parkinson - her parents are climate activists and she believes such tunnels should not be built as they harm nature.

When there is a temporary shutdown of the tunnel, Liam persuades Imogen to go into the tunnel with him, certain that the amazing engineering will get her to see the light. But nobody knows that they are in there, and when the tunnel collapses their situation and chances of survival are grim...

Fortunately, they are trapped in a sizeable area with Lucia, the monstrous tunnel drilling machine, and the supplies that she has stored in her to help in such emergencies. They have water and a small supply of food that they ration out to last for a week. But will they die from the constant smaller collapses, the water that is coming into the tunnel, or eventual starvation?

This is a real edge-of-your-seat thrilling adventure story, where two people with different opinions are trapped together for days. Will they learn to see each other's point of view? It has themes of the environment, progress and survival, making it a terrific novel for middle grade readers in lower secondary and upper primary.

Reviewed by Rob



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SECONDARY FICTION

March 2023

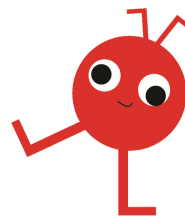
ESCAPE FROM EAST BERLIN

By Andy Marino

Publisher: Scholastic

ISBN 9781761293542 SCIS: 5438708

\$15.99



BLURB

December, 1961 - Marta is a young girl who saw thirty miles of barbed wire appear across her city overnight, separating Berlin into West and East, with Marta's home on the Communist Bloc-controlled eastern side.

January, 1989 - Now a spray-painted concrete monolith, the Berlin Wall bisects the city. Kurt, a young East Berliner, often wonders what those living on the other side must think of their unseen neighbors. Do they hate the people of East Germany as completely as Kurt has been instructed to hate them? Inspired by real events, *Escape from East Berlin* tells two stories of daring bids for freedom from the Eastern Bloc, set decades apart and relayed in alternating perspectives. Triumph and tragedy intertwine in this examination of both the earliest and final days of the Berlin Wall.

REVIEW

This is the tale of two families, split by almost 30 years.

In November 1961, Marta and her family are living in Berlin - but by December 1961 miles of barbed wire has been erected overnight, and Berlin is suddenly split in two. Marta is left on the east side, controlled by the communists, but some of her family who lived across the road are now in West Berlin.

When her brother Stefan is killed trying to visit his girlfriend in the West, her family attract the attention of the Stasi secret police and they decide that they will do anything to escape from East Berlin.

Nearly 30 years later, in 1989, Kurt has grown up knowing nothing but the communist regime and often wonders what life is like in the West. His grandfather is a legend in the Stasi, but he too decides that the East is no place for Kurt and secretly plans for his escape.

This story is told in alternate chapters from both Marta and Kurt, which is a little confusing to begin with, but we soon recognise each story. A compelling insight into the life of people in East Berlin, and their desperation to escape the life of control by the communist government.

With daring escape plans and characters that will draw you in, this is an intriguing story and although not everything has a happy ending, the resilience of the human spirit shines through. A perfect book for those who enjoy historical fiction, as this is inspired by real events, and it will best suit readers aged 14 and above.

Reviewed by Michelle

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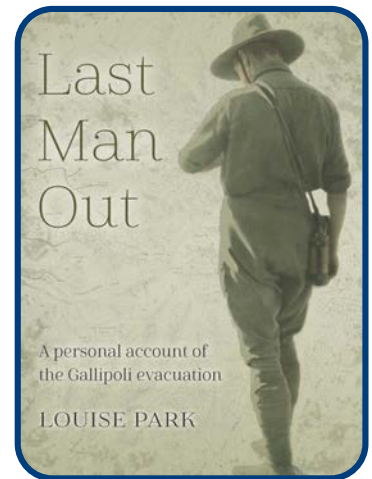
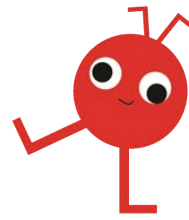
LAST MAN OUT

By Louise Park

Publisher: Wild Dog Books

ISBN 9781742036427 SCIS: 5438716

\$24.99



BLURB

The evacuation from Gallipoli of Australian and New Zealand troops was a logistically incredible undertaking. The exhausted young men were to slip away by ship in the dead of night.

But...

Someone needed to remain behind to cover for their fellow soldiers. This was a mission that almost certainly meant death.

Would it be you?

Would you volunteer to be the last man out?

And so, the rivalry begins. Who will be chosen to stay on until the end? Who will hold fast to the last to allow tens of thousands to slip away silently from Gallipoli? Only the fittest, the most gallant and capable will be chosen. The pick of the whole force, we are told. And the message is clear: the rear guard of honour will be killed or captured.

The rear party, the most daring men of all, doomed. John Alexander Park grew up in England and served in Africa, the Afghan War, and the Boxer Rising before settling in Australia. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in 1914 sparked The Great War – or World War I. On 1st March 1915, John joined the Australian Army in Sydney and was promoted to Sergeant before being assigned to the 19th Battalion. He was 36 years old and a seasoned serviceman when he arrived at Gallipoli.

And he was the last man out.

REVIEW

This book is a must for all Australian secondary schools.

Collated by Australian author Louise Park, this is based on journal entries written by Louise's grandfather, John Alexander Park, who was the last man out of the Gallipoli Peninsula when the Australian troops evacuated.

His first-hand accounts show of the hardship experienced by those at Gallipoli, but also the mateship and camaraderie that bound these men together.

We see the small things they did to keep their country and those at home close to their hearts, and how their hearts were particularly warmed when they actually received the mail and parcels from home.

Their bravery and sense of duty is highlighted by the fact that so many of the men didn't want to leave their hard-fought trenches and would volunteer to be among the last to leave, which would surely see them die defending the rear position.

I found this fascinating reading, and with the incredible primary source material and Australian historical content, this is an important addition to secondary school libraries.

Reviewed by Rob

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SECONDARY FICTION

March 2023

NIGHTBIRDS

By Kate J. Armstrong

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760526900 SCIS: 5438561

\$24.99

BLURB

Magic may be illegal in Simta, but you can find it if you know which whispers to heed. None as tantalising as the ones about the Nightbirds, Simta's best kept secret. These privileged girls have the ability to gift their magic to others with a kiss - something the church would have them killed for. But protected by the Great Houses, their identities safe behind masks, the Nightbirds are well-guarded treasures.

Matilde, Aesa, and Sayer spend their nights bestowing their unique brands of magic to well-paying clients. But this Season's Nightbirds find themselves at the heart of a political scheme that threatens their secrets and their safety. When they discover that their magic is far more than they were ever told, they see the carefully crafted Nightbird system for what it is: a gilded cage.

Now they must make a choice - to remain kept birds or take control, remaking the city that dared to clip their wings.

Filled with sumptuous, cinematic writing and dazzling details, Nightbirds is a fiercely feminist fantasy debut where the most potent magic lies not in a kiss, but in the truth.

REVIEW

This is a captivating and magical fantasy novel, full of secrets and intrigue.

Matilde, Aesa and Sayer are Nightbirds - special girls who have the ability to share their unique magic with others, all through a kiss.

In Simta, magic is illegal - but not if you know where to find it! The Great Houses of the wealthy and powerful families have kept the girls and their secrets safe, until now. But with rumblings in the church, and a fight brewing for political power, their lives are suddenly at risk.

Things are changing fast for the girls too. Their magic is becoming more powerful than they have ever been told, and when they are together, extraordinary things start to happen. Why have they been kept in the dark for so long about what they can truly do? The magic of Nightbirds all lean towards one of the four elements - fire, wind, water and earth. With only three of these elements covered, is there another girl in their midst that will complete them?

When they find themselves in real danger and end up in the secret underground, they are exposed to more magical beings and a world that they never knew existed.

But they aren't the only ones with secrets, and trusting anyone in this world is dangerous, as they all find out. Can the girls, with the help of those closest to them, stand up for who and what they really are, or will they be caged birds forever?

This is an epic story than spans more than 450 pages, with complex relationships between the characters. This is a great read, and you will find yourself willing the girls to show the world what they are really made of. It is full of magic spells, romance, a thirst for political power, as well as female empowerment, and I will be thoroughly looking forward to Book 2! It will be enjoyed by all readers aged 14 and older.

Reviewed by Sam



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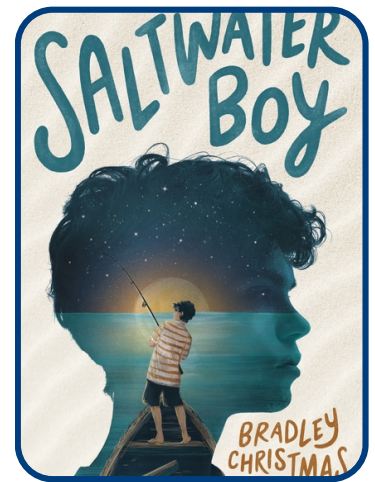
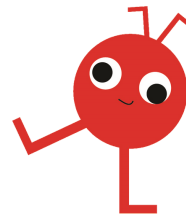
SALTWATER BOY

By Bradley Christmas

Publisher: Walker Books

ISBN 9781760656393 SCIS: 5438550

\$18.99



BLURB

Heartfelt and poignant, this coming of age story explores father-son relationships, against a backdrop of small town rivalries, buried truths, with themes of sustainability, preserving the past and environmental care.

When Dad goes to jail, Matthew and his mum move to the coast, so mum – an artist – thinks she can renovate her late father's old place to sell it to get them back on their feet. Matthew strikes up a friendship with Old Bill, an Indigenous man who becomes a father figure to him, and teaches him how to find and eat pippis, fish (and to make a few dollars from it). Dad gets out on parole and moves back in with the family, but his anger fractures the newfound peace and everything is once again at stake, and in peril.

REVIEW

Matthew's Dad is in jail for stealing cars - not that Matthew cares much, he never liked him anyway. Matthew really only has his Mum and his one friend, Asha, in his life.

But when they can't pay the rent Mum decides to move to the old shack on the coast that her father bought, but never got around to fixing up before he died. Matthew and Asha agree to keep in touch but distance doesn't make that easy.

When Matthew meets Bill, an Indigenous man and local fisherman, who nobody in town talks to, they quickly form a bond. Bill teaches Matthew to be a great fisherman but also how to respect the land and their ancestor's connection to it. Everything is looking up, and Matthew's Mum has started to paint again, and has also started doing up their place.

But all this comes to an abrupt halt when his Dad gets out of jail and arrives in town wanting them all to return to the city. His Dad still has his usual temper, no time for Matthew, and is back to his old ways, stealing things. But when he gets injured in a boating accident, and Matthew saves his life, it seems like the hard bump on his head may have changed his personality for the better. Maybe they can stay and have a normal family life?

And then Asha arrives for the holidays, and they have both grown up a lot. Might they be more than just friends...

This is a terrific novel filled with great characters. With themes of doing the right thing, families growing and changing, friendships in many forms, holding grudges and learning to move on, as well as learning about Country and First Nations' traditions, this is an ideal novel for those aged 13 to 16 years.

Reviewed by Rob

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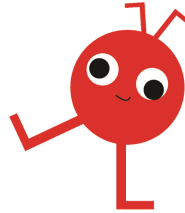
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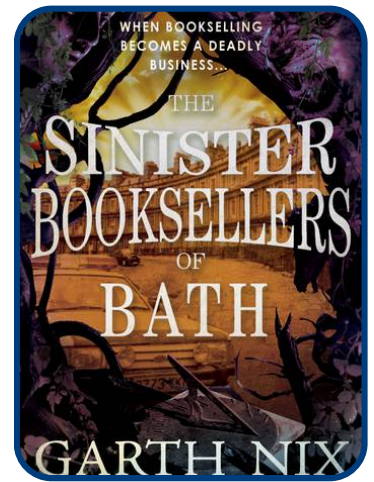


SECONDARY FICTION

March 2023



Secondary Fiction
Book of the
Month



THE SINISTER BOOKSELLERS OF BATH

By Garth Nix

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781761180002 SCIS: 5438563

\$24.99

BLURB

There is often trouble of a mythical sort in Bath. The booksellers who police the Old World keep a careful watch there, particularly on the entity who inhabits the ancient hot spring. Yet this time it is not from Sulis Minerva that trouble starts. It comes from the discovery of a sorcerous map, leading left-handed bookseller Merlin into great danger. A desperate rescue is attempted by his sister, the right-handed bookseller Vivien, and their friend, art student Susan Arkshaw, who is still struggling to deal with her own recently discovered magical heritage.

The map takes the trio to a place separated from this world, maintained by deadly sorcery performed by an Ancient Sovereign and guarded by monstrous living statues of Purbeck marble. But this is only the beginning, as the booksellers investigate centuries of disappearances and deaths and try to unravel the secrets of the murderous Lady of Stone, a serial killer of awesome powers.

If they do not stop her, she will soon kill again. And this time, her target is not an ordinary mortal.

A wintry return to the somewhat alternate 1980s England of *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London*.

REVIEW

The Sinister Booksellers of Bath is an utterly absorbing fantasy set in an alternative version of 1983, and I absolutely loved this book.

Garth Nix returns to the world of *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* in this story, where trouble in the Old World in Bath is threatening those in the New World.

This is a follow up, and although I haven't read *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* I had no trouble jumping into this world and following the story in this second instalment - and after reading this I enjoyed it so much that I'm going back to read the first one now!

Bath, England is a hot spot for Old World trouble, and the Booksellers posted there must keep a close watch on Sulis Minerva, the Ancient Sovereign who inhabits the hot springs precinct.

Vivien and her brother, Merlin, are visiting the Bath bookstore when Vivien discovers a map full of sorcery - a map that drags the delightful Merlin right into it's world. And it seems that an entirely different Ancient Sovereign is causing trouble in Bath this time...

The only way to save Merlin is to create a magical map of their own, but Vivien can't do it alone. She needs help from Merlin's girlfriend, and her friend, Susan - the daughter of another Ancient Sovereign and a mortal - who has mystical powers of her own. And although Susan has made it clear she does not want to be drawn any further into the mystical world (she would much rather continue her normal life as an art student, thanks), she is left with little choice when Merlin is in such grave danger.

But the mysterious stone world of the map is only the beginning, as it leads the booksellers to discover a nefarious and previously unknown Ancient Sovereign, one who has committed many murders across the centuries. The sovereign needs one final victim to complete the magic she set in motion centuries before - a rare victim to be sacrificed on the Winter Solstice, a victim who needs to be half-mortal and half-Ancient Sovereign...

This is a thrilling and action-packed fantasy novel as Susan and the Booksellers race against time to stop the evil spell from succeeding. With themes of friendship, learning who to trust, believing in yourself and being who you truly are, with an enthralling side of ancient mysteries, this is a fabulous book that will be particularly enjoyed by those who love fantasy in middle to upper secondary.

Reviewed by Kate

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