

After The Lights Go Out

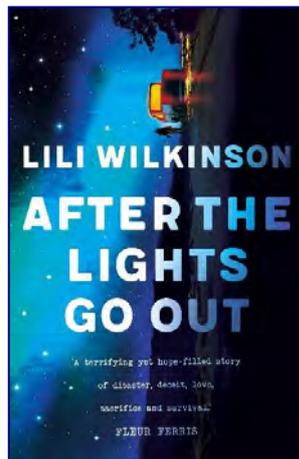
By Lili Wilkinson
Publisher: Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781760297299 SCIS: 1871420
\$19.99

**SECONDARY
BOOK OF THE
MONTH**

Blurb:

Seventeen-year-old Pru Palmer lives with her twin sisters, Grace and Blythe, and their father, Rick, on the outskirts of an isolated mining community. The Palmers are doomsday preppers. They have a bunker filled with non-perishable food and a year's worth of water.

One day while Rick is at the mine, the power goes out. At the Palmers' house, and in the town. All communication is cut. No one knows why. It doesn't take long for everything to unravel. In town, supplies run out and people get desperate. The sisters decide to keep their bunker a secret. The world is different; the rules are different. Survival is everything, and family comes first.



Lamont Review:

Being the daughters of a doomsday prepper is difficult, but at least it has prepared Pru and her sisters for the apocalypse!

Set in a small mining town in remote outback Australia, far off the grid, their Dad has built an incredible, self-sufficient underground bunker. His most important rule has been religiously instilled in his girls - family first.

Then comes the Electro Magnetic Pulse, taking down all communications, transport, electricity, and basically everything that everyone takes for granted everyday. With their Dad missing and presumed dead in the mine collapse, seventeen-year-old Pru and her twin sixteen-year-old sisters face a stark new reality.

Should they only fend for themselves or share their stores? Can they let people die of things that they can prevent with their epipens and antibiotics?

After the Lights Go Out raises many ethical questions of friendship, the common good and 'what if', making it an ideal novel for classroom discussions in middle secondary school.

But more than that, it is also fantastic, action packed adventure with enough twists to keep you entertained from the first page to the last!

Reviewed by Rob

The Finder

By Kate Hendrick

Publisher: Text Publishing

ISBN 9781925603811 SCIS: 1871401

\$19.99

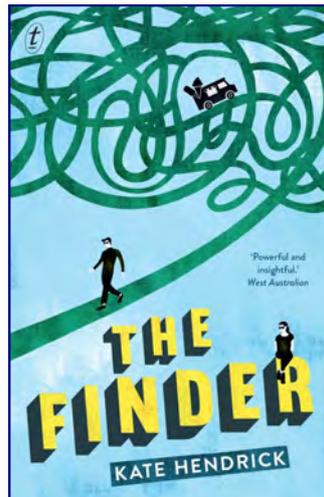
Blurb:

When Lindsay meets Elias the signs aren't promising. She's a grungy introvert who doesn't want to talk to anyone. He's a teen fashionista who can't shut the hell up.

But since Lindsay tracked down a runaway kid, word's got around that she knows how to find people. And Elias is looking for his birth mother. And he has money, and Lindsay's perpetually broke... So that's how this oddest of odd couples teams up.

But the thing is, Lindsay wasn't actually trying to find the runaway. It's just how she looks at the world. Not idly, like most people, but really looking. Scanning every house, every face, every car. That's because someone is missing in Lindsay's life: her identical twin Frankie, who disappeared when they were eight. Since then, her parents have kept themselves busy. And angry. And Lindsay has been... looking.

In Elias, despite their differences, she might have found someone to look with.



Lamont Review:

How do you cope when your eight-year-old identical twin sister disappears? For Lindsay's parents, they have filled their house with five other children all under seven. But this hasn't made the now sixteen-year-old Lindsay any less lonely, she still madly misses Frankie.

And she looks. At people. At faces. Then one day she spots a missing girl and becomes a media hit. A Finder.

For the extroverted Elias, who doesn't know how to find his birth mother, Lindsay could be the finder that he needs. He seeks her assistance and an unlikely association, turning into friendship, occurs. Their journey of discovery is the highlight of the book, with Lindsay leaving home for a while as she finds the space to find her true self. Maybe in the end she will start looking for what is really missing, her wonderful twin Frankie.

This is an often funny, often poignant look at lives that continue after real loss. It also looks at searching for family and why people do things and how not everything can be easily repaired.

Our characters and their relationships are fantastic, the themes important and the content suitable for all secondary students.

I found it a really enjoyable, easy read.

Reviewed by Rob

Angel: Through My Eyes - Natural Disaster Zones

By Zoe Daniel & Edited by Lyn White

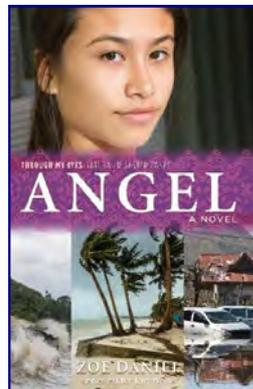
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760113773 SCIS: 1871387

\$16.99

Blurb:

Angel's family has seen many typhoons. For generations the violent storms have passed across the central Philippines around November, bringing with them drenching rains and strong winds. Lately they seem to be stronger, more destructive, but Angel's family and their neighbours know how to batten down - it's part of their way of life. But when a super typhoon comes to Tacloban, will Angel be able to withstand the greatest challenge of all?



Lamont Review:

Angel and her family live on the waters edge in Tacloban. Every year storms and typhoons batter the Philippines, but they all know how to pack up the house and the boat and wait for the storm to pass.

But the storm that hits this year is unlike anything they have ever seen before, as huge walls of water batter the town and cause massive destruction. Angel and her neighbour Mrs Reyes are separated from the rest of her family, and so begins the search to find out who survived.

This is a fascinating story focusing on how people react when faced with disaster and are struggling to survive. This is a story of hope, resilience and courage, as Angel and her friends grow up very quickly and realise how strong and capable they are. It is also a story of friendship and the truly wonderful nature of the human spirit when faced with adversity.

A perfect story for students in Year 7 and up. It has a wonderful message, and will leave you realising that all you really need to be happy is food, water, shelter, and to know your family are safe and well - everything else are just possessions.

Reviewed by Michelle

Finch

By Penny Matthews

Publisher: Walker Books

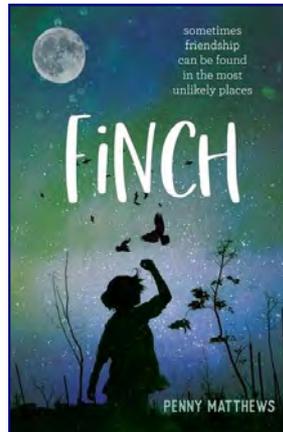
ISBN 9781760650759 SCIS: 1873246

\$16.99

Blurb:

This coming-of-age novel for middle-grade readers is about accepting and celebrating differences.

Audrey is used to not fitting in. She knows she's different – even her little sister calls her “Nerd Girl”. When her family moves to the country to live on a vineyard property, Audrey makes a secret friend: a boy, Finch, who seems to understand her as nobody else can. But there's something mysterious about Finch. Who is he, really?



Lamont Review:

When Audrey and her family move to the country, she hopes she might fit in and find a new friend. It would make a nice change, Audrey isn't used to fitting in.

So then she meets Finch and thinks he really understands her. But who is really?

Set in the country, *Finch* is a story about adapting to change, making new friends and growing up. It will resonate with those who are trying to find their place in the world.

It has strong underlying environmental themes, and upper primary and lower secondary students will love the story with its unexpected twists.

Reviewed by Michelle

Jane Doe and the Cradle of All Worlds

By Jeremy Lachlan

Publisher: Hardie Grant Books

ISBN 9781760501815 SCIS: 1871158

\$19.99

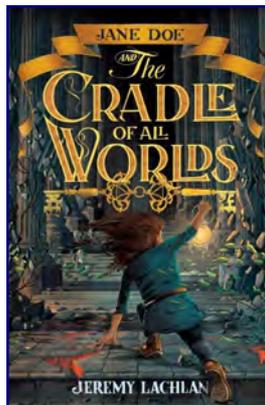
Blurb:

Step inside. Don't look back. Forward is the only way. His Dark Materials meets Mad Max in this unforgettable blockbuster adventure about the world between worlds.

When a fierce quake strikes the remote island of Bluehaven, and her father disappears, Jane Doe is thrown headfirst into an epic quest to bring him home.

But this ain't no ordinary rescue mission. Her father is lost in a place between worlds; a dangerous labyrinth of shifting rooms, infernal booby traps and secret gateways. And Jane has to find him fast, because someone else is searching for him, too. A man who knows her father's secrets. A man who has an army.

With a pyromaniac named Violet and the enigmatic Hickory by her side, Jane is about to discover that this adventure is even bigger on the inside than it looks ...



Lamont Review:

This is a fantastic action packed debut novel from Australian author Jeremy Lachlan.

Given a key to the cradle of the world, Jane is sent headfirst into an Indiana Jones style underground world, full of traps and evil to prevent her getting to the end. An end that she believes will reveal three keys and with them, balance can be restored to all worlds that stem from the cradle.

The characters are wonderful, particularly Jane's best friend Violet, and the evil Roth who sucks all of the good out of everything he touches.

Strap yourself in and be prepared for an amazing ride that is full of adventure and humour. A twist at the end ensures that we will have the opportunity to travel with Jane again in a sequel, and I can't wait!

Rarely have I read a better middle grade novel, full of action and adventure. It just a wonderful story full of fun and adventure that will be thoroughly enjoyed by everyone older than 10.

Reviewed by Rob

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

Front Desk

By Kelly Yang

Publisher: Walker Books

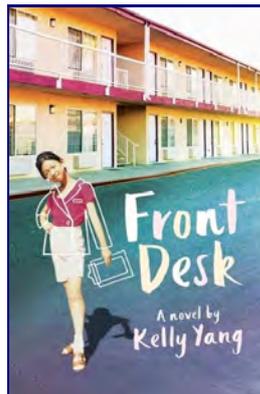
ISBN 9781760650469 SCIS: 1876923

\$17.99

Blurb:

An empowering story of empathy, courage, and hope, based on the author's real-life experience immigrating to the US as a child and working at the front desk of the motel where her parents work.

Ten year-old Mia Tang moved to the US for a better life, a freer life, but so far, it's a life where she runs the front desk of a motel while her parents clean rooms. And she's not even allowed to use the swimming pool. Based on author Kelly Yang's real-life experience immigrating to America from China and running a motel with her parents, this novel explores how one little girl overcomes language barriers, discrimination and her own lack of confidence to find her voice – and use it to make a difference. This is a sensitive story of tolerance and diversity that will resonate with readers of all cultures who have experienced the challenges of feeling like an outsider.



Lamont Review:

Mia and her parents move to the USA for a better life. They want to be able to make their own decisions and give Mia a chance for a better future.

America turns out to be much more difficult than they expected, but can the courage of one young girl to face discrimination head on change things?

This book is based on the authors own experiences growing up. It is an empowering story about hope, resilience, enjoying each others differences and treating everyone the same. It is also a story of the power of a families love, as well as the friendships that you can find everywhere, if you only open your eyes and your heart.

Most of all this book is about kindness and one young girl's determination to change her world.

Highly recommended for all lower secondary students, it will most appeal to girls who are on their own journey to finding their voice.

Reviewed by Michelle

Just Breathe

By Andrew Daddo

Publisher: Penguin

ISBN 9780143573623 SCIS: 1871392

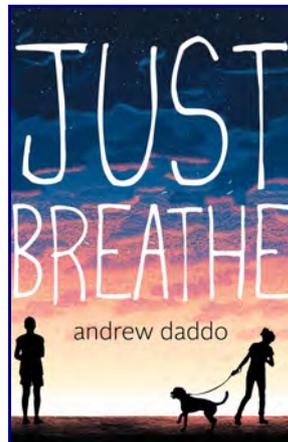
\$17.99

Blurb:

Hendrix's father has a vision - to see Hendrix run for Australia at the Olympics. His days are completely mapped out - what he eats, when he trains, when he sleeps, even the air he breathes.

There was never room in that vision for a girl, especially in the lead-up to the Nationals. Yet fate works in funny ways, and when Hendrix literally bowls Emily over on a training run, he just can't get her out of his head. His life and priorities take a turn as he falls for her.

But Emily has a deadly secret that she's scared to share even with Hendrix. As their bond grows and Hendrix strays further from his father's strict regime, the tension builds to a heart-wrenching climax.



Lamont Review:

I think this latest book by Andrew Daddo is his best yet!

Mixing the Australian country culture with inner city Melbourne life as our two main characters cross paths. They are mature teenagers who have to deal with complex issues.

Hendrix (Drix) has shared his father's belief that he is a brilliant runner, destined for greatness. But his Dad is totally fixated on the extreme training regime required to accomplish this dream.

Emily has moved from Benalla with her Mum to Albert Park so she can be close to the children's hospital, as she has a tumour at the base of her brain, surrounding her spinal chord, that they are not sure how to treat.

They met, and literally collided, while she is walking her dog, Lucky. They have an instant connection and this relationship quickly develops. Unfortunately, this situation is totally unacceptable to Drix's Dad - with State and National titles looming, he believes that Drix cannot afford any distractions.

It was great to see these characters maturing at their own pace and facing their real challenges both alone, and then ultimately with someone else in their corner.

With themes of ill health, inner strength, relationships and finding your place in the world, I found this a wonderful read with a fantastic and climactic ending.

It will be enjoyed most by readers around 14 - 16 years of age.

Reviewed by Rob

The Relic of the Blue Dragon: Children of the Dragon 1

By Rebecca Lim

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760297367 SCIS: 1873235

\$14.99

Blurb:

When Harley Spark accidentally releases Qing, one of five dragon sisters, from the ancient vase she's been trapped in for centuries, he is soon on a dangerous international mission with Qing to find and free her four sisters.

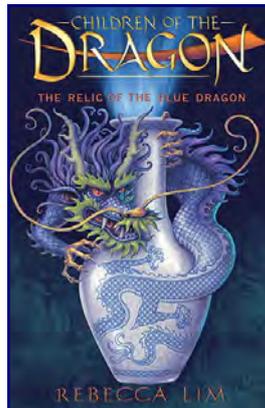
Harley gave a little shiver as he peered at the mysterious girl's message. She'd written: DRAGON KING RETURNS.

Harley Spark is just an ordinary thirteen-year-old kid who lives with his mum, Delia.

Rumour has it that his dad, Ray, is an international crime figure with a talent for nicking old, valuable things.

So when Harley finds an antique Chinese vase on the footpath, something compels him to stuff it under his school jumper and run for home. Little does he know he's about to reignite a centuries-old war between two ancient, supernatural families...

Featuring magic, mystery and martial arts, *The Relic of the Blue Dragon* is the first book in the action-packed *Children of the Dragon* series.



Lamont Review:

When Harley Spark picks up a vase on the footpath near his home, he has no idea what is in store for him! The vase is not all it seems, and when it gets broken a magical warrior emerges from the mess.

Qing is one of the five daughters of the first dragon and she needs Harley's help to find her sisters. So begins an adventure that takes them from Melbourne to Singapore, and then to China.

Entwined in all of this is Harley's dad, Ray, who appears to have as many mysterious things about him as Qing...

This is a fast paced fantasy with lots of adventure, action, dragons, magic and amazing powers all wrapped up in Chinese mythology. Readers will love Harley and Qing as they battle the odds stacked against them and forge an unlikely friendship in the process.

It will also introduce readers to some fascinating elements of centuries old Chinese culture.

It is perfect for middle-grade readers, Year 5 - Year 8, and is a thoroughly enjoyable read.

Reviewed by Michelle