

The Fire Star

By A.L Tait
Publisher: Penguin
ISBN 9781760897079 SCIS: 1977664
\$16.99

**SECONDARY BOOK
OF THE MONTH**

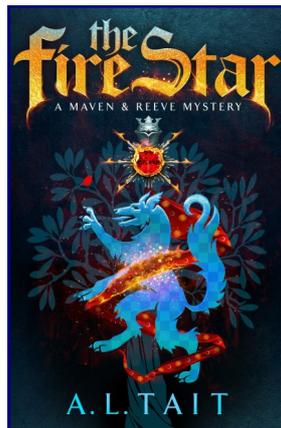
Blurb:

A maid with a plan.
A squire with a secret.
A missing jewel.
A kingdom in turmoil.

Maven and Reeve have three days to solve the mystery of the Fire Star. If they don't, they'll lose everything.

This could be a complete disaster... or the beginning of a friendship.

Bestselling author A. L. Tait is back with the intriguing story of two unlikely allies and a mystery to solve that could change their lives.



Lamont Review:

Maven is a lady's companion and Reeve is a squire, and they really do not like each other. But given they are both living in the same castle, and the castle is in turmoil after the theft of the fire star jewel, they will need all their combined wits to solve this mystery.

Set in medieval times, when girls were given no education, Maven is an exception to the rule as she can both read and write, and is very feisty. Reeve has been taught to look and listen, and is a bit squeamish and often underestimated. Readers will absolutely adore this unlikely pair.

This story is exciting and full of adventure and there is a wonderful cast of supporting characters, however it is the interaction between Maven and Reeve that is truly enjoyable. It is hard to put this book down, as the mystery slowly unravels and they uncover secrets, lies, blackmail, theft, murder, espionage and a noble wedding to top it all off.

This is an excellent medieval tale, and I hope there will be more adventures for these two wonderful characters.

Perfect for all readers in Year 7 and up.

Reviewed by Michelle

Of Boys and Boats

By Ian Trevaskis

Publisher: Ford Street Publishing

ISBN 9781925804515 SCIS: 1980997

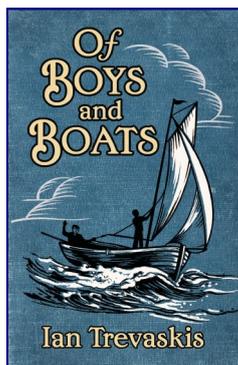
\$19.95

Blurb:

It is 1956 – the year the Olympic Games came to Melbourne. Jack Spiller and his mates are caught up in the excitement, running their own torch relay around the block each night while the Olympic Torch travels to Melbourne.

When Jack and the new kid, Heinrich, discover an unfinished sailboat in the shed of recluse ‘Mad’ Mick Metcalf, Jack’s focus changes. Can he convince Mick to allow them to finish it? Or has the old man been too damaged by the horrors of World War One?

A fast-paced, humorous story about the power of friendship.



Lamont Review:

Set in Geelong in 1956 during the Olympics, Jack and his best friend Percy are having fun running their own torch relay. But trouble is never far away and Bruiser, the local bully, delights in making life hell for Jack, Percy and especially their new mate Gunther, whose family fled Germany after the war.

When the boys discover that their reclusive neighbour Mick has a half finished boat in his shed, they decide to ask him if they could finish it. And so begins the most unlikely of friendships - can three boys and one girl really build a boat?

This book is a beautiful story of friendship and hard work. It is set in 1956, and the bullying that Bruiser inflicts is physical and, when the boys have eventually had enough, their retaliation is too - a far cry from what we would expect or hope to see today.

It is also a story of redemption for Mick, who shut himself away after the war in which his younger brother was killed, and after his fiancée died from the Spanish flu. Jack and Mick realise that age is no barrier to a friendship, and seeing Mick come alive again is one of the joys of this story, as is Jack’s special friendship with Anna.

A truly enjoyable book that will transport readers into Melbourne in the 1950’s. Full of adventure and friendship, it is perfect for students in Year 8 and up.

Reviewed by Michelle

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

Indigo Owl

By Charlie Archbold

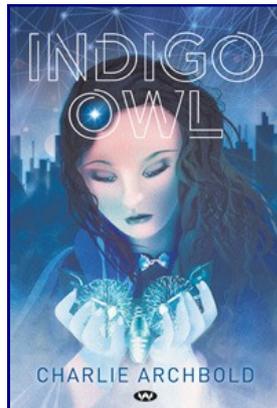
Publisher: Wakefield Press

ISBN 9781743057322 SCIS: 1978075

\$24.95

Blurb:

'It's a privilege to live here, but we have to work for it. As Earth was bleached and destroyed by climate change, only private companies were able to afford to colonise space. Our planet, Galbraith, is named after what was once the biggest pharmaceutical company on Earth.' When Scarlet Bergen leaves the comforting familiarity of her home, Facility 614, to start her training at the imposing Arcadia Institute, she has all the normal worries: whether she will make friends, what life will look like, and whether she will pass the rigorous training to become a valued member of Galbraith society. But Scarlet has a secret: her mother went missing many years ago, and she's determined to find her. With the help of Rumi, her headstrong and frankly odd neighbour, and Dylan, the handsome but aloof student who reads her intuitively, maybe she'll be able to uncover the dark secrets of her family's past. But the three of them will also find out there's very little the Galbraith Executives will stop at to get what they want. In the vein of the popular *'Divergent'* series, *'Indigo Owl'* is fast-paced young adult dystopian fiction at its best.



Lamont Review:

Indigo Owl is a story that will grab you from the very beginning. Full of secrets, conspiracy and adventure, it is hard to put down.

Scarlett, Rumi and Dylan are the main characters in this fast-paced dystopian novel. Set in a future where the Galbraith company control everything, including the fertility of all their citizens, and no one can escape them.

Our three main characters all have their own reasons to question Galbraith's overwhelming control of their lives - stemming from their past. To uncover the truth they must trust each other and risk everything, and what they uncover is a planet-wide conspiracy that the Galbraith company will stop at nothing to keep hidden...

Perfect for readers who enjoyed *Divergent*, this book is sure to become a favourite with those in Year 9 and up.

Reviewed by Michelle

Fighting Words

By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Publisher: Text Publishing

ISBN 9781922330628 SCIS: 1978064

\$19.99

Blurb:

Della can't work out why her adored older sixteen-year-old sister Suki screams in her sleep. Suki has always been Della's protector, especially after their mother went to prison and her boyfriend took the sisters in. But who has been protecting Suki?

Della is in trouble at school for having a big mouth, but after she stands up to the class bully other girls rally to her cause. When Suki tries to kill herself, Della decides it's time to tell their secrets and speak out about the terrible things that happened to Suki. Bound by love and trauma, these two sisters must find their own voices before they can find their way back to each other.

Based on the author's personal experience, this gripping and essential story explodes the stigma around child sexual abuse. Written from the heart, with tenderness, compassion and humour, *Fighting Words* is about finding the words to talk about the most difficult things in young adults' lives.



Lamont Review:

This is a powerful and confronting novel about the impact of child sexual abuse.

I've read many books over the years that have centred on this truly difficult subject, but this is the first one that I've read that I felt really tackled this subject for teen readers in such a powerful way that it had to be included in our Standing Order selection.

Based on the author's own personal experience, it is written with compassion, love, sensitivity and a deep understanding of young people, and of this issue.

Della is the youngest of the two sisters and it takes her a long time to realise that Suki, her elder sister, has been abused for years. When Suki attempts suicide, Della decides that there will be no more secrets. It is a confronting story, but readers will love Della and Suki and their gruff, but kind-hearted, foster Mum who helps both girls to realise that what happened to them was never their fault, and that they do not need to be defined by it.

It is also a story about the unbreakable bond between two sisters, and how love, hope and a dash of humour can give them the courage to face their future together.

Recommended for those 14 and up, and I would encourage librarians and teachers to read it as well, as it may give one of your students the courage to speak up.

Reviewed by Michelle

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

The History of Mischief

By Rebecca Higgle

Publisher: Fremantle Press

ISBN 9781925816266 SCIS: 1978078

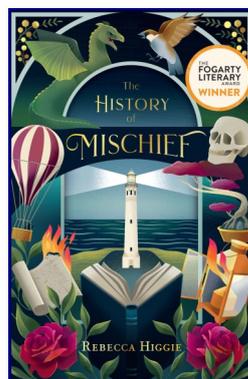
\$19.99

Blurb:

When Jessie and her older sister Kay find a book called *The History of Mischief*, hidden beneath the floorboards in their grandmother's house, they uncover a secret world. The History chronicles how, since antiquity, mischief-makers have clandestinely shaped the past - from an Athenian slave to a Polish salt miner and from an advisor to the Ethiopian Queen to a girl escaping the Siege of Paris. Jessie becomes enthralled by the book and by her own mission to determine its accuracy.

Soon the History inspires Jessie to perform her own acts of mischief, unofficially becoming mischief-maker number 202 in an effort to cheer up her eccentric neighbour, Mrs Moran, and to comfort her new schoolfriend, Theo. However, not everything is as it seems. As Jessie delves deeper into the real story behind the History, she becomes convinced her grandmother holds the key to a long-held family secret.

The History of Mischief is about the many things we do to try to escape grief, and the stories we tell in order to protect ourselves and those we love.



Lamont Review:

Jessie and her older sister Kay are both struggling after the death of their parents in a car crash. When they move into their Grandmother's house and find a book hidden under the floorboards, they start sharing the stories. The book is a history of the mischief-makers, from ancient times to now. Jessie starts researching what she reads in the book and believes that the stories are real.

Inspired, she decides to start a bit of her own mischief to help her friend Theo and her lonely neighbour, Mrs Moran, who vacuums her driveway at night time.

But the history has a story all its own, and Jessie desperately wants answers. Can her Grandmother help?

This is a fascinating look at history through a different set of eyes. It's fun, entertaining and full of mischief.

It is also the story of Jessie and Kay's struggle with grief, and how we all deal with it in different ways. Strong themes of family, friendship and history make this a wonderful read and one I'm sure will be much loved. It would also make a great addition any lower secondary class reading lists, as there are so many layers you could explore.

Reviewed by Michelle

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

When This Bell Rings

By Allison Rushby

Publisher: Walker Books

ISBN 9781760651947 SCIS: 1977933

\$17.99

Blurb:

This story within a story within a story celebrates the creative art of storytelling. In London's Belgravia, Tamsin lives next door to Edie St Clair, famous author of the 'London of the Bells' series of graphic novels. With the series' tenth and final novel overdue, Tamsin offers her idol help and discovers that Edie can literally draw herself into her stories. When Edie goes missing, Tamsin draws herself into the novel and lands in a world of unexpected danger. The stakes couldn't be higher in this gripping adventure.



Lamont Review:

This is truly a classic story within a story.

Tamsin's neighbour, Edie St Clair, is the famous author of the "London of the Bells" graphic novel series. But Edie is struggling to finish the final book in the series. When Edie goes missing, Tamsin realises that she is the only one who can find her and the adventure within an adventure really begins...

The world of London of the Bells is immersive, and the half-fairy/half-human heroes of the world are wonderful characters who are battling the human-sized ravens for control of the City of London.

Intriguing, fast paced and adventurous, this is a 'read in one sitting' kind of book, that is perfect for anyone who loves great storytelling from 13 to 103.

Reviewed by Michelle

Rebel Gods: Monuments Book 2

By Will Kostakis

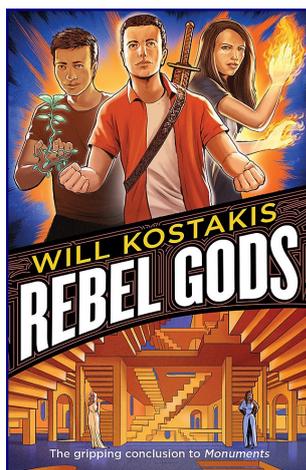
Publisher: Lothian Children's Books / Hachette

ISBN 9780734419262 SCIS: 1981005

\$19.99

Blurb:

With the Monuments gone, newbie gods Connor, Sally and Locky must stop the rebel gods from reducing the world to ruin. Trouble is, they don't know how. While Sally searches for answers and Locky makes plans to change the world, Connor struggles to keep up appearances as an ordinary teenager. But when a rebel god offers them a deal to end the chaos, their lives are turned upside down and they're forced to reckon with the question: who should decide the fate of the world? *Rebel Gods* is the gripping conclusion to *Monuments*, a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book 2019, from YA superstar, Will Kostakis. It's a heartfelt look at family, friendship and the parallel lives we lead.



Lamont Review:

Connor, Sally and Locky are back for another adventure...

Whilst this is the second and final book in the *Monuments* story, you can definitely read it as stand-alone story too, as Will Kostakis has done a great job with the summary of the previous tale at the beginning of this one. Although *Monuments* is also an excellent book, so I would recommend you do read it if you have the chance!

Our three new gods are struggling with their new roles and normality, when a rebel god shows up. The Monuments had left them a message that the rebel gods would ruin the world and must be killed immediately. Can our new gods save the world? And are the rebel gods really that bad?

Fast-paced and filled with humour, friendship, love and action, this is an enthralling tale.

Perfect for those who like their fantasy stories grounded in reality, will most suit readers in Year 9 and above.

Reviewed by Michelle

Reading questions prepared by the publisher are available for this title on our website.

You Were Made For Me

By Jenna Guillaume

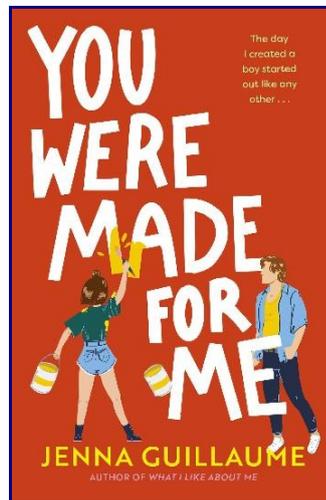
Publisher: Pan Australia / Pan Macmillan Aust

ISBN 9781760559137 SCIS: 1980527

\$17.99

Blurb:

The day I created a boy started out like any other. Katie didn't mean to create a boy. A boy like a long-lost Hemsworth brother: six-foot tall with floppy hair and eyes like the sky on a clear summer's day; whose lips taste like cookie dough and whose skin smells like springtime. A boy who is completely devoted to Katie. He was meant to be perfect. But he was never meant to exist.



Lamont Review:

Katie has high expectations and a seemingly unrequited affection for the school hottie, Declan Bell Jones. Always wanting the perfect guy, Katie puts her artistic talents to work and decides to sculpt her own. But when her scientific minded BFF, Libby, adds a soul to her artwork, suddenly her perfect Guy has miraculously come to life!

This sets in train a myriad of events where they have to explain and hide Guy, so that their secret is not uncovered.

Although Guy has been created perfectly, and with 100% devotion to Katie, he unfortunately has no memories. So when her real perfect guy, Declan, starts taking an interest in Katie, who will she choose?

With themes of dreams versus reality, idealism, true friendship and bullying, this is a great novel that will best appeal to mid-teen girls.

Reviewed by Rob

Spotlight

By Solli Raphael

Publisher: Puffin / Penguin

ISBN 9781760898410 SCIS: 1981355

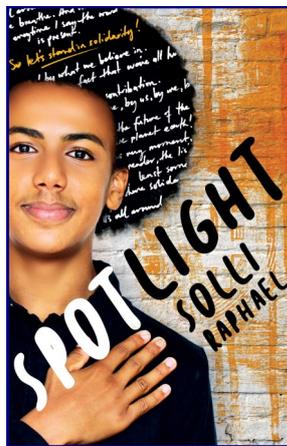
\$16.99

Blurb:

Following on from the success of *Limelight*, this new collection of poetry illuminates the social interests of Solli's generation in a thought-provoking style, including a mix of traditional poems and brand-new performance poems. It covers topics from connection to bullying and pinpoints climate change as a key concern with poems like Solli's Greenpeace collaboration piece 'Let's Make More Minutes Count!'.

Spotlight also contains five non-fiction chapters with advice, tips and plenty of activities for kids and teens. Solli encourages readers to find their voice and learn the forms and occupations of writing, as well as discusses how to use and gain a platform, with ways to instigate change and become a wordsmith themselves. He shares his experiences, ideas and advice on how the reader can create a sustainable future and discover ways to help create change, while looking at trends such as veganism and zero waste.

Everyone can be proactive in shaping the future so let's stand in solidarity.



Lamont Review:

Spotlight is the second book from SLAM poet Solli Raphael, and it will not disappoint his many fans. This time as well as his own poems, Solli has included wonderful tips and advice that are perfect for those trying to find ways to express themselves, for example how to write poetry, and how to create change.

All these poems focus on causes close to Solli's heart, especially climate change, bullying and being connected to each other.

I particularly loved the following ones: Embracing Life, Beliefism, Ignite Your Spark, Spotlight, Follow The Light, Slam and Rise, but I'm sure readers will quickly find your own favourites.

Destined to become an instant hit with readers in lower secondary and above.

Reviewed by Michelle

Where We Begin

By Christie Nieman

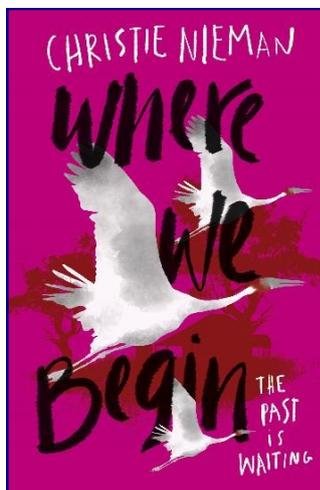
Publisher: Pan Australia / Pan Macmillan Aust

ISBN 9781743535660 SCIS: 1981017

\$18.99

Blurb:

Seventeen-year-old Anna is running into the night. Fleeing her boyfriend, her mother, and everything she has known. She is travelling into the country, to the land and the grandparents she has never met, looking for answers to questions that have never been asked. For every family has secrets. But some secrets - once laid bare - can never be forgiven. A dark, deeply compelling, coming-of-age YA novel from the author of *As Stars Fall*.



Lamont Review:

Anna is a seventeen-year-old high achiever, soon to be studying medicine, when she discovers that she is pregnant. This was not part of her plan, and she is sure that she has to do something about it...

With her Dad away nursing his sick father in Germany, and her high-functioning alcoholic mother off to a conference in New Zealand, Anna decides to go to her grandparent's country house. But she has never met them, and when she arrives what she finds is nothing like what she had expected.

Her Dutch grandparents are living in the relative squalor of a rundown farmhouse, but the true horror is more hidden. Although initially welcoming, Anna soon discovers that her grandfather is a very unpleasant man - prejudiced, with a very short fuse and prone to physical violence.

Anna slowly discovers the secrets that have been buried deep within her family, and the reason her own mother fled at seventeen, wanting to never return. But some actions cannot be forgiven or undone. Can Anna hope to break free from the cycle and look for a brighter future?

A captivating story dealing with the difficult themes of the intergenerational impact of family violence, alcoholism and physical abuse, as well as exploring the impacts and history of racism, prejudice and injustice towards Aboriginal people, this was a truly eye opening read. It is ultimately a story of hope, and is a terrific and important read for teenagers in Year 9 and up.

Reviewed by Rob