

Readings Monthly

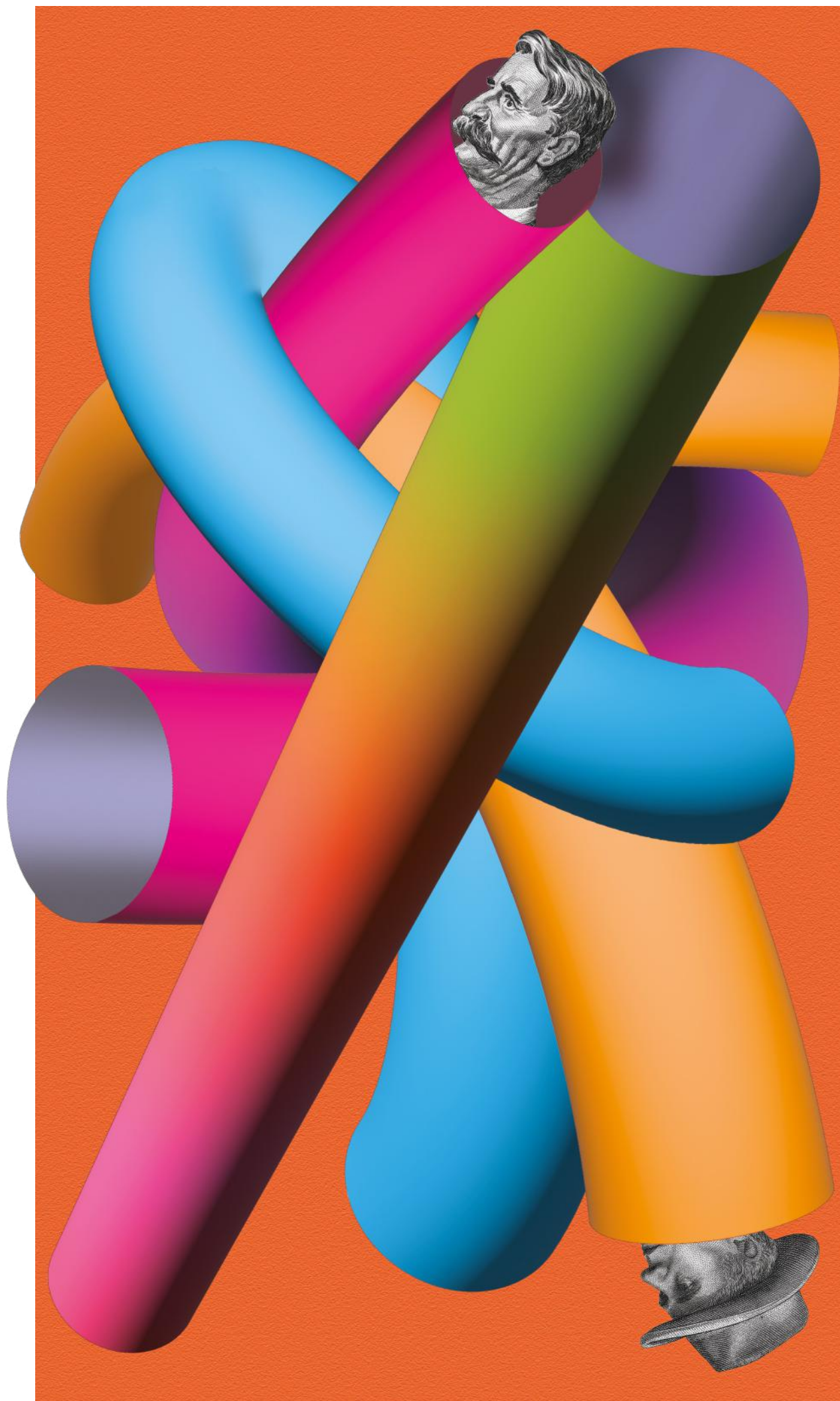
FREE | MAY 2026

**Introducing our
Children's Book
Division Manager,
Kim Gruschow**

page 4

New books from
**Elizabeth Strout,
Amanda Lohrey,
Wayne Marshall,
Martin McKenzie-
Murray** and more!

from page 5



ROBERT FORSTER
page 5



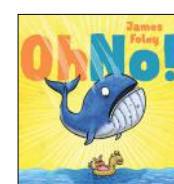
REBECCA LIM
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EMMA HARDY
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WENDY TYRER
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JAMES FOLEY
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SAMERA KAMALEDINE
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[Melbourne Writers Festival]

7-10 May

visions & Revisions

From page to stage... Immerse yourself in events that will move, challenge, and inspire you.



Genki Kawamura: One Hundred Flowers

Sat 9 May, 4.30pm | The Capitol

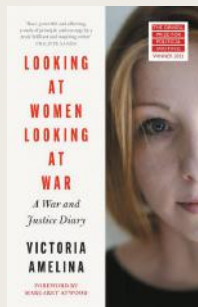
English-speaking readers first encountered **Genki Kawamura** through his debut novel, *If Cats Disappeared from the World*, which has sold over three million copies worldwide and been translated into 25 languages. Now, he makes his Melbourne Writers Festival debut in celebration of his affirming new novel, *One Hundred Flowers*. **\$40 full / \$35 conc.**



Maria Reva: Endling

Sun 10 May, 10.30am | The Capitol

Canadian-Ukrainian author **Maria Reva** joins the MWF lineup to discuss her daringly inventive Booker Prize-longlisted novel. *Endling* is at once a war novel about modern-day Ukraine, a hilarious satire of the mail-order bride industry, a eulogy to almost-extinct species and an examination of the ethics of writing on conflict and violence. With **Maria Tumarkin**. **\$35 full / \$30 conc.**

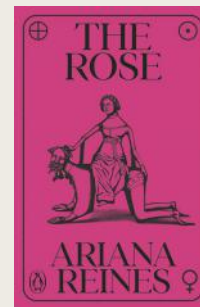


Looking at Women, Looking at War: Book Club

Sun 10 May, 3pm | State Library Theatrette

Join this special book club discussion on Victoria Amelina's *Looking at Women*, *Looking at War* with **Kate Larsen**, **Maria Reva** and **Madison Griffiths**. Together, they'll discuss Amelina's work and legacy – from documenting the powerful acts of resistance undertaken by Ukrainian women, to exploring the intersections of gender, power and conflict.

This is a panel-style book club discussion. Audience members are not required to read or discuss the book. **\$25 full / \$20 conc.**



Ariana Reines in Conversation

Sun 10 May, 2.30pm | The Capitol

Poet, playwright, performing artist and translator **Ariana Reines** is one of the most electrifying voices in modern American poetry. Across her extensive body of work, she explores the viscera of life: suffering, desire, violence, pleasure, the search for the divine. Spend an afternoon with this enthralling poetic force as she reflects on a life spent seeking meaning through art. With **Rebecca Harkins-Cross**. **\$35 full / \$30 conc.**

On sale now mwf.com.au

News

Mother's Day

It's Mother's Day on Sunday 10 May. You'll find plenty of ideas in this issue of the *Readings Monthly*, in our nine shops and online at readings.com.au. Please note that our online shipping deadline has passed and any orders placed will not be guaranteed to arrive in time for Mother's Day. But our shops will all be open and our well-read staff are readily available to assist you with finding the perfect gift for Mum. Our April 3 for 2 Penguin Modern Classics sale will wrap up on Sunday 10 May, so there is still time to grab a bargain before then!

The Big Book Club: *The Odyssey*

This June, Readings has teamed up with the University of Melbourne and Cinema Nova to launch The Readings Big Book Club with a five-part seminar series on *The Odyssey*. Led by Michael Williams and top academics, the series concludes with a screening of Christopher Nolan's new adaptation of *The Odyssey*. To find out more and to book your spot, visit readings.com.au/news/the-readings-big-book-club

Melbourne Writers Festival 2026

The Melbourne Writers Festival is back for 2026, running from Thursday 7 until Sunday 10 May. MWF is where intellect, imagination and inquiry take the stage. Readings is proud to be the official bookseller for

Melbourne Writers Festival. To browse the program and book tickets, head to mwf.com.au

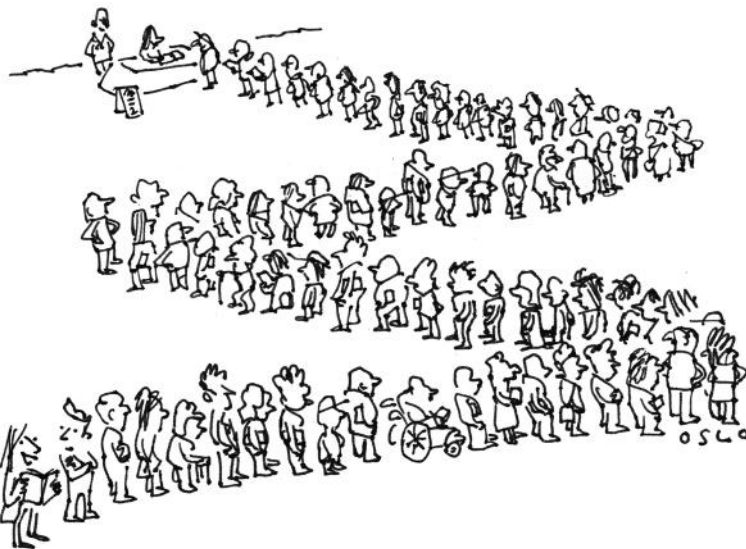
Stella Prize shortlist 2026

The shortlist for the 2026 Stella Prize has been announced, celebrating six incredible books from Australian women and non-binary writers. The six shortlisted titles are *The Rot* by Evelyn Araluen, *Memorial Days* by Geraldine Brooks, *Fireweather* by Miranda Darling, *Cannon* by Lee Lai, *58 Facets* by Marika Sosnowski and *I am Nannertgarrook* by Tasma Walton. The winning book will be announced on 13 May, and will be awarded \$60,000. Find out more at stella.org.au

Promos

20% off Kids' nonfiction

We have a great offer happening in May to help combat those dreary staying-inside blues! Take 20% off a range of kids' nonfiction books! This offer is available online and in Readings shops (except Readings Carlton and State Library) until 31 May 2026. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.



"This line gives me time to both read the book and decide if I want her to sign it when I get there."

READINGS MONTHLY

The *Readings Monthly* is a free, independent newspaper published by Readings. The print edition is available in all our shops and a copy is included with every online order. Sign up to our e-news to receive a link to a digital copy of each new edition or view them online at readings.com.au/readings-monthly

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FRONT COVER

The May *Readings Monthly* cover features artwork from the cover of *Henry Goes Bush* by Wayne Marshall, courtesy of the publisher, Picador. Cover design by Sandy Cull, sandycull.com. Read our review on page 6.

PRICES AND AVAILABILITY

Please note that all prices and release dates in *Readings Monthly* are correct at time of publication, however prices and release dates may change without notice. Special price offers apply only for the month in which they are featured in *Readings Monthly*. Readings donates 10% of its profits each year to the Readings Foundation.

Learn more about the foundation at readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Readings acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work. We pay respects to all First Nations people of Australia, and recognise their connection to the land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

SHOP INFORMATION

See shop opening hours, browse and buy online at readings.com.au. Australian online, mail and phone orders have \$9 flat rate shipping, with free shipping on orders \$100 and over.

CARLTON	309 Lygon St	03 9347 6633
KIDS	315 Lygon St	03 9341 7730
CHADSTONE	The Market Pavilion	03 9810 0860
DONCASTER	Westfield Doncaster	03 9810 0891
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ST KILDA	112 Acland St	03 9525 3852
SLV	285-321 Russell St	03 8664 7540

KEY

Your key to getting the most out of the *Readings Monthly*

Review

Events

Special price

ALL MY SONS

WRITTEN BY ARTHUR MILLER DIRECTED BY IVO VAN HOVE

BRYAN CRANSTON
MARIANNE JEAN-BAPTISTE
PAAPA ESSIEDU

COMMENCES
MAY 7
AT CINEMA NOVA

380 LYGON ST, CARLTON
CINEMANOVA.COM.AU

Dear Reader

with Alison Huber



It's May in Melbourne, and that means the Melbourne Writers Festival is rolling into town. Readings is a festival partner and the festival's bookseller, so for many weeks before the festival, a small group of people feverishly source

the stock for our booksellers to take to the many venues of the festival. It's no small feat and requires significant powers of organisation and crystal-ball-gazing, and so here's a little shout-out to the ordering finesse of Claire and Andras, and the stock wrangling prowess of our amazing receiving team and van drivers who ferry the

stock around: thank you one and all for your contributions to this epic endeavour, and congratulations on another amazing year!

For many years, Angela Crocombe has been synonymous with children's books at Readings. She started her time in Readings St Kilda before moving to Carlton and eventually becoming the inaugural manager of Readings Kids when it opened next door to our flagship shop in Lygon Street in 2016. Angela recently made the decision to step back from her buying role to focus on her work as manager of The Readings Prizes and Foundation, as well as mentoring the Teen Advisory Board (an initiative she began). Thanks so much

for all your contributions to children's bookselling at Readings, Angela!

It's a real pleasure to introduce you now to Kim Gruschow, our new children's book division manager, though you may recognise her already because she's been working with Readings since 2011: she's pictured below with a giant cannoli! (If you're wondering why the cannoli, it's a prop from the recent picture book, *My Nonna Loves*, plus, just between you and me, I reckon Kim could make a pretty mean cannoli, giant or otherwise – she was the joint winner of the most recent staff bake-off for Emelia Jackson's book, *You Had Me at Cake!*).

Alison Huber, our Head of Buying, celebrates the appointment of Kim Gruschow to Children's Book Division Manager with a quick Q&A!

AH Kim! Congratulations on your new role as Children's Book Division Manager at Readings. It's great to have you on board. You have been a children's bookseller for over 20 years, and I'm sure our readers would love to know a bit more about your career trajectory. How did you start out in books, and when did you decide to specialise in children's bookselling?

KG Thanks Alison! It may go without saying, but books have always been a big part of my life. When no clear path appeared for me after I finished a politics and philosophy degree, I applied for a job at The Children's Bookshop in Wellington; a great specialist bookshop and the perfect place for me at the time. I studied publishing ahead of my 2011 move to Melbourne; I'd planned to head in that direction, but I started at Readings and I've stayed in various roles and locations since. I love bookselling because of the direct connections with people. Understanding the impact books have had on my life, I find it so rewarding to introduce readers to books they love, and to encourage something as vital as literacy. Kids' books are the most fun!

AH What is the biggest change you've noticed in children's books over this time?

KG There are so many books being published and more being translated, too. To me, bookselling feels more global than a few decades ago, and the books available to us better reflect the experiences of a broader array of young readers.

AH What was your favourite book as a kid, and do you still love that book now?

KG I was completely obsessed with witches as a child and that shaped my tastes. I loved Margaret Mahy's book *The Witch in the Cherry Tree* and when I was a bit older, her novels, particularly *The Changeover* and *The Haunting*. Spike Milligan's *Badjelly the Witch* was disproportionately popular in New Zealand because the recording used to be played on national radio sometimes. It was out of print when I was a kid, but I

was obsessed enough that my mum was compelled to photocopy the entire library book and paste it into an exercise book for me. Mahy's books have stood the test of time well. I re-read *The Changeover* not long ago and I think she was ahead of the curve with that one!

AH What's the best book you've read in the last few years? Do you think people will be reading this book 40 years from now?

KG There are so many books I've loved recently, but of the children's novels I've read in the past few years Katherine Rundell's *Impossible Creatures* and its follow-up, *The Poisoned King*, have been real highlights. She understands so well how to create the immediacy and pace that are important in writing for young readers. These books are so clever. I think she will be known, if she is not already, as one of the greats. She also advocates eloquently for children's literature. I'm excited to see what she does next.

AH What do you think are some of the challenges facing Australian children's publishing at the moment?

KG It can be very difficult for more interesting and unique titles to gain traction in a crowded market. Publishing can be quite focused on branding and celebrity, and some books seem to cater to search terms ahead of young readers. Media coverage of children's books is rare now and often negative, even though there are so many amazing Australian books being published and loved. Nostalgia is also a big factor, too – naturally people immediately recognise and want to share the books they loved as a child. It's totally understandable, but I always hope we can also connect people with more recent beautiful books and living authors that I think they might love just as much, if not more!



Kim Gruschow and giant cannoli. Photo credit | Lian Hingee **R**

AH I know you're a big fan of graphic novels for kids, and it has been exciting to watch this category grow in recent years. Tell us why you think these are important in a child's reading journey.

KG I think many of us love and respond to visual languages. Images can add another layer to the reading experience. Comics often have a very broad appeal, so graphic novels sometimes offer a way in that isn't perceived as 'babyish' for readers who might be struggling. It's been fantastic to see Australian graphic novel publishing for kids develop over the past decade. Hardie Grant's new dedicated kids' graphic novel imprint, Figment, has already published four excellent and unique books, and we have great authors doing interesting things with other publishers, too – Remy Lai, Jason Pamment and Renée Trembl spring to mind. Reading for enjoyment is so important and no one is ever too old for pictures!

AH What are you reading and loving right now?

KG I loved Sara Pennypacker's historical adventure *The Lions' Run*, illustrated by Jon Klassen. *Josephine* by Chloé Alméras is a board book about a giraffe that is only 32 pages long but is a profound and funny epic. It brought a tear to my eye. *Imanka nurna laakinha nitjaarta / Old Days* is published by the wonderful Magabala Books. It's a bilingual picture book by Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams, a senior Western Arrernte woman and artist. Her childhood memories are depicted in her incredible paintings. *Omnibird* by Giselle Clark is a nonfiction book that is great for bird lovers of all ages. I'm just diving into a couple of very fun recent translations of books by Italian author Gianni Rodari, who came to writing for children by way of communism and the avant-garde: *The Grammar of Fantasy* and *The Adventures of Cipollino*, which is an anti-authoritarian adventure starring an onion!

Events

with Chris Gordon



Recently, I heard we're in a civic-engagement recession, meaning we are simply not able to participate in activities as much as we used to. I imagine money and time have a lot to do with it. This is not good news, especially when

considering loneliness and its role in health. I'm glad our events program is mainly free to attend (get in touch if ticket prices are prohibitive for you). It's yet another reason to come along and hear from authors and have a gasbag with someone. It's for your health!

Jane Caro in conversation

Wednesday 13 May at 6.00pm

Cinema Nova, 380 Lygon St, Carlton

Tickets: \$20 and includes a signed book

We are delighted to partner with The Australia Institute to host an evening with Jane Caro and Monica Dux in conversation about *Rich Kid Poor Kid*.

If You're Listening: Declassified by Matt Bevan

Thursday 14 May at 6.15pm

Cinema Nova, 380 Lygon St, Carlton

Tickets: \$35 includes a signed book; \$10 no book

We are delighted to have Matt Bevan, host of the wildly popular podcast *If You're Listening*, take us on a fascinating journey through the murky waters of history, memory, and the stories we tell ourselves.

Friday Night Poetry

Friday 22 May at 8.00pm

Readings Carlton, 309 Lygon St, Carlton

Free, but bookings are essential

Join us for a showcase of Melbourne poets – Darby Hudson, Emilie Collyer and Eartha Davis – reading their most recent works. Hosted by Tim Loveday.

Steve Toltz in conversation

Friday 29 May at 6.15pm

The Church of All Nations, 180 Palmerston St, Carlton

Free, but bookings are essential

Join us to hear Michael Williams in conversation with Steve Toltz about *A Rising of the Lights*.



For our full events calendar, the latest events information and to book tickets, scan the QR code or visit readings.com.au/events

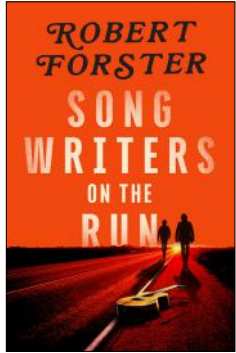


Look for the event symbol throughout this issue to discover more upcoming events **R**

Fiction

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Australian Fiction



Songwriters on the Run
Robert Forster
Penguin. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May

R In 2015, Robert Forster released his album *Songs to Play*. Cue Side 1, Track 3, ‘Songwriters on the Run’, a three-verse folk ballad in E minor about two musicians escaping jail, finding refuge with friends, making music, and falling in unrequited love. It’s a beautiful song with an unresolved narrative. It was the very vehicle that Forster wanted to explore next. He recently commented, ‘Basically, I wanted to free myself and write what I made up. Fiction. Imagination. Freedom to dream. I began to think of stories. I had a couple that didn’t fly, and then I remembered ‘Songwriters on the Run’. It flew.’

It’s a wonderful ride, filled with names and stories, real and imagined – guessing games galore!

Over the course of nine years, Forster wrote this wonderful, quirky, amusing and insightful fable. As he says, it’s an ode to song itself, and a project for which he never lost enthusiasm, always returning to it in between his music and other projects. Paul Kelly has accurately described the book as ‘A comic odyssey, a crime thriller and a nuts-and-bolts account of making art. Not bad for one book!’

This is the story of a band: two friends, Mick and

Drew, eternally locked together in that dreamland of songs and music, books and film, firmly believing in themselves, no matter what may befall them on the road. It’s 1991, they’re on tour in Queensland, singing and writing songs in small clubs. Then a steely, determined cop in Rockhampton happily busts our two heroes for marijuana possession and credit card fraud. All hell breaks loose!

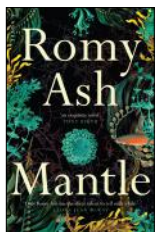
What follows is a rollicking road trip of friendship, sacrifice, desperation and redemption, always with the hope of rescue. It’s a wonderful ride, filled with names and stories, real and imagined – guessing games galore! Forster writes well, with warmth, humour and insight into the process of writing. He has the knowledge that it takes time to create a song – and this most charming and unexpected delight of a novel! Congratulations, Mr Forster ... see you on the road!

Daniel Carroll is from Readings Carlton

Australian Fiction

Mantle

Romy Ash
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R *Mantle* by Romy Ash is a beautiful novel, at times joyful, thoughtful and interspersed with numbing grief. *Mantle* begins with Ursula, a geologist working for an Australian university,

visiting her sick mother in a small Tasmanian coastal town. But her mother’s sickness is something strange, and Ursula begins to develop a rash that won’t go away. There is a growing sense of dread, but this dread doesn’t fully seep into the character’s everyday activities. Alongside dread, there’s a building sense of connection between Ursula, this place, its politics and its people. There is something literal and strange growing inside people’s bodies, but the strangeness becomes part of Ursula’s new reality.

Mantle’s prose brings this Tasmanian coastline to life, both in the present – in the sounds of the birds, the forest and the ocean – and in the land’s history, its deep time, within rocks and tree rings. *Mantle* also contemplates the changes made by colonisation and modernity to the landscape: the layers of plastics that will ring the earth; the loss of abundance

in the forests and oceans; the cruelty of salmon farms and industrial forestry. But *Mantle* is clever in focusing on the details of everyday life: the movements of animals and insects, the smell of the bush and ocean, the flavours of food; the rich texture of life being lived, which brings joy as much as grief.

Mantle is Ash’s second novel after *Floundering*, which was shortlisted for numerous awards including the Miles Franklin and the Prime Minister’s Literary Award in 2013. *Floundering* won the Sydney Morning Herald Best Young Australian Novelists Award. As an accomplished fiction and essay writer, Ash has written for *The Guardian*, *The Saturday Paper*, *Meanjin* and the *Griffith Review*, among others. She has also written a children’s book, *As Bright as a Rainbow*. *Mantle* is an exciting second novel and a beautiful piece of Australian literature.

Stephanie King is from Readings Emporium

Good Joy, Bad Joy

Mikki Brammer
Penguin. PB. \$34.99
Available 19 May

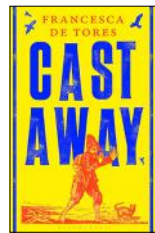


For more than 80 years, Joy Bridport has followed the rules – devoted wife, loving mother, steadfast neighbour in her town. But when her best friend Hazel is given only months to live, Joy is forced to confront the truth: Hazel has

lived fully, while she has only played it safe. Determined to change, Joy vows to live boldly in the time she and Hazel have left together. What begins as small rebellions soon snowballs into petty crimes, and Joy must decide whether she can embrace the freedom of ‘Bad Joy’ without losing the life and legacy she’s built.

Cast Away: Or, the Surprising Adventures of Alexander Selkirk

Francesca de Tores
Bloomsbury Circus. PB. \$32.99
Available now



R Banished to a foreign shore, surviving on scraps of sailcloth and a fingernail of flint, wholly alone against the endless horizon: the *Robinson Crusoe* narrative has been told time and again, its trail so well-trodden that its features blur between adaptations. What is less familiar to audiences is the story of Alexander Selkirk, the real Scottish sailor who inspired Daniel Defoe’s classic when he was abandoned by his crew in 1704 and survived four years alone on a remote island off the coast of Chile – less familiar, that is, until now.

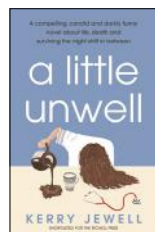
Cast Away, Francesca de Tores’s strident return to historical fiction, shadows Selkirk through his exile as he comes undone in isolation. Haunted by a past he refuses to recognise as his own, Selkirk becomes accustomed to the monotony of survival – until one morning, the old goat who frequents his camp begins to speak. Selkirk, the goat, and a taciturn wild cat form an unlikely trio of philosophers, turning over the tumultuous events that precipitated Selkirk’s arrival on the island and the wider web of history in which he has become entangled.

Fresh on the heels of her 2024 novel *Saltblood*, which similarly retold the story of pirate Mary Read, de Tores pries Selkirk from his own legacy to explore the man that exists in the gaps between. What drives a boy to leave his village and take to the sea? What wastes of empire would a young mariner witness at the crest of sail’s golden age? What remains when a man is stripped of his home, his peers and his sense of purpose? More than a redux of *Crusoe*, *Cast Away* is an unflinching study of the borders between civilisation and wilderness, elegantly examined with de Tores’s signature deftness and candour.

Gene Pinter is from Readings Chadstone

A Little Unwell

Kerry Jewell
Hachette. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R This debut novel set in the Australian public health system is about the challenges faced by an early-career doctor, and while there is plenty of dark humour, there are also regular scenarios of bureaucratic bumbles, sleep-deprived doctors forced to make impossible choices, and end-of-life patients with nowhere else to go. The author is a medical specialist and has clear (and terrifying) insight into the pressure points of the Australian medical system.

Amy is a junior resident doing hospital rounds. She and her partner of seven years, Chris, who is also a doctor, are

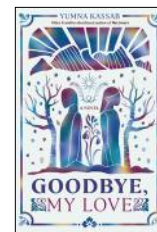
living together but barely see one another. It’s hard to maintain even the basics of a relationship, such as a regular dinner together, while navigating their wildly conflicting schedules, and they are too tired to organise an engagement, let alone a wedding. Chris is sometimes thoughtful and kind, but often sexist and dismissive of his partner; the reader quickly suspects this relationship is never going to last the distance. Most of the narrative is given to Amy’s working life, and the staff and patients she encounters at the hospital.

This is an engaging read peopled by a variety of memorable characters, such as Amy’s thrill-seeking younger sister, her very traditional grandma, the forbidding and the kind nurses, as well as the human parade of both charming and infuriating patients in their care. Readers of Adam Kay’s *This Is Going to Hurt* will delight in this cautionary tale of life as a junior doctor that is alternately hilarious and horrifying, but so compelling you can’t look away.

Angela Crocombe is The Readings Prize and The Readings Foundation coordinator

Goodbye, My Love

Yumna Kassab
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Amina’s marriage to Amin was supposed to be a new beginning, instead, it became an inescapable end. Even after the divorce, the shadow of their relationship clings to her. Set within the world of an Arab community, the story of these once-lovers explores the devastating impact of a failed marriage from its heady beginning to its bitter end. This is a story of departure, yet Amina’s physical leaving is only the very first step. Like Lot’s wife Amina is meant to move forward, but how can she when the past is burned into her soul?

Simply Beside Herself

Judith Katherine
Affirm. PB. \$34.99
Available now



When Elizabeth finds a dead body on a park bench – her own – she knows it’s time for big changes in her life. Staff are too busy at the retirement home to listen, but she decides to leave its stifling routine in search of a better future and connection to her past. Shocked by Elizabeth’s escape, her daughter Lara experiences a series of tipping points and, along with her troubled teenage daughter, Lara is forced to face change. Having discovered how easy it is to get lost, all three soon realise how important it is to be found again.

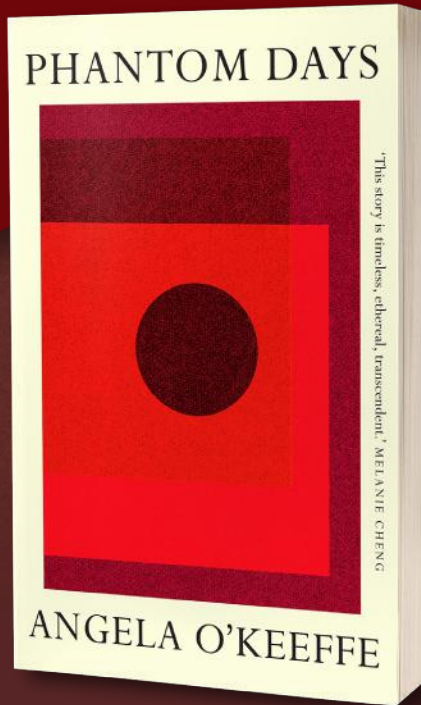
Capture

Amanda Lohrey
Text. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R As the world turns on its axis, how do we make sense of the new order? How do we grapple with loss and fear? Do we share our reactions with others, or would we be ridiculed? These are the questions

What if a book really could save your life?



READ MORE

UQP

award-winning author Amanda Lohrey uses as a springboard for this strange and delightful novel.

James, a clinical psychiatrist, has been asked to interview people who have been visited (or abducted) by aliens to see if there are any common experiences among them. He has been tasked with establishing a clinical profile of these people. Together with his pragmatic research assistant, Lucy, he interviews carefully chosen people, one by one, in a sparsely furnished office where he hears their fantastical stories. There is nothing startling about these people; they appear normal. He examines their backgrounds for commonalities and hopes that by listening he is offering them some comfort in their distress at being alienated (see what I did there) from what they know. It is a beguiling premise.

Like all of Lohrey's beautiful writing, this story is grounded by its pathos. This is what humans bear, she is (surely) saying. This is humankind with all its ties and knots. This is not a novel that answers any profound questions but, rather, one that positions itself as a portrait of those living with another truth they must carry. Readers of her past works will be delighted by this new novel, as will those who have enjoyed books by Jeanette Winterson or Janette Turner Hospital. This is not speculative storytelling; nevertheless, the plot could be described as wonderfully and deliciously bonkers. Reading it certainly ensures reflection on life – and surely that makes us better people immediately.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

constant is Lawson himself, and although a grim fate seems to be written in his DNA, if everything else about Bourke is so changeable, is it so absurd to imagine a slightly brighter future for one drunkard-poet?

Calling to mind everything from the metafictional wonders of Charlie Kaufman to the comical nihilism of *Disco Elysium*, *Henry Goes Bush* is like nothing else I've read, balancing its gleeful absurdity with a genuine compassion for its characters, warming my heart while blowing my mind.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

Phantom Days
Angela O'Keeffe
UQP. PB. \$29.99
Available now



R If a book could speak, what would it tell you? When I heard that Angela O'Keeffe was releasing a new novel, I was eager to read what I knew would be another spellbinding,

emotionally rich work shaped by her exquisite prose. *Phantom Days* is certainly that – and more.

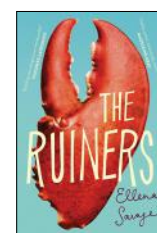
The novel opens with Isabel attending a book launch, where she purchases a copy of the aforementioned novel, which is our unexpected second protagonist. From there, the book travels with Isabel from Sydney to London and back, observing her burgeoning relationship with Lewis. When Isabel accidentally leaves the book behind in a taxi, it finds its way into Lewis's home, where it is placed beside his mother's ashes. Through this unusual companionship, the book begins to learn about Lewis's past, gradually sensing that Isabel is in danger.

O'Keeffe weaves together themes of absence and longing with striking subtlety. Isabel's mysteriously growing belly is revealed to be a phantom pregnancy, her body mirroring the signs of new life without the life itself. Her mother, meanwhile, undergoes breast cancer treatment, her physical body altered in ways that echo an alienation from herself. Lewis, too, is marked by vacancy, shaped by a troubled childhood and the sudden loss of both his parents. Each character carries a quiet emptiness, a loss of self that permeates the novel.

Despite its eerie premise, *Phantom Days* unfolds with a gentle, almost tender touch. O'Keeffe captures the intimate and transformative bond between a reader and their book. A book may be silent, but in the right hands it listens, reveals, and can even alter the course of our lives, becoming less an object and more a companion that holds pieces of us within its pages. So, if a book could speak, what would it tell you? What is a book reading about you?

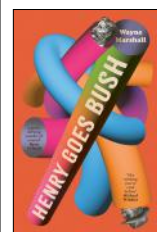
Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

The Ruiners
Ellena Savage
Summit. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Pip is a university drop-out in a dead-end job at a Melbourne lobster shack. But when her long-absent father dies, she's bequeathed \$50,000. When she meets Sasha, a dashing young scholar of Balkan

Henry Goes Bush
Wayne Marshall
Picador. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R In the early 1890s, famed writer Henry Lawson travelled to Bourke in rural New South Wales amid a heated debate with Banjo Paterson about the merits of the Australian bush. About this much,

Wayne Marshall's *Henry Goes Bush* is historically accurate. When it comes to literally any other part of this madcap odyssey, Marshall's relationship to historical fact is deeply tenuous. Who's to say what really happened in Bourke? Who's to say where truth ends and mythology begins? After following Marshall's version(s) of Henry Lawson across 300 pages and several universes of bewildering possibility, I dimly suspect his account takes some creative liberties, but I had such a good time, I simply don't care.

The tale begins with Henry Lawson's exile to Bourke; thanks to his uncontrolled drinking and the literary blows suffered in his feud with Paterson, his publisher has sent him away from Sydney to truly live the bush and escape his own self-destructive impulses. Changing his nature seems like an impossible task, but thankfully for Lawson, Bourke is an impossible place, warrened with mysterious tunnels that connect one version of Bourke with another. Sure, in this Bourke, Lawson is penniless and hungover, but elsewhere he might be effortlessly charismatic (good), locked in a life-or-death escalation of his feud with Paterson (bad), or other things decidedly stranger than both. The one

From the #1 internationally bestselling author of *What Happened to Nina?* comes a gripping high-stakes novel of suspense about three seemingly unconnected people, caught in a lethal web of deceit and unhealed wounds.

Natalie lives a traditional lifestyle – and has the social media accounts to prove it. And what Natalie's followers don't know ... won't hurt them.

Famesick is a frank, deeply personal reflection on illness, fame, sex, and everything in between, from the mind behind the hit series *Girls* and *Too Much*, and the bestselling author of *Not That Kind of Girl*.

New in 2026, a brand new series from Matt's Stanton's hilarious world of Funny Kid that will have kids in hysterics.

OUT NOW

literature she uses her windfall and together they buy a decrepit house on a distressed Greek island where Sasha will write, and Pip will sort out her life. However, instead of bohemian idyll, they find themselves ensnared in an environmental struggle that brings the mistakes of the past into sharp relief.

Yeah the Boys
Holden Sheppard
Pantera. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R As soon as I heard that there was a sequel to *Invisible Boys*, I knew I had to take the chance to review it. I expected gritty, tragic, heartbreaking – and Holden Sheppard’s new novel *Yeah the Boys* truly doesn’t disappoint in delivering all that and more.

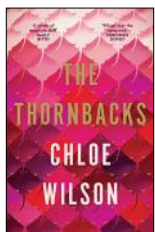
The novel picks up seven years after we left Charlie, Zeke and Hammer in the reclusive and conservative town of Geraldton. This time, the busy and bustling Perth acts as the setting in which the three men will grow. Despite the passage of time, however, they are each still, in some aspects, lost and coming to terms with their identity – and how it fits into the world and into their relationships. Zeke still battles with the dichotomous contrast between his sense of his true self and how he presents himself to his family and friends. Charlie has high aspirations to be a famous musician, yet has had little success and constantly battles with his grief. In comparison, Hammer has found immense glory in his AFL career but struggles with his sexuality and how it affects his professional life.

This form of inner conflict is what Sheppard excels at – and his ability to pull at our heartstrings and create devastating scenarios for our three protagonists is truly unparalleled. His writing will make you sad, yet not despondent. No matter what happens to the three men, Sheppard’s writing always instils a sense of hope that things will turn around for them – and that is what makes his novels a tier above others. His work reminds me of the timeless classic *Holding the Man* by Timothy Conigrave.

Needless to say, the Australian queer literary scene is better off with Sheppard and his contributions. I am so excited for other readers to find and love Sheppard’s new book as much as I do.

Anson Cheng is from Readings Doncaster

The Thornbacks
Chloe Wilson
Hamish Hamilton. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May



R To the men she matches with online, Poppy is a dream come true. She’s bright, bubbly and always knows the right bar to meet at. She only has one flaw: she’s dead, and therefore

guaranteed to ghost them. Hiding behind her profile are Gertie and Tabitha, eerily co-dependent stepsisters and virtuosic morticians familiar with all it takes to give a dead body the appearance of life. Their weeks are spent painting colour onto sunken cheeks, filling veins with formaldehyde and sewing flesh back into

pleasing shapes before heading out on a Friday night and performing a different sort of substitution at the bar. They find a man who’s been left waiting for a corpse and take him home instead. All it takes is a moment’s distraction and a pill slipped into a drink and the men become powerless in their arms, soon to awaken in bed – unviolated, but unsettled nonetheless.

Is this grim routine some collective revenge for male violence, a bizarre simulacrum of romance, or something stranger still? If there are answers to be found, they lie deep behind Gertie and Tabitha’s facade of functionality, in the failed relationships from beneath whose shadows they struggle to escape and in the steadily growing cracks threatening their carefully measured lives.

Chloe Wilson’s debut novel is a playfully dark tale of appearances and entitlement told from the perspective of two sisters so close they literally share a single narratorial voice. Although their motivations often seem inscrutable, Wilson expertly immerses you in their world of sensation, where sights, sounds and smells only exist at the extremes of pleasure and disgust. In such a world, it seems only natural that the ordinary and forgettable should be overlooked. Supposedly ordinary and forgettable themselves, Gertie and Tabitha are heroes for anyone accustomed to the scraps of life and eager to bite for something bigger.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

Margaret, Are You Leaving?
Dianne Yarwood
Hachette. PB. \$34.99
Available now

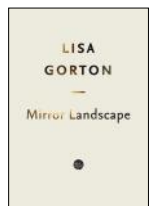


Sydney, 2001. Now in her 40s, Maggie Reid has built a good life for herself. She has an adorable but needy dog and a new relationship. She has tried hard to leave her painful past behind her, but when

her brother calls with news of their adopted mother’s death, he also delivers a bombshell about Maggie’s birth mother. So begins an uncertain, bumpy journey to trace her mother’s identity, a quest that brings fresh heartbreak but also unexpected joy.

Australian Poetry

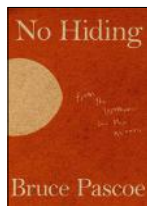
Mirror Landscape
Lisa Gorton
Giramondo. PB. \$35
Available 1 May



A major collection by the remarkable contemporary Australian poet Lisa Gorton, *Mirror Landscape* is a wide-ranging survey of Gorton’s poetry, and an appealing introduction to

her work, ideal for both poetry enthusiasts and students. This tribute to her achievement, brings together poems published over the past twenty years, from Gorton’s first collection *Press Release* to her most recent *Mirabilia*. It also includes a substantial new sequence of poems, ‘Caesars’ on the relation between art and power.

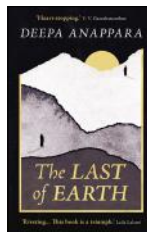
No Hiding from the Woman in the Moon
Bruce Pascoe
Magabala. PB. \$27.99
Available 5 May



A celebration of the moon, of life and of love from one of Australia’s most acclaimed authors. By turns romantic and realist, Bruce Pascoe explores the urgency of the contemporary climate crisis and the need to love Country in his haunting, slow-burning and classical poetry style. This is startlingly vulnerable poetry to heal the earth, to navigate heartache, to provoke stillness and introspection.

International Fiction

The Last of Earth
Deepa Anappara
Oneworld. PB. \$32.99
Available now



In 1869, Tibet is closed to foreigners, an infuriating obstacle to Europeans racing to grow their empires. To cross its borders in secret Britain begins training Indians to undertake perilous expeditions. Balam is one such recruit. His path will soon cross with Katherine, another unlikely explorer, planning to be the first European woman to reach Lhasa and the legendary Potala Palace. An unforgettable story about the obsessions of the colonial enterprise, and the ways we endeavour to leave a mark on the world.

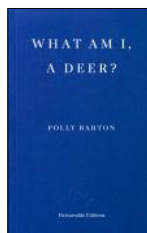
The Shadow of the Object
Chloe Aridjis
C&W. HB. \$34.99
Available now



Flora is visiting home in Mexico when the family dog bites her hand. She winds up in hospital where she meets Wilhelmina, an elderly German woman who collects pre-cinema toys. They have a series of

dreamlike conversations and Wilhelmina puts on a magic lantern show for Flora, leaving her enchanted. When things take an unexpected turn Flora returns to London where she resumes her job polishing silver and befriends Wilhelmina’s son. As she dips in and out of her imagination Flora finds her perception of reality is subtly altered.

What Am I, A Deer?
Polly Barton
Fitzcarraldo. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May

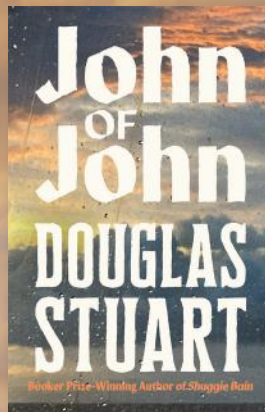


R A 12-year-old girl in her mother’s nightgown sings Céline Dion in front of a thousand people, almost completely oblivious to her own bravery. Years later, on a tram, a man proffers her

‘Douglas Stuart has written something brilliant and rare.’

ANN PATCHETT

‘This book is special.’
COLM TÓIBÍN

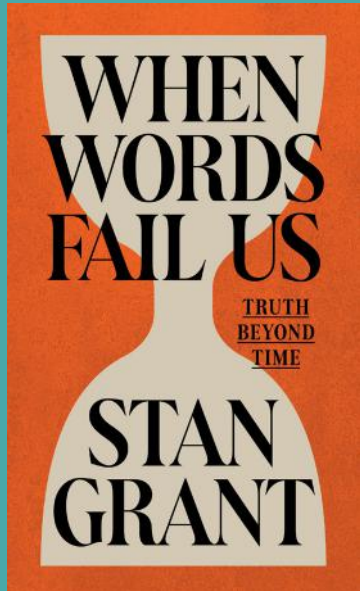


From
DOUGLAS STUART

the Booker Prize-winning author of **Shuggie Bain** and **Young Mungo**

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forgotten umbrella. Polly Barton's unnamed protagonist is, as her author once was, a translator of Japanese for video games in Germany. She's taken a new job in a city where she knows nobody and is trying to make friends, going out for karaoke and fantasising about more meaningful work and an imagined future with a man she's barely spoken to, rather than the stylish but uninspiring man she's actually dating.

Barton seems to take pleasure in writing the almost untranslatable. Sprawling sentences meander back and forth with disconcerting elegance around a character whose internal world is in flux. Song lyrics in place of chapter breaks provide pause and an emotional soundtrack. The prose is precise and specific, a pleasure to read aloud (as Barton herself has done for the audiobook, which is available on Libro). This isn't one to rush, it deserves an opportunity to breathe.

The title comes from a series of short films by Isabella Rossellini titled *Seducer Me*, in which Rossellini is courted by a series of disembodied hands and puppets simulating animal mating rituals. Barton's novel, too, offers this precise blend of irreverence created with serious skill. It's not to be binged, but savoured and shared with ELO's (Electric Light Orchestra) *Out of the Blue* cranked at full volume. It is, on one hand, an opportunity to relieve the maddening, joyful and devastating feelings of obsessive love, fantasy and projection. But, so much more than that, Barton captures the unspooling and re-forming of identity and self-awareness that can come from living alone in a new place, and the power of a voice – be it solo karaoke or Céline Dion to an audience of a thousand.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Into the Blue
Emma Brodie
Orion. PB. \$34.99
Available now



In the summer of 2000, 17-year-old AJ dreams of being a writer far from her small town. Working in a video rental store, she meets Noah, the youngest in a family of great actors. They forge a deep bond first as friends, then as acting partners, until the day Noah disappears without a word. Seven years later in New York AJ is cast opposite Noah in the same intergalactic TV show. As the lines between reality and acting begin to blur AJ and Noah are forced to face the truth of what happened years ago.

Yesteryear
Caro Claire Burke
Fourth Estate. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R Natalie has the perfect life. A handsome husband, six beautiful children, a rustic farm and eight million followers on social media. But what her followers don't know is that behind the scenes, Natalie has got help from nannies and producers. So what though, what

they don't know won't hurt them. Until one day, Natalie wakes up to a life that isn't hers. Her husband and children are familiar, her home even looks the same, but something's off. Only yesterday, she was curating photos for her social media, and today she's expected to haul firewood and wash clothes by hand. Is it time travel, a test from God or a way to repent for her sins? When Natalie suffers a brutal injury in the woods, she knows two things: this is not the life she knows, and she must escape as soon as possible.

Yesteryear intrigued me from the beginning. I was drawn in by the premise of the plot – a rich, successful Instagram influencer thrown into the world of hard work. It was gripping from the very start. Why was Natalie sent into the past? How did this happen? I had to know. I found myself unable to put this book down. The chapters switch from past to present and back again, moving the plot along at a good pace, giving just enough information to keep you hooked.

Natalie herself is a really interesting character. She's struggling with her fame, religion and marriage. Her traditional family and her alternate family are both strikingly different and I loved seeing how the characters are portrayed in both situations. There is dark humour at times, and the novel looks at tradition, fame, faith and womanhood. I'd highly recommend this book for any readers who are looking for something a little bit different, with plenty of twists and turns along the way.

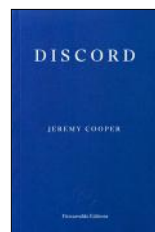
Yasmin Baker is from Readings Online

The King in Yellow
Robert W. Chambers
Pushkin. PB. \$24.99
Available now



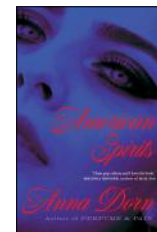
The weird tales in this slim volume are all linked by a play, the second act of which reveals truths so terrible and beautiful that it drives all who read it to despair: *The King in Yellow*. These four macabre, uncanny and unsettling stories are some of the most thrilling ever written in the field of weird fiction, and since their first publication in 1895 have become a cult classic, influencing many writers from the renowned master of cosmic horror H.P. Lovecraft to the creators of HBO's *True Detective*.

Discord
Jeremy Cooper
Fitzcarraldo. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



One August night, an audience at the Royal Albert Hall attends the first ever concert of Distant Voices. The Proms performance is the culmination of a year's work between the middle-aged composer Rebekah Rosen and the young saxophonist Evie Bennet. Alternating between both perspectives, *Discord* charts the course of their intense and at times fractious relationship, the resonances and dissonances both women find within one another, as well as the struggles and satisfactions that accompany an artistic life.

American Spirits
Anna Dorn
S&S. PB. \$34.99
Available now



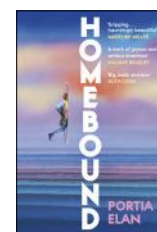
Musician Blue Velour has finally achieved the acclaim she's been chasing. Her latest album *Blue's Beard*, a reference to rumours of her secret relationship with long-time producer Sasha Harlow, has rocket-launched her reputation. Blue hires superfan Rose Lutz as her assistant to handle the upcoming tour but when the pandemic shuts it down, the trio escape to the redwoods to make an album. What begins as a creative retreat turns into chaos and betrayal, culminating in a tragic act that changes their lives forever.

Honey in the Wound
Jiyoung Han
Manilla. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Spanning 90 years as one family is displaced across Asia, this novel follows Young-Ja, who is struggling to survive after her family is killed by Japanese soldiers. The magical gift of infusing her cooking with emotion, once joyful, grows darker as sorrow and anger seeps into her confections. Recruited by a Korean resistance fighter, she's taken to Manchuria. There she becomes a spy at a teahouse favoured by Japanese officials and endures horrors and brutality at the hands of the Imperial Army.

Homebound
Portia Elan
C&W. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



R In deep space, an astronaut seeks a silent sister ship, the only waking member of a frozen crew whose fate is in her hands. On bloated seas, a ship's captain in deep debt agrees to take on two passengers and their strangely organic android. That self-same android seeks to understand the difference between memories and stories as time and the loneliness of immortality blur the lines of reality. A professor of integrative biology writes emails – some sent, some unsent – held back by the NDA she only signed because the work needed doing. In the 1980s, a lonely teen reaches out to her recently departed uncle through the video game he made just for her.

Homebound, each character journeys between both a self and a world they think they know, and towards a true understanding of home within community and identity. Woven throughout the interlocking timelines is a core of Judaism – a refreshing take on a genre which so often blends traditions into featureless soup or does not consider that humanity might exist beyond Christian cultural hegemony. Instead, Portia Elan's world in the year 2500 features Aramaic prayers, spoken by a future diaspora who have lost so much yet still hold fast to their identity.

Elan's debut novel tries to do almost too much: it's a five-timeline epic across five centuries, tackling queer identity, climate change, technology, video games,

the Jewish diaspora, the power of music and the fine line between memory and storytelling. But for all its expansiveness and ambition, world-building and complex characters, *Homebound* is a deep, universal story about community and integrity. Reminiscent of some of the greats of science-fiction short stories, this deftly woven novel is still absolutely approachable for readers less (uni)versed in the genre.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Hey Good Morning How Are You?
Martina Hefter & Linda L. Gaus (trans.)
Fig Tree. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May



Juno is a dancer and performance artist who cares for her ailing husband by day and spends her nights chatting to love scammers online. She's aware of the risks but she's also discovered a

heady freedom in these online conversations, and the things they allow her to say. When Juno meets Owen_Wilson223 – real name, Benu – she senses an immediate connection between them, even though they're separated by thousands of miles. Gradually, they reveal more about themselves to each other. And just as Juno sees through Benu's lies, he sees through hers too.

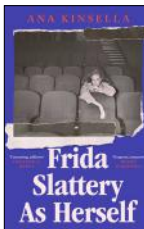
Molka
Monika Kim
Brazen. PB. \$32.99
Available now



Dahye has met the man of her dreams, who is also the heir to a multi-billion fortune. One day, a video of them having sex goes viral. She is all over the internet and he is nowhere to be found.

Junyoung is a nothing office worker who harbours a dark secret: he has placed hidden cameras in every women's cubicle, shower and bathroom in his workplace. He watches and preys on his unsuspecting female victims. Soon his obsession turns to Dahye – but, this time, he has chosen the wrong woman to wrong.

Frida Slattery As Herself
Ana Kinsella
Scribner. PB. \$34.99
Available now



'Sprawling' is one of my favourite ways to describe a book. It may be cliché, but every cliché has its reason. Sprawling, dramatic, multi-perspective books are my favourite to recommend,

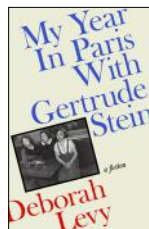
and Ana Kinsella's debut has joined the fray. Informed by her journalistic years spent interviewing many an actor, *Frida Slattery As Herself* is the story of a young actor (surprise: Frida Slattery), and a slightly older (but in my opinion, emotionally younger) director, John Reddan. This is a literary romance set across Dublin, London, New York, and many, many pubs. Perfect for fans of *One Day*, it takes the reader through time with the characters, who are both Irish creatives finding their feet in the

theatre – and pretty insufferable about it. But as the years pass and they navigate life's obstacles, they become multi-dimensional characters.

We follow Frida and John through the highs and lows of their working and personal relationship, within which Kinsella has crafted satisfying and realistic drama. I loved Frida. I wanted to yell at John. At first, I was worried their story simply couldn't sustain the page count, but this is the beauty of the sprawl. *Frida Slattery As Herself* only gets better and better; I quite comfortably spent multiple hours a day in Frida and John's world. At times their points of view can hardly be told apart, and in other moments you forget their counterpart exists. We have all had friendships that chart a similar course, and I loved how well-observed Kinsella's interpretation is. I didn't really want to move on from my time with the characters after this one. Since we are using clichés: Kinsella is one to watch.

Grace Gooda is from Readings Chadstone

My Year in Paris with Gertrude Stein: A Fiction
Deborah Levy
Hamish Hamilton. HB. \$42.99
Available now



'She had no idea what she was doing. She was just doing it. All art has to start like that.' Our narrator is in Paris, writing on Gertrude Stein. There, she meets Eva, who has a cat she refuses to name and whose

husband is a whole continent away, and Fanny, an amorous financier with a monthly roster of lovers. Together, these three wade through the loneliness, joy, wonder, anxiety, and desires of modern life. Stein herself is woven through the narrator's experience of Paris, politics, and life – a vivid figure who watches the events of the 21st century with the eyes of the early 20th. Queerness, artistry and individuality, along with the greats – Stein, Whitman, Picasso, and Woolf – all whirl at the forefront as Deborah Levy jumps the story from past to present and back again with ease.

Levy holds you aloft amid musings and observations on modernity and humanity, moving the novel around you – all you need to do is keep your eyes open. As always, Levy's prose gives you access to the narrator's thoughts but also, somehow, your own. It's as if she is privy to your psychology in a way you are yet to realise.

Deborah Levy is a literary powerhouse; there is no doubt about that. *My Year in Paris* is a continuation of her brilliance. It is at once sharp and gentle, concise and wandering, and I can say with confidence that it will deliver something of great import to those who read it.

Ruby Grinter is from Readings Carlton

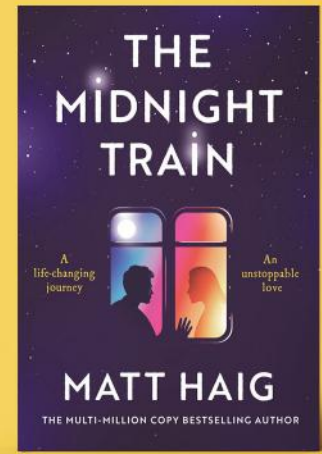
Canon
Paige Lewis
Corsair. PB. \$34.99
Available 19 May



Canon by Paige Lewis is one of those rare books that feels completely unlike anything else I've read. It's original, strange and chaotic all at once – the kind of novel that made me pause halfway

WHEN YOUR LIFE FLASHES BEFORE YOUR EYES, WHERE WOULD YOU STOP? A TIME-TRAVELLING LOVE STORY, FROM THE WORLD OF *THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY*.

'Matt Haig is astounding.'
STEPHEN FRY,
actor, comedian and writer



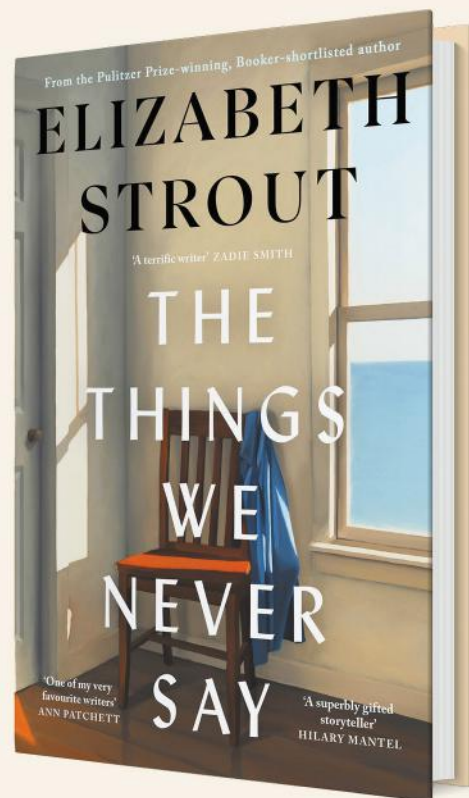
A MEMOIR OF MENSTRUATION, MADNESS AND MONSTERS.

'Thought-provoking, rage-inducing and darkly funny, a candid exploration of medical misogyny and the terror of the unknown: the strangeness of what it is to live with a poorly understood chronic condition.'
JENNIFER DOWN,
author of *Bodies of Light*

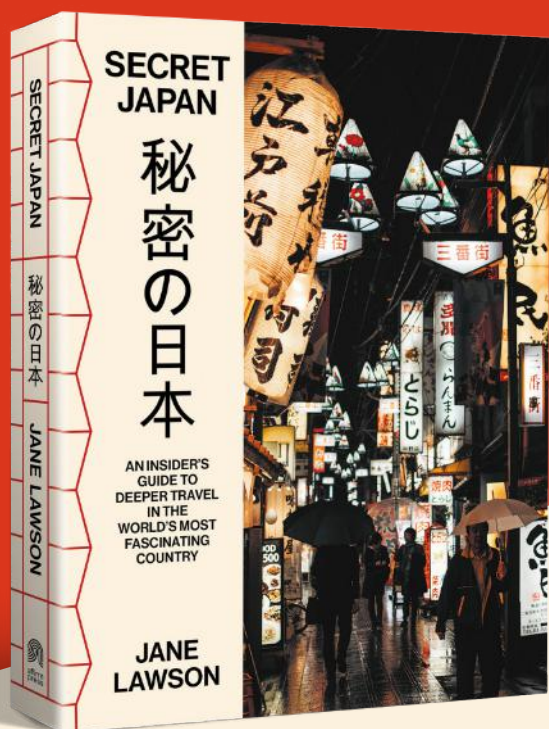
ALLEN & UNWIN

AUSTRALIAN. INDEPENDENT. FOR READERS.

'One of my very favourite writers'
ANN PATCHETT



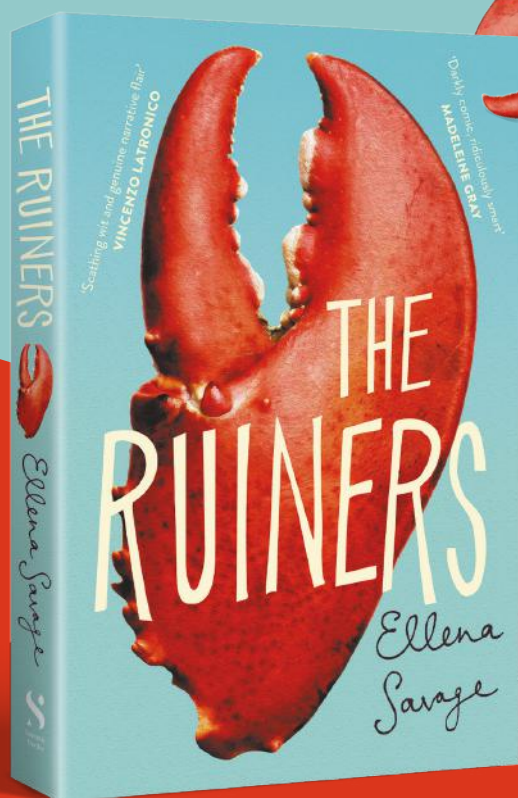
A poignant meditation on loneliness, friendship, and free will in a capsizing world.



In *Secret Japan*, writer and tour host Jane Lawson draws on over 40 years of immersive Japan travel to open up a world that outsiders rarely access.



affirm
press



'A darkly comic, ridiculously smart novel about desire, desperation, and trying to do the right thing'

MADELEINE GRAY,
author of *CHOSEN FAMILY*



Summit
Books
Australia

through just to process what I was experiencing.

The story follows two unlikely figures, Yara and Adrena, both chasing something bigger than themselves, for very different reasons. Yara, cast out by their family and recovering from a damaging relationship, is suddenly tasked by God with an almost absurd mission: to kill the leader of the Bad Guys. It's not a heroic calling in the traditional sense, and that's what makes it so compelling. Yara doesn't want this responsibility, and their reluctance feels deeply real.

Adrena, on the other hand, is driven by a desperate need for purpose and validation. As a prophet with a dangerous secret, she's determined to prove herself worthy of God's favour, hoping it will lead her to heaven. Her storyline feels more ambitious, almost performative in contrast to Yara's quiet resistance, and the tension between these two arcs is what really propels the novel forward.

Structurally, the book is split into short sections, almost like a series of mini books, each shifting perspectives and occasionally branching into unexpected voices. The chapters themselves are often brief, with titles that read like snarky asides from the narrator. I loved this element; it added a layer of humour and self-awareness that kept the story feeling playful, even when it dived into heavier themes.

The world itself is difficult to pin down, existing somewhere outside time and place, which only adds to the disorienting, dreamlike quality. This is a novel that embraces its strangeness completely. It's bold and surprisingly heartfelt, and even when it feels chaotic, you won't want to put it down.

Nicole Vasilev is from Readings Emporium

A Little Bit Bad Cassandra Neyenesch

Fig Tree. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May



Perdita Jungfrau thought her marriage was forever until she falls in love with Nando her 'anarcho-Marxist' handyman. Against every obstacle – she's pregnant, he is much younger, he has a girlfriend – the affair turns her life upside down. Three years later Nando has been murdered. As her bewildered husband tries to understand the woman she's become, Perdita has other things on her mind: the woman parked outside her house, her brother's drug addiction, and the searing memories of her illicit relationship.

First Summer Ekin Oklap

Summit. PB. \$29.99
Available now



Early summer, a teenage girl watches a new girl move in across the street. In Clara, she recognises the same loneliness she feels herself but finds tenderness and laughter too. As they spend time talking and reading in the garden she discovers the possibility of true connection, free from self-consciousness. Meanwhile in a fictional galaxy, Nadia, a space explorer from their favourite children's series, traverses the known universe with her companion Rosa. Their

imagined adventures make sense of new, powerful feelings changing them forever.

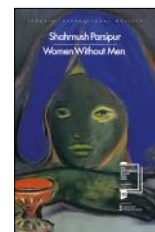
Hollow Inside Asako Otani & Ginny Tapley Takemori (trans.) Pushkin. PB. \$24.99 Available 12 May



Stuck in a bland, low-paying job, Hirai, 38, moves in with her colleague Suganuma, 42. Both single and ambivalent about marriage, they create their own domestic routines, defying social expectations. But when Suganuma reveals a secret affair, Hirai returns to dating apps. As she drifts through painful dates and endures intrusive questions at office socials, Hirai frets over whether she really needs to freeze her eggs again. In a dating world sapped of genuine connection, where can she turn to feel less hollow?

Women Without Men Shahnush Parsipur

Penguin. PB. \$29.99
Available 5 May



This internationally acclaimed masterpiece by one of Iran's most important and influential writers traces the interwoven destinies of five women as they arrive by different paths to live together in an abundant garden on the outskirts of Tehran. Drawing on recent Iranian history and elements of Islamic mysticism, Parsipur's novel sees women escaping strict confines of family and society. It is still as pertinent and discerning today as it was when travelling secretly from hand to hand upon its first publication in 1989.

Fruit Fly Josh Silver

Oneworld. PB. \$32.99
Available now



R *Fruit Fly* by Josh Silver is one of those books I absolutely tore through in a few days. It's messy, uncomfortable, and completely addictive in the best way. Honestly, it felt like watching a trainwreck: you know you should look away, but you just can't.

The story follows Mallory, who shot to fame years ago as a literary star but is now stuck with a brutal writer's block and fading relevance. She's desperate to prove she still has it, and that desperation really drives the whole novel. When she meets Leo, a young queer man struggling with addiction and homelessness, she sees more than just a person; she sees a saleable story.

Mallory convinces herself she's the perfect person to tell Leo's story. It's dark, it's sad, everything the publishing world loves. But as the book goes on, it becomes harder and harder to ignore how exploitative that mindset is. Watching her justify her actions is honestly wild, and a big part of what makes the book so hard to put down.

One of my favourite things about this was the dual narration. Having both perspectives adds so much tension and depth, and it makes you feel even more conflicted about everything that's

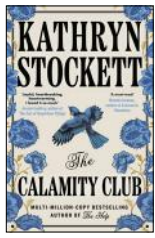
happening. You're constantly pulled between understanding Mallory and Leo, and it is hard to fully side with anyone. Even with all the heavy themes, the book is actually really funny in places. I genuinely laughed out loud a few times, which I wasn't expecting at all. The mix of dark humour and serious subject matter works really well and stops the novel from feeling too heavy.

Fruit Fly is one of those books that embraces its own chaos. Definitely one to pick up if you are in the mood for something dark, bingeable and a little bit unhinged.

Nicole Vasilev is from Readings Emporium

The Calamity Club

Kathryn Stockett
Fig Tree. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May



This new novel from the author of *The Help* is set in Oxford, Mississippi, 1933. Eleven-year-old Meg Lefleur trusts no one. Since her beloved mother vanished last Christmas Eve, she's been one of the

'unadoptable' girls at the town's orphanage. Then she meets Birdie, who is in Oxford to remind her wealthy sister of the poor family she abandoned, and sees new possibilities. As the Depression deepens Birdie discovers her sister's life is built on lies. Drawn together by circumstance they find unexpected kinship among a disreputable, determined band of women.

American Fantasy

Emma Straub
Michael Joseph. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R Sarah is working back-to-back cruises aboard the *American Fantasy*. She's in no rush to get home now that her ex-girlfriend won't be waiting for her. The next cruise is for a '90s boy band, Boy Talk, and 2,000 of their biggest fans, better known as 'Talkers'.

This is the fifth time Keith, his brother, and the other members of Boy Talk have boarded the *American Fantasy*. Keith, in his 50s and in a loveless marriage, both loves and hates the cruise; he's sick of hip-thrusting on stage for screaming middle-aged women, but quitting would mean losing his brother.

Annie, recently turned 50 and newly divorced, boards the *American Fantasy* alone after her sister, a Boy Talk superfan, cancels last minute. Annie stopped obsessing over the band in college (the second her roommate made fun of her Boy Talk sticker). But as the lights go down and the crowd starts to scream, Annie joins in, and suddenly a part of herself that was lost comes rushing back as Boy Talk walks onstage.

On the surface, *American Fantasy* is a humorous and absurd story about a washed-up boy band and their seriously unhinged fans. But if you dive a little deeper, you'll discover a tender reflection on growing older and realising life doesn't end at 50; that it's okay to let things go and allow yourself to get lost in the fantasy. But most importantly, it shows us that the inner fangirl never truly dies,

and there's so much joy to be found in the world of fandoms.

This fascinating and nostalgic read will make you laugh, cringe, and leave you just a little bit emotional. I hope you love it as much as I did.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator

The Things We Never Say

Elizabeth Strout
Viking. HB. \$35
Available 5 May



R Readers, fall to your knees. There is a brand-new Elizabeth Strout offering that showcases her immense storytelling power.

Artie Dam is a history teacher living his life near the coast of Massachusetts. He is married, has a son, loves teaching, and is kind and constant in his attentions; the sort of man who is dependable and loved. But everyone, surely, is an enigma, and Artie Dam is no different in that way to anyone else. I do not want to give too much away here, but know that you will read this novel quickly and afterwards you will consider your own messy network of friends and family. Perhaps because of Artie Dam you might slow down your responses to whatever falls in your path. Strout's writing can do that: make you pause before leaping. She reminds us that everyone has a secret that niggles and nags at the edges.

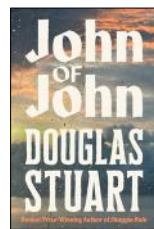
Yes, the writing is familiar, the pace and tone exactly right, and there are those beautiful, telling character details, but this is a new equation for Strout. Perhaps because everything is currently so terrible in her country, Strout pulls on history and philosophers to keep this tale anchored to a broader truth. References to Carl Jung's theories on memory, life and death, and fear are scattered throughout the novel. It works beautifully, of course, as a portrait of – dare I say it – hope.

An easy summary of the novel might be that this is a portrait of marriage or of Middle America, even, but Strout gives us more than that. She examines the dark corners and reminds us that every action, every word has consequences. And it is this reminder – the grace and generosity of this story – that allows it to expand into a profound love story. *The Things We Never Say* is an ode to kindness and is exactly what we all need to be reading right now.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

John of John

Douglas Stuart
Picador. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



R *John of John*, Douglas Stuart's third novel, follows John Calum Macleod as he returns home to the island of Harris after art school. Broke, unsure of what comes next, and back in the croft where

he grew up, he slips into a version of his old life where he is caught between his deeply religious father and his grandmother, who has long tried to keep the peace between them.

Cal feels incredibly real from the first page, and it's easy to get a sense of how torn he is. There's a constant tension

between the life he wants to live and the one that is expected of him. This tension carries through the whole novel in a way that feels very natural and is especially strong in the way Cal's queerness sits alongside his father's religion. It's never overly dramatised, but there's a quiet sense of what's at stake for Cal, if he were to be open and come out. It adds a lot of weight to even the smaller moments. His relationship with his ageing grandmother heightens everything.

This is my first Douglas Stuart novel. Having heard nothing but praise for his previous works, I knew I would be in good hands. That said, I was a bit apprehensive, thinking maybe his third novel might be the wrong place to start, but I am glad I started with *John of John*! Stuart's characters feel so real and human. That sense of them living on is what stays with me the most now that I've finished reading it, and memorable characters who feel like real people are among the qualities that make a great book.

Thomas Busse is from Readings Doncaster

Having Spent Life Seeking

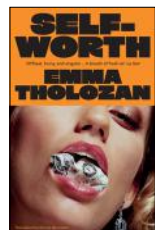
Kae Tempest
Jonathan Cape. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Fifteen years since they left it behind, Rothko Taylor is back in their hometown, Edgecliff. The past rushes towards them: the skateboard kids on the high street; the benches looking out to sea where their mum, Meg, drank; the nice bit of town, where their dad, Ezra, attempted to build a happy home; and Dionne's block. Beautiful, extraordinary Dionne, who saw Rothko as they were. Back then, overwhelmed and full of fear, they sank into chaos. But they made it out alive and now, Rothko is determined things will be different.

Self-Worth

Emma Tholozan & Emma Ramadan (trans.)
Scribe. PB. \$27.99
Available now



Fresh from completing her master's in philosophy, Anna is shocked when a career counsellor tells her she has 'no special skills'. Needing financial independence, she accepts a thankless job at a TV talk show. At least she has the love of her life boyfriend Lulu. When Lulu starts throwing up cash, thousands of euros in just a few days, it hurtles the couple into unforeseen wealth. As Anna grows accustomed to a life of luxury, Lulu's health suffers, and she wonders: what would be worse, losing him or losing the money?

Wifehouse

Sonya Walger
Manilla. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Annie and Hector have been hosting family friends in the guest house of their Connecticut home for months. As a thank you, Annie is gifted French lessons with a 26-year-old local French tutor,

Thierry. Hector, an actor, goes to Argentina to film on location, leaving Annie to single-parent their two kids. As life and the lessons progress, she finds herself unexpectedly vulnerable to the charms of a man closer in age to her teenage daughter than to her own. A new life for Annie emerges, one she could never have foreseen.

Science Fiction & Fantasy

If We Cannot Go at the Speed of Light

Kim Choyeop & Anton Hur (trans.)
MacLehose. PB. \$29.99
Available 5 May

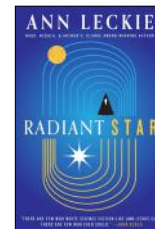


Kim Choyeop became a literary sensation in Korea when her debut short story collection was released in 2019. Now in translation, each of these bite-size speculative masterpieces represents a journey into

the unknown, guided by a writer blessed with a boundless imagination. From alternative futures to distant alien planets, she revels in making the impossible seem not only possible but somehow inevitable. With an ethereal incisiveness, Kim's stories dismantle the borders between normal and abnormal, material and abstract, earthly and otherworldly.

Radiant Star (An Imperial Radch Novel)

Ann Leckie
Orbit. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



The Temporal Location of the Radiant Star has always been a source of both conflict and hope for the people of Ooioiaa. Seen as an inconvenience by the imperial Radch the religious site is to be

absorbed into their own culture. As a final concession, the Radch will allow one last man to join the mummified bodies in the temporal location to become a 'living saint'. But amidst food shortages, riots and Radch communication blackouts this decision will ripple out to affect every part of the city and its people.

The Last Contract of Isako

Fonda Lee
Orbit. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May



Isako is a legendary swordswoman, but every legend must come to an end. When her long-time client unexpectedly retires, she plans to follow – to walk out into the frozen wasteland of their planet

with her head held high and her family enriched by her legacy. But when a competitor offers her a final mission, it's one she can't refuse. Soon, she's thrust deep into a world of corporate espionage, duty-bound duels, and shadowy secrets. What she uncovers will change humanity's existence in the stars forever. **R**

Crime

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Crime



The Graduate
Rebecca Lim
Affirm. PB. \$34.99
Available now

R Popular children's author Rebecca Lim brings a stark and unflinching perspective to crime fiction with *The Graduate*, her debut novel in the genre. It interrogates abuses of power, racism and misogyny in the workplace, and the human capacity for cruelty.

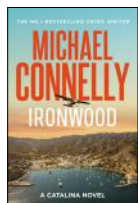
Fei Fei Chou wants to prove herself in her new job at a prestigious law firm. She wants to prove she's there because she has earned her place, not because she's a 'diversity hire' or because her boss has a fetish for Asian women. Fei is determined to take revenge on an unidentified man who kidnapped and raped three girls from her school 30 years ago. The only clues she has to go on are from her communication with one of the victims, Hailey, and her memory of seeing the word 'Paukeaho' on a box, which led her to a mysterious cattle station in central Queensland whose accounts were handled by the law firm for which she now works. Newly hired as a graduate, Fei will use her position however she can to access the firm's records and connections – and uncover the rapist's identity.

Set in the heart of Melbourne, *The Graduate* is a gritty and brutal legal thriller that is also a woman's story of exorcising her demons from a traumatic experience. Fei is an admirable protagonist, beginning as an insecure and meek graduate, unsure where to begin in her quest for revenge and if she is even capable of it. But her anger grows and she becomes furious at the trauma she and many young

girls have gone through, the injustices that go unchecked, and the blatant prejudice she confronts at work every day. As you learn just how personal these crimes really are to Fei, she grows into a woman confident in her own voice and unwavering in her mission for revenge.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Ironwood
Michael Connelly
Michael Connelly. PB. \$34.99
Available 19 May



Posted to scenic Catalina Island, DS Stilwell feels danger closing in. Acting on a tip, he and his deputies interrupt a drug drop on a remote mountain airstrip, but the operation goes badly – and deadly.

Stilwell faces an internal enquiry; however, he is determined to uncover the truth and conducts his own secret investigation. From a lost and found backpack to a long-disappeared woman, and the help of LAPD's Renée Ballard, Stilwell risks his career to pursue a case whose reach is wider than he ever imagined.

The Missing Mother
Mali Cornish
Atlantic. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R Elspeth has taken the skills she learned throughout her dangerous upbringing – an ability to read people, ask the right questions, and be the right person, among others – and made a life for herself as an

investigative journalist and bestselling author. She wouldn't say she's happy with her life in New York – far from it – but at least it's a world away from her self-absorbed ex-model mother, the toxic artist commune she grew up in, and the life of nightmares she tries to forget. And then there's her sister Aoife, who might not have left Geelong, but has run away from their upbringing in every other way possible with her two kids and husband, a white-picket fence, a steady job as a school principal, and

an utterly beige life. It's been 20 years, and things might not be going well work-wise, marriage-wise or money-wise, but at least Elspeth is free of her family's judgement and their drama. Well, until the phone call comes in: it's Aoife, and their mother is missing. And for the first time in 20 years, her sister is begging her to come home.

After a long flight, during which she was mercifully knocked out to keep the nightmares at bay, Elspeth lands like a hurricane in her hometown. She's leaving destruction back home and walking into the chaos of old exes; charming, untrustworthy fellow journos; boorish policemen; the shadow of her long-missing, presumed-dead painter father; and the drama of her newly missing mother, Simone. Wherever she goes, there are as many hints towards the truth as there are revelations of old lies. It turns out Simone was in the middle of her memoir, trying to rewrite history, but she only handwrote one copy, and it's nowhere to be found.

An explosive new novel from the author of the acclaimed *Judgement Day* (as Mali Waugh), *The Missing Mother* is full of secrets and old silences, and will have you glued and guessing up until the very last pages.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

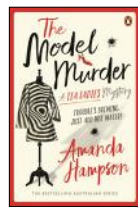
Happy Woman
Abby Corson
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Gwynne Hogg is an enviable woman – until she discovers her beloved dad is a serial killer. As her dad's decades-old secrets finally catch up with him, Gwynne struggles to reconcile the man she

trusted most with the crimes he's accused of. She tries to process it all the while keeping the wheels of her 'normal' life turning under the gaze of the media. But as the court case unfolds, Gwynne can't shake the fear that a murderous gene might live inside her too: her thoughts grow darker and her once-happy life unravels.

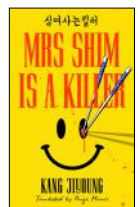
The Model Murder (A Tea Ladies Mystery, Book 4)
Amanda Hampson
Penguin. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Sydney, 1968. When a local man is murdered, police are quick to blame his glamorous fiancée, who has since disappeared. But Hazel suspects a criminal cover-up and rallies the tea ladies to investigate.

Meanwhile, Merl stumbles on evidence that her detective son-in-law is corrupt and reunites with the tea ladies to help expose him. Betty becomes immersed in a local theatre group where there is more drama offstage than on it, and Irene aspires to a new career as a debt collector but gets more than she bargained for.

Mrs Shim is a Killer
Kang Jiyoung & Paige Morris (trans.)
Doubleday. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Widowed and unemployed, Mrs Shim and her children face an empty fridge. When she answers an ad for the Smile Detective Agency she has turned it around within weeks, for Mrs Shim is sharp as a blade, handles business cleanly and is like a padlock when it comes to keeping secrets. By day, she prepares kimchi for her family and her neighbour with dementia; by night Mrs Shim is out on a contract. But what starts as a need for survival escalates into a thirst for vengeance. She is done with being everyone's doormat.

Three Reasons for Revenge
Dervla McTiernan
HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R When college student Alexis Turner appears at the North Melbourne police station to make an allegation of sexual assault against respected psychologist Robert Walker, detective Judith Lee experiences an intense sense of déjà vu. Ten years earlier, another young woman had sat in the chair opposite Judith with the same story. Is this Judith's chance to finally put the predator behind bars?

Walker's wife, a successful breakfast TV host, receives a mysterious package containing a USB-drive with what appears to be footage of her husband being intimate with a stranger. Elsewhere, other packages are being delivered: a handgun and a beautifully wrapped parcel of treats. What do the three recipients of these ominous gifts have in common, and what does it have to do with two young girls who played together on a beach years earlier?

In creating this novel, her most recent standalone thriller, bestselling

author Dervla McTiernan says she was inspired by the movie *Seven* and the series *Killing Eve*, and the parallels are obvious: a charming, morally ambiguous protagonist; an investigator drawn against their will into a game of a killer's devising; and, of course, boxes being delivered that contain endless destructive potential.

Three Reasons for Revenge is a satisfyingly twisty psychological thriller with a propulsive storyline and gradual reveals throughout that allow readers to unravel the tangle of narrative threads as the book progresses towards its explosive finale. It's perfect for readers who relish character-driven suspense novels that are guaranteed to keep you awake and turning pages late into the night.

Lian Hingee is the digital marketing manager

The Secrets of Strangers
Jess Kitching
S&S. PB. \$34.99
Available now



After suffering a loss, Janine and her husband Kamal leave Manchester for a quiet village in Lancashire. The fresh start will be just what Janine, a thriller writer, needs to work on her next novel.

But when a local woman, Alexa, goes missing, Janine stumbles into investigating her disappearance. As rumours swirl about Alexa's life Janine discovers there are disturbing parallels between them. What starts as curious procrastination quickly spirals into a tangled web of secrets, lies and a truth Janine may not be ready to face.

The Last Mandarin
Louise Penny & Melissa Fung
H&S. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



When security and fire alarms go off simultaneously worldwide, setting off a panic, the signal is traced to China. Chinese dissident turned human rights activist Vivien Li and her

estranged Chinese-American daughter Alice are called to the White House to help decode China's intentions. Caught in the chaos they are uniquely placed to stop the next attack but become targets from within both governments. Racing across continents, they must work together to decode an ancient legend, and an old women's language before it's too late.

The Ark
Haruo Yuki & Jim Rion (trans.)
Pushkin Vertigo. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



One week to escape. High in the mountains, a sudden rockslide traps 10 hikers in an abandoned bunker, nicknamed 'The Ark'. Then it starts to flood. There is only one chance of survival – for the rest of

them to escape, someone must be left behind. But one of them has other plans. As they struggle to decide who to abandon, the group is torn apart by a brutal murder. And it won't be the last. Can they unmask the murderer and reach safety before the water rises? Or will The Ark become their tomb? **R**

Nonfiction

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Australian Studies



Periodic Bitch: A Memoir of Menstruation, Madness & Monsters
Emma Hardy
A&U. PB. \$29.99
Available now

R Every 29 days, in the week before her period, Emma Hardy becomes someone she barely recognises. She's depressed, irritable, and unable to leave her bed. Her relationships strain under this pressure, while her grip on reality is tested. When she is diagnosed with PMDD (premenstrual dysphoric disorder), she begins a long, frustrating search for relief, trying everything from an IUD (intra-uterine device) to the pill, to antidepressants. Each option offers a partial reprieve, but always at a cost.

Periodic Bitch speaks to an experience many women and people who menstruate will recognise, even if their own experience of premenstrual symptoms is not as severe. The emotional and mental strain of the more common PMS (premenstrual syndrome) is often trivialised and reduced to jokes about women 'just PMSing'. This stereotype casts women as unpredictable, Jekyll-and-Hyde monsters who are composed most of the time but transform into something irrational or unrecognisable once a month, like a werewolf at the sight of a full moon.

Alongside her personal story, Hardy explores the cultural framework surrounding premenstrual symptoms. She suggests that expectations play a powerful role; if we are taught to anticipate irritability or anxiety, are we more likely to notice and label those feelings as a PMS or PMDD-related response? She seamlessly weaves cultural theory into her account, along with examples of how PMS is portrayed across true crime, pop culture, and feminist horror, and

reflects on the history of the contraceptive pill, developed as a tool of women's liberation, yet rooted in disturbing foundations of eugenics and racism. Nothing about these explorations is straightforward, though, and Hardy, 'want(s) to hold multiple realities: that this illness is physical and mental and cultural, all at once.'

Importantly, this is not a self-help book but a memoir, with much of it set in the familiar territories of Melbourne's inner north during the Covid lockdowns, giving the experiences Hardy endures an additional note of claustrophobia, confusion, and urgency. There are no neat solutions offered here, only a deep sense of the unique embodied experience of menstruation, and the navigation and persistence required to advocate for oneself in a system lacking in its understanding of this chronic condition. It's another example of what is broadly termed 'medical misogyny', and a stark reminder of the many ways in which medical thinking is (again) lacking and failing individuals, and by extension everyone around that individual – all of us.

Periodic Bitch is uncompromising in its honesty about the author's personal yet universal experience of life in a hormonal body. The book is necessarily challenging in its candour, and the author must be commended for shining a light on this often-misunderstood aspect of women's lives with such grace, insight, and erudition.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Australian Studies

Sirens: Inside the Shadow World of First Responders

Martin McKenzie-Murray
Black Inc. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R *Sirens* is an articulate and humane portrait of three first responders: Peter, a paramedic; Brett, a police officer; and Tara, a firefighter. It's a book about how people survive such work, and why they are driven to do it in the first place. Inevitably, *Sirens* is also a book about trauma, and about PTSD. Well-respected journalist Martin McKenzie-Murray approaches his generous interviewees and these topics with empathy and compassion, bringing together their compelling reflections with his own observations and broader analysis.

Their experiences range from small acts of kindness in the back of an ambulance, to career redirection from Oxford to firefighting; from maintaining morale and oxygen levels among those trapped in the Beaconsfield Mine collapse,

to reporting for duty at the Port Arthur massacre; from answering triple-zero calls on Black Saturday to the life-changing moment when the phone rings in the middle of the night at home.

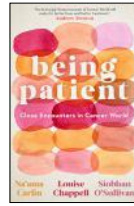
McKenzie-Murray does not unduly glorify or valorise first responders, and he is open about his initial misconceptions about PTSD. As he finds, the worst-case scenario does not have to eventuate for events to be traumatic. He shares restrained accounts of his own experiences, and his description of how time behaves in traumatic situations is staggering in its precision. This is some of the best writing you will ever read.

Sirens is essential reading for anyone who can, but it won't be for everyone: as the author notes clearly, many kinds of trauma are referenced in the book, including childhood sexual abuse. It feels impossible to do justice to the nuance and sensitivity of this work, and crucial to acknowledge what it must have cost McKenzie-Murray to write it, and his subjects to share their stories with him. But, as they have done before in their vocations, they felt something was important – in this instance, sharing their experiences to aid greater understanding – and so they did it anyway.

Elke Power is the editor of *Readings Monthly*

Being Patient: Close Encounters in Cancer World

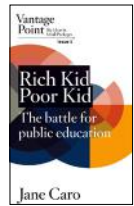
Na'ama Carlin, Louise Chappell & Siobhan O'Sullivan
NewSouth. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 May



Na'ama Carlin, Louise Chappell and Siobhan O'Sullivan all received the diagnosis people dread – cancer. Working in universities, these three women knew how to speak up. But in *Cancer World*, their voices were often unheard. As they negotiated medical hierarchies, 'scanxiety', gender bias, ongoing treatments and confronting diagnoses, they met others who felt the same. In *Being Patient*, Na'ama, Louise and Siobhan share their own stories and talk to people about their experiences in *Cancer World*.

Rich Kid Poor Kid: The Battle for Public Education (Vantage Point, Issue 5)

Jane Caro
Australia Institute Press. PB. \$19.99
Available now



R For decades Australia has been pumping money into private education while public schools struggle with crumbling classrooms, overworked teachers, cuts to music, STEM and more.

With rising private school attendance and the marketisation of education, parental anxiety and inequity increase. Jane Caro analyses the policy decisions behind this crisis and shows what can be done to have a public education system worthy of a wealthy nation.

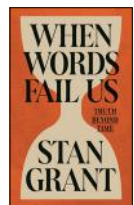
The Enigmatic Echidna: Secrets of the World's Most Curious Creature

Danielle Clode
Black Inc. PB. \$36.99
Available 5 May



There are few animals more unusual and captivating than the echidna – a spiky, egg-laying mammal that eats ants. But some of the most striking things about echidnas are things most of us don't know. In *The Enigmatic Echidna*, biologist and award-winning author Danielle Clode follows the echidna on its eclectic path through the Australian landscape. Equal parts surprising, amusing and enlightening, it is an irresistible journey into their unique and beautiful world.

When Words Fail Us: Truth Beyond Time
Stan Grant
NewSouth. HB. \$26.99
Available 1 May



I am out of words at home. I have grown bored with my language, bored with my voice, bored with my writing. My words labour under the weight of Australia's history. The land itself, as much as I love it, bears down hard. Now in another place, I am finding lighter words. Stan Grant, one of Australia's most prominent writers, reflects on how we struggle to speak to one another today, and the importance of listening, silence

and philosophy, from Plato to Simone Weil to Radiohead. An important book for our times.

The Good Sea: The Journey of the Tasi Diak and the Politics of Refugee Protection in Australia

Vannessa Hearman
MUP. PB. \$36.99
Available 12 May

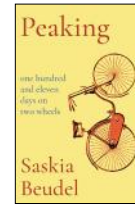


In May 1995, 18 East Timorese asylum seekers, including a six-month-old baby, sailed into Darwin in a small fishing boat after six nights at sea. The *Tasi Diak* was the only boat to reach Australia during the 24-year Indonesian occupation of East Timor. Drawing on archives, government records, media reports and interviews, *The Good Sea* recounts their perilous journey, traces the lives of young East Timorese activists, and examines the impact of the boat's arrival on Australian Indonesian relations, refugee policy and the campaign for East Timor's independence.

Biography

Peaking: One Hundred and Eleven Days on Two Wheels

Saskia Beudel
Monash. PB. \$32.99
Available 1 May



R I was pleased to find I share similarities with athlete (and author) Saskia Beudel. For example, we are both middle-aged women who are perplexed by our ageing selves; we enjoy a sunrise when there is no wind; and we share a dependence on caffeine. We differ, though, on recreational sport. I do none and she has completed the most demanding one-day cycling event in Australia as a sort of ultimate experiment that encompasses over 100 days of training. Called the Peaks Challenge, it covers enormous uphill and downhill experiences across Tawonga Gap, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek in the Victorian High Country. Like Beudel, I've been there and can confirm that the hills are indeed peaky.

This bike riding memoir is more than a discussion about bike riding though. Beudel spends time talking us through the notion of ageing, citing various studies. (Do we ever feel our age?) She shares the joy (oh, please!) of juggling time between work, family, training, and friends. She recounts the pain of riding for hours and the pure anxiety of going into an organised sporting event where women are outnumbered four to one and therefore the foregone conclusion is that the day's experience will be an emotional mix of exhaustion and accomplishment.

Peaking did not inspire me to shift from my electric bike to a road bike, nor do I think this is the purpose of Beudel's story. Rather, this is a book that encourages conversations about and reflections on the notion of women ageing. *Peaking* is about taking up as much space as possible, trying new experiences and being amazed at how your body works. It is about freedom. Cyclists will want to read this book and use it as a training manual, other readers will find solidarity

in Beudel's beautiful writing, and women of a certain age will find that there is more than one way to wear purple as we move on through the years.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

Famesick: A Memoir Lena Dunham

Fourth Estate. PB. \$34.99
Available now



In this rowdy, frank reflection on illness, fame, sex, and everything in between, Lena Dunham, the remarkable mind behind the hit series *Girls* and the bestselling author of *Not That Kind of Girl* asks whether fulfilling her creative ambitions has been worth the pain. What she finds is deeper than physical relief, and more lasting, as she learns to live with what she can't change and turns her regrets into wisdom that can carry her forward, as she reconnects to what, and who, she loves.

Ghost Stories: A Memoir Siri Hustvedt

Sceptre. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 May



R Siri Hustvedt is writing her way forward with tremendous grief caused by the death of her husband, Paul Auster. Her literary dance steps show her anguish in every line. Fans of their work will leap to this offering. Those who have gone through the recent loss of a partner may hesitate.

Hustvedt began writing *Ghost Stories* almost immediately after Auster's death. I read an interview with Hustvedt in *The Guardian* years ago (2019) in which she said that, essentially, she works (writes) for her life. I have always been affected by this sentiment: writing for her life – that writing was her lifeline. She also mentioned in that interview that writing is full of tricks and sidesteps. And in this memoir, it's apparent. This writing, clever and concise, is her survival technique.

Hustvedt isolates her readings about memory and cognitive processes to help her understand what is happening to her emotionally. She talks about her wedding, her daughter, her grandchild; she includes letters Paul wrote; she writes about his eyes, his hair, his hands, and his humour. She can smell him at times. She writes about their kindness to one another, their intellectual connection to each other's work and that of others' studies and work. She writes about loss, fear, and the future. It will break your heart.

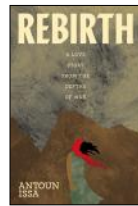
Reading this raw and compelling story is like being a visitor in Auster and Hustvedt's Brooklyn brownstone home. I see the chairs they read from, their bookshelves and their windows. It is an intimate portrait of a life lived together and of an active, shared, formidable intelligence. Hustvedt is not writing about loneliness or an inability to accept death, but rather that she is forsaken now that Auster is gone. Auster was her equal and so, now, grief has halved her.

May we all be so lucky in our partnerships.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

Rebirth: A Love Story from the Depths of War Antoun Issa

Hachette. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Beirut, 1974. Laila Khalil, the eldest in a poor Catholic family, has just come of marriageable age and must fulfil her family's expectations. However, Laila is drawn to a handsome coiffeur,

Nicolas, and they soon make their own plans. But Laila's dreams are dashed when the Lebanese Civil War breaks out. Her family are caught in heavy clashes between warring factions and when tragedy strikes all Laila's hopes wither. When all seems lost, a lifeline presents itself: migration to Australia. A young woman's extraordinary journey through war, tragedy, migration and renewal.

Call Girl Confidential: Millions of Followers. Hundreds of Clients. One Hell of a Story. Blue-Eyed Kayla Jade

Affirm. PB. \$36.99
Available now



Since reaching wild success through OnlyFans, Australia's most sex-positive influencer Blue-Eyed Kayla Jade has become a viral sensation on social media, breaking the taboos of full-service sex work to a rapt, largely female audience. Her memoir charts the highs, lows and sexploits of her career, detailing her many adventures – including with those in the upper echelons of power – and juggling steely ambition with motherhood. An unflinchingly honest, hilarious and wryly intelligent tell-all.

Childhood: A Memoir of Growing Up, Parenting, Teaching, and Discovering What Children Need Most Brendan James Murray

Picador. PB. \$36.99
Available now



Brendan James Murray's childhood was one of stark contrasts: vivid imaginative adventures but also disadvantage, fear and months of refusing to attend school. When a silhouette on a freeway overpass forces him to confront the ghosts of his childhood, he realises the extraordinary power of imagination to transform lives, and how much it has been neglected. *Childhood* is a deeply personal investigation into how we can help children find their place in the world, informed from Murray's own experience as a child, teacher and parent.

Annastacia Palaszczuk: The Politics of Being Me Annastacia Palaszczuk

HarperCollins. PB. \$36.99
Available now



Annastacia Palaszczuk made history when she became the first woman to win the premiership of Queensland from opposition, and again when she became the first female premier in the

nation to secure three consecutive terms. But her journey to the top was anything but easy. This powerful memoir takes readers behind the scenes of Palaszczuk's political triumphs and personal struggles, and reflects on the sacrifices, resilience and unwavering sense of purpose it takes to lead while staying true to yourself.

Craft

Loop, Hook, Loom: A Creative Collection of Textile Art Made with Yarn and Thread Sophia Cai

Smith Street. HB. \$39.99
Available now



Loop, Hook, Loom brings together some of today's most creative textile practices in a celebration of contemporary exploration and play. Comprising three chapters – Weaving, Crochet and Knitting – Sophia Cai dips into the history of these art forms and the creative ways they're currently being expanded. An accessible entry point into the world of yarn-based art, the book features both working artists and hobbyists from around the globe, highlighting the endless possibilities of textiles.

Cultural Studies

The Book that Taught the World to Orgasm and then Disappeared: Shere Hite and The Hite Report Rosa Campbell

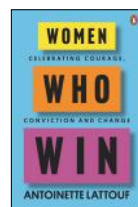
NewSouth. PB. \$32.99
Available 1 May



Despite being one of the leading thinkers of the second wave feminist movement, today Shere Hite is little known. Published in 1976, her bestselling and groundbreaking book *The Hite Report* was the first feminist exploration of the link between sex and male power and revolutionised the way people thought about marriage and the female orgasm. Rosa Campbell traces Hite's life, ideas, and cancellation, her cultural impact and limitations. In a post-#MeToo era, Campbell's account reveals how feminist voices are silenced – and why Hite still matters.

Women Who Win: Celebrating Courage, Conviction and Change Antoinette Lattouf

Penguin. PB. \$36.99
Available now



R *Women Who Win* is a fiercely proud and unapologetically raw insight into women's struggles and triumphs throughout history. Full of humour, rage, and candour, award-winning Australian journalist Antoinette Lattouf delves into her own stories of being unjustly sacked from the ABC for condemning the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians in Gaza, and the court trial that followed.

Combining personal anecdotes and insights, Lattouf explores the lives of women whose voices were also silenced in the face of injustice, who refused to submit, or who chose to strive for a life different from what was expected of them. Lattouf's own story is inspirational: she took on Australia's biggest broadcasting institution and questioned the freedom of speech actually permitted in the media.

In this book, we discover First Nations women who resisted colonialism, the first female Australian students to graduate from law school, and pioneers in sport, science, and climate research. Although Lattouf talks to us in an easy, conversational manner, she doesn't hold back from delving into the intricacies within misogyny and feminism, and how the intersectionality of race, sexuality, and disability creates further complex systemic experiences of privilege or discrimination. Investigating through a cultural, social, and legal framework, spanning from colonisation in Australia to recent pop-culture moments, Lattouf highlights that although there is much to thank past female figures for (including paving the way to things we now might take for granted, e.g. the right to education and to paid work) there are still many things that have not changed. Her stories underscore the fact that although women have gained more rights in 'the lucky country', the ways of silencing us have just evolved over time, with Lattouf's own forced termination from the ABC as just one example.

Women Who Win is a sharply witty and highly entertaining exploration of untold stories of women's history.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Girls@: Gen Z and the Commodification of Everything Freya India

Swift. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Coming of age has long been marked by inner turmoil and anxiety. But today girls must navigate these worries in a world of AR filters, TikTok plastic surgeons, dating apps, hook up culture, online porn, modern sex-positivity, therapy apps, direct-to-door medication and even AI girlfriends – each ready to exploit. *Girls@* traces the technological and cultural shifts of the past decade, from social media to changing family structures, exposing the intensification and commercialisation of girls' inner lives and the loss of their authentic selves.

Feminism for a World on Fire Natasha Walter

Virago. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 May



Today, feminism is trapped in a cycle of consumerism and sold to women as individual empowerment. The result is that women are struggling to build connections with one another and with the world around them. How can women defend their rights and freedoms in this dangerous world? Finding a thread of real hope in the dark, this compassionate and compelling book builds a vision of a rooted feminism that

can connect women's liberation to other movements for equality and environmental protection.

History

The Shortest History of Ireland

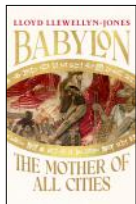
James Hawes
Black Inc. PB. \$27.99
Available now



Guiding us through centuries of struggle and resistance, James Hawes charts the importance of Ireland's links to Europe, and to its exiled children in America. For centuries, Europe provided hope in the face of near-genocidal colonisation. Today, Ireland is in an era of renewal. Bolstered by huge economic growth, a young and growing population and support from both its diaspora and its allies, the nation just needs to sidestep the last, toxic wreckage of the British Empire, and its fascinating past will flow into a bright future.

Babylon: The Mother of All Cities

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones
Wildfire. PB. \$34.99
Available 19 May

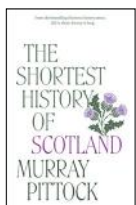


Babylon often appears more myth than history. Purportedly the site of the Hanging Gardens and the Tower of Babel, its infamous presence in the Bible has made it a byword for sinful decadence. But

Babylon was a bustling metropolis teeming with life. *Babylon* traces the city's foundation through to its world domination, and subsequent decline, fall and ruin. The extraordinary ancient sources help inform what is both a stunning work of scholarship and a vivid, fascinating evocation of a long-lost world.

The Shortest History of Scotland

Murray Pittock
Black Inc. PB. \$27.99
Available 5 May



Scotland is one of the oldest nations in Europe. Its territory has remained fundamentally unchanged since the 15th century, and its southern border with England has barely altered since 1237. And yet

Scotland is not a state at all. Murray Pittock argues that its very ambiguity is what has made the nation a central part of the global story. Starting at the very beginning with a Scotland before Scotland Pittock ranges with expertise through the defining episodes of Scottish history up to the present.

Servus: How Slavery Made the Roman Empire

Emma Southon
Hodder. PB. \$34.99
Available 19 May



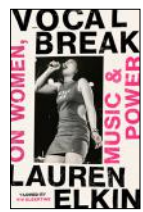
We associate the Romans with majesty and greatness. But the Romans were also enslavers. They built an empire on the backs of millions of unwilling people who were captured after war,

kidnapped, punished, or born enslaved. *Servus* takes us into the world of these silenced enslaved people who were the bedrock of Rome. Through the fragments they left behind, Emma Southon traces the pain and tragedy of their lives alongside the love stories, lifelong friendships, small victories and hard-won freedoms.

Music

Vocal Break: On Women, Music & Power

Lauren Elkin
C&W. HB. \$65
Available 19 May



R This book contains so much. Lauren Elkin is the essayist who I feel most lucky to exist at the same time as; we get to read her books as they come out and should pay attention to their messages instantly.

Vocal Break has pieces of memoir which chronicle life as a theatre kid, coming of age surrounded by '90s music, and feeling like a Mary Bennet: '... she can't take the chitchat; she just wants to play the piano.' This is the second nonfiction book of Elkin's I've read and I'll never tire of how she writes about her life (I feel like we are friends ... I hope that we would be). Her anecdotes punctuate heavy academic research and feminist history. From Beyoncé to Hannah Arendt, it seems no woman with a voice is left out here.

Voices are the crux of the book. How musical women have been portrayed historically (see: pirate-killing sirens), how tone and accent place us within the world, and which women have been silenced again and again. Using specific '90s acts, such as Bikini Kill and The Cranberries, to illustrate her observations on voice, Elkin delivers so many significant points that I'd advise slow and careful reading to digest it all.

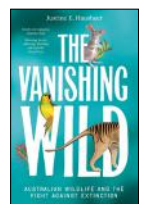
The last essay in this book is a much-needed alarm bell, because while singing women can shout at the top of their voices, they cannot throw off the violent and misogynist culture around them. Almost every woman chronicled in this book has a story of violence: '... her voice emerges from herself, but that self is shaped by this violence.' Elkin states that it is only with a stronger collective voice that we stand a chance.

Grace Gooda is from Readings Chadstone

Natural History

The Vanishing Wild: Australian Wildlife and the Fight Against Extinction

Justine E. Hausheer
NewSouth. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 May



Australia is a country celebrated for its wildlife, yet native species are in crisis. In the last 200 years, Australia has lost more biodiversity than any other developed nation. From pygmy possums that

Vantage Point

Big Ideas in Small Packages

Issue 5

OUT
NOW

Rich Kid
Poor Kid

The battle for
public education

Jane Caro

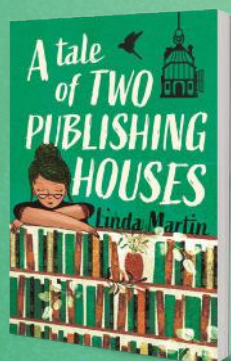
Join Jane Caro, in conversation with Monica Dux at Cinema Nova in Carlton, discussing her new essay on the dire state of public education and how to fix it on Wednesday 13 May



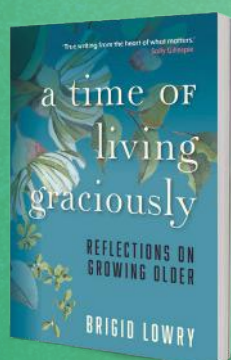
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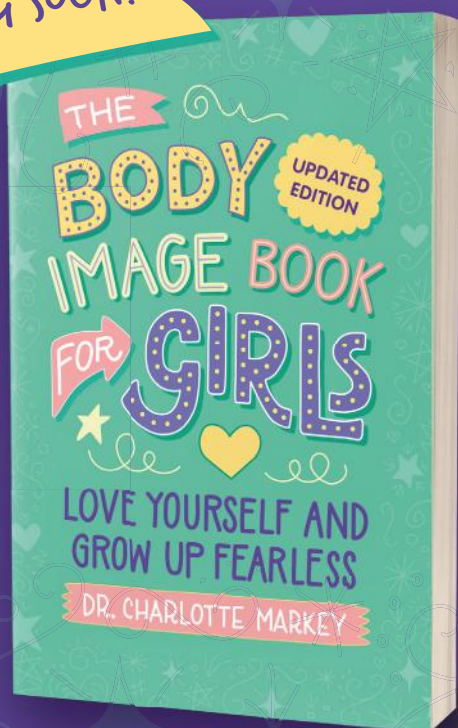
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"...a unicorn-like resource for girls..."

VANESSA KROLL BENNETT, co-host of *The Puberty Podcast*

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

live high in the Snowy Mountains to adorable fat-tailed dunnarts who might hold the answers to reviving the Tasmanian tiger, science writer Justine E. Hausheer immerses us in the harsh reality of the extinction crisis – and shows us the future of conservation and what can be done to save Australia's native species.

The Creatures' Guide to Caring: How Animal Parents Teach Us that Humans Were Born to Care

Elizabeth Preston
Scribe. PB. \$36.99
Available now



What unites us with frogs ferrying tadpoles on their backs or a shorebird luring a predator away from her nest by pretending her wing is broken? In this compelling and entertaining study, science journalist Elizabeth Preston explores the biology, brain circuitry, and behaviours we share with species across the animal kingdom that care for young. In the field and in the lab, readers will also meet scientists who have dedicated their lives to understanding these animals, often while juggling families of their own.

Parenting

Birth with Confidence: Savvy Choices for Physiological Birth (revised edition)

Rhea Dempsey
Boat House. PB. \$29.99
Available 1 May



Since its publication in 2013, *Birth with Confidence* has been the go-to resource for anyone hoping for a physiological birth. Based on childbirth educator Rhea Dempsey's renowned birth-preparation workshops, the book explains why physiological birth is almost impossible in our contemporary birth culture – and what readers can do to beat the odds. This revised edition includes fully updated birth statistics, additional real-life birth stories, as well as new research that backs Rhea's 40+ years of insight with hard data.

Personal Development

It's Not Love, Actually: How to Find the Life and Love You Deserve

Dee Salmin
Pan Mac. PB. \$36.99
Available now



Have you ever been made to feel *less than* just because you're single? Or just sick of the low-effort dating culture? After years of talking to people about their love lives on triple j's award-winning podcast

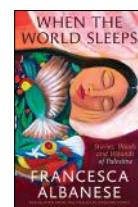
The Hook Up, Dee Salmin shares everything she's learnt in this part-memoir, part-manifesto on dating, sex

and love. From being single and thriving, to dating with boundaries, to finding love that's worth your energy, Salmin blends research, expert insight and truth-telling in this funny, furious and unfiltered guide.

Politics

When the World Sleeps: Stories, Words and Wounds of Palestine

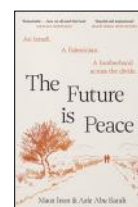
Francesca Albanese
Hardie Grant. PB. \$32.99
Available now



Francesca Albanese, the first woman to serve as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, conveys the soul of a people through ten remarkable stories of resilience and humanity. An urgent account of bearing witness to the Palestinian struggle, beyond the headlines and statistics, Albanese illuminates the people themselves, offering a powerful lens on the failures that have led us to here – and the fragile possibilities that still exist for a shared future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The Future Is Peace: An Israeli. A Palestinian. A Brotherhood Across the Divide.

Maoz Inon & Aziz Abu Sarah
Canongate. PB. \$36.99
Available now



Palestinian Aziz Abu Sarah and Israeli Maoz Inon are unlikely peacemakers, bound by their friendship and personal losses in a region shaped by generations of conflict. Sarah and Inon recount a weeklong journey across the holy land exploring personal and national histories amid competing narratives, war and devastation. With hope and candour, they explain how believing more violence can bring security is naive and that true and lasting peace is achievable through the power of all people to make change.

Visual Arts

Tony Albert: Not a Souvenir

Tony Albert & Liz Nowell (ed.)
T&H. HB. \$100
Available now

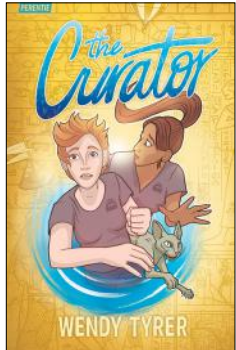


Tony Albert's art reclaims and reframes the imagery of Aboriginal Australia with wit, beauty and force. Across painting, photography, sculpture and installation, his practice explores Aboriginal culture, identity and history through a deeply personal lens. Drawing on individual and collective pasts, Albert transforms the visual language of colonisation, turning objects of prejudice into symbols of resistance, resilience and pride. *Tony Albert: Not a Souvenir* is the most comprehensive publication on the artist to date, tracing his journey as one of Australia's most incisive contemporary voices. **R**

Young Adult

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Young Adult Graphic Narrative



The Curator

Wendy Tyrer
Perentie. PB. \$24.99
Available now

R It's hard to gaze at the National Gallery of Victoria's ever-flowing waterwall and not marvel at the creative power of that iconic vault of art and history. Author-illustrator Wendy Tyrer takes readers through that rippling portal and into a world of art, intrigue and magic in *The Curator*, an adventurous debut from new graphic novel imprint Perentie Press.

A seven-year labour of love, *The Curator* bursts with mysterious puzzles and references to a wide range of artistic movements, galleries and museums

Our heroine is aspiring artist and gallery attendant Mimi, who struggles to find space and time for her art while juggling classes and an overbearing mum who isn't so sure about Mimi's chosen profession (especially when there are reports of artists going missing!), and all the while Mimi is trying to impress the impossible-to-read new curator, Simon. At least Simon seems interested in Mimi's art, because her work bestie Nahal can't even get him to notice she exists, and if she can't climb the ladder at the gallery, how will she find the courage to tell her parents she wants to

study art history instead of law or medicine?

What starts as a normal (frustrating) week full of screaming kids, spilled coffee and stress gets a whole lot weirder when a strange cat starts appearing around the gallery and the Master Portraits exhibition mysteriously floods. Mimi isn't looking for any more distractions, when along comes Drew, a cute young sculptor who says he's just trying to find his dad, a painter who went missing in Paris ...

What follows is a magical adventure through space and time, featuring a cast of artists spanning 500 years of art history and a whole lot of cats (including wild, domestic and divine varieties). A seven-year labour of love, *The Curator* bursts with mysterious puzzles and references to a wide range of artistic movements, galleries and museums, but it's ultimately a story about creativity, friendship and making art on your own terms. For ages 13+.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Once Upon Tomorrow

Karen Comer
Lothian. PB. \$19.99
Available now



Miri, 18 and a hopeful student of Jungian psychology, discovers she's pregnant in 2025. Aleita, 16, shelters in the library, the one place free from jolts to her digital implant in 2125.

Interwoven between them stands Sylvie, spinning tapestries to save her life and a kingdom. Sylvie exists in the pages of a mysterious fairytale. All three are connected through time by heartbreak, a desperate need to save the environment and a search for family and community.

Rise of the Empress

Julie C. Dao
Penguin. PB. \$19.99
Available 12 May



Eighteen-year-old Xifeng is beautiful. The stars say she is destined for greatness, that she is meant to be Empress. But only if she embraces the darkness within her. In order to achieve greatness,

Xifeng must spurn the young man who loves her and exploit the callous magic that runs through her veins. Is the price of the throne too high? How far is she willing to go to achieve her destiny?

Survival Show

Juno Dawson
Gallery. PB. \$24.99
Available now



SING FOR YOUR LIFE! Taryn Beck's younger brother needs vital medication to survive; medication they can't access or afford. Taryn enters Starmaker, a reality TV show where ten young

women compete to join a pop group and win a life of luxury. But there's a catch: the five eliminated contestants are literally eliminated. As Taryn and her fellow trainees are pitted against each other in cruel challenges, she decides to expose and destroy Starmaker from the inside.

Don't Forget to Remember Me

Annie Drum
Bakers Lane. PB. \$19.99
Available 1 May



Thirteen-year-old Starling 'Star' Cooney lives with her grandfather, Roy, in Rocky Point. She has not made any friends – that is, until new student Bronte arrives. Then Roy disappears, and Star must decide who to trust as she searches for her mum. *Don't Forget to Remember Me* is a heartfelt coming-of-age novel about first love, identity and the value of true friendship.

Drawing Nudes While Making Other Plans

Zoe Gaetjens
Penguin. PB. \$19.99
Available 5 May



Plan for the perfect summer before Year 12: do a life-drawing course at the Australian Art School (try not to freak out the first time you have to draw a naked man); find your friends (your real ones); first kiss?! (only if it's with the right person); and try not to wish your sister were still here (impossible!). A warm and funny novel about finding yourself, in a room full of strangers, drawing naked people.

I Could Give You the Moon

Ann Liang
HQ Young Adult. PB. \$19.99
Available now



R Chanel Cao seems to have a picture-perfect life, with beauty, fame and wealth. Everyone wants to be her friend. Little do they know of the troubles she has at home with her parents' crumbling marriage. She just wants to actually have the happy life she pretends she is living. One night, when she encounters Ares Yin at the park, the two of them stare into a lake shining in the moonlight and magically glimpse a vision of the future. Chanel sees her house on fire, while Ares sees his missing brother, Luke. Chanel immediately mistrusts Ares, believing he will be the one to burn her house to the ground. But as they spend more time together, they slowly let their walls down, even as the revealing of the truth threatens to break their hearts.

Set in the same elite Beijing school as The Readings Prize-winning *If You Could See the Sun* (with guest appearances from Alice and Henry!), Ann Liang's *I Could Give You the Moon* combines her signature swoon-worthy romance with a hint of the magical realism explored in her debut. Liang delves deeper into the world of the *fuerdai*, a Chinese term for the wealthy second generation born into families of high socio-economic status. Through Chanel and Ares, Liang explores how difficult it can be to express genuine feelings of sorrow or stress in an environment characterised by excessive materialism and where there is a sense that happiness can be bought. But the true magic of this book is the beauty of finding that one person who understands you, is empathetic, and makes you feel loved and seen. For ages 14+.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Song of the Saltings

Rachael King
A&U. PB. \$24.99
Available now



On the isolated island of Brack, an ancient bargain requires a yearly sacrifice be made to the Glimm, a creature from the salt marshes. Spared when she was young, 16-year-old Lotta tends the Council's sacrificial horses and keeps her distance from the villagers. But the island is dying and a song threads through her dreams. Is the Glimm calling Lotta back? When she meets fellow outcast Moss, their lives – and the fate of the island – will change forever.

Don't Let Them Leave

Mike Lucas
Penguin. PB. \$19.99
Available 5 May



One island. One house. One curse. Ghosts aren't real and houses can't come to life. Charlotte knows these facts to be true. Yet when Charlotte and her siblings are orphaned and sent to live with their grandmother on remote Black Island, she begins to realise that only one thing is certain: they shouldn't be there. But will they ever be able to leave?

My Wonderful Disgrace

Angourie Rice & Kate Rice
Walker. PB. \$21.99
Available 1 May



R The mother-daughter duo behind the Reese's Book Club pick, *Stuck Up & Stupid*, are back with a story about a night that goes horrendously and hilariously wrong!

Amy Middleton has planned the perfect Senior Year Ball. The most exquisite designer dress hangs in her wardrobe, the limo is booked, and her speech and corresponding slideshow won't leave a dry eye in the ballroom! All she needs now is the perfect date, in the form of Leo Prince. After she drops the heaviest of hints, Leo finally asks Amy to be his date. And now he is totally going to realise how amazing she is and ask her to be his girlfriend! As she steps out of the limo, Amy knows it will be a night to remember – and it will be, just not the way she hoped.

The details of the events that unfolded that night are slowly drip-fed to the reader through Amy's journal entries, police interviews, emails, texts and school newsletters. Everything that could go wrong, goes extremely, horribly wrong! I read this book in one sitting as I just had to know every delicious detail of Amy's wonderful disgrace! Truly, you'll never see some of it coming!

While it's a humorous and honestly quite ridiculous story, *My Wonderful Disgrace* does explore some heavy themes including violations of privacy, bullying, and predatory relationships. Animal lovers, be warned, an innocent goat meets a tragic fate.

If you enjoy a (mostly) light and funny read full of unrequited love, misunderstandings, and mishaps, then this one is for you. For ages 14+.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator

Tearing Myself Together

Anna Whateley
A&U. PB. \$19.99
Available now



Year 12 student Hilzy has a lot on her plate. She's just lost her job, she and her sister are struggling financially, and her former childhood best friend Imogen recently dished them in to child services.

At least Hilzy is growing closer to her crush, Dawn. But when Hilzy ends up in hospital with a busted knee, it's only Imogen who understands what it's really like living with an invisible disability. **R**

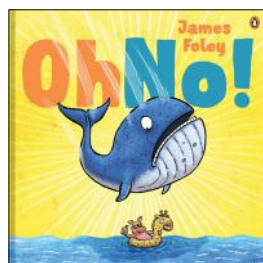
Kids

PICTURE BOOK OF THE MONTH

Picture Book

Oh No!

James Foley
Penguin. HB. \$19.99
Available 5 May



R Join us on a rollicking romp through James Foley's new picture book, *Oh No!* From the iconic *Stellarphant* to uproarious *Happy Barry Capybara*, the award-winning author and illustrator James Foley has set a tremendously high bar for his picture books, and I can promise you his newest does not disappoint.

An utterly ridiculous comedy of onomatopoeic errors, this story is literally filled to the brim with twists and turns: each page reveals a new surprise. Can you guess what that noise is? I bet you can't!

This high-stakes carnival of chaos is set to leave anyone who reads it in a pile of giggles. Yes, even the adults – I know I couldn't make it to the end without a good chuckle.

With a thumping rhythm and dynamic tone, this picture book makes for the perfect, energetic read-aloud. For ages 2+.

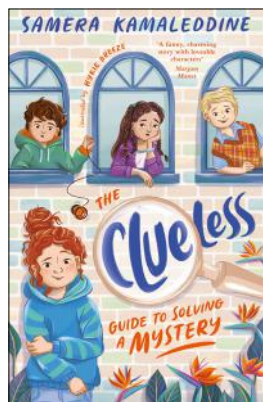
Celeste Perry is from Readings Emporium

KIDS BOOK OF THE MONTH

Middle Grade

The Clueless Guide to Solving a Mystery (Clueless, Book 1)

Samera Kamaledidine & Hykie Breeze (illus.)
HarperCollins. PB. \$17.99
Available now



R *The Clueless Guide to Solving a Mystery* is a fun, fast-paced middle-grade mystery perfect for kids who want to try to crack the case but don't want to read about murder. Claudia is staying with her grandparents in their retirement village when the electrical gates lock, trapping everyone inside. At the same time, mysterious notes containing threatening messages are being passed among the residents.

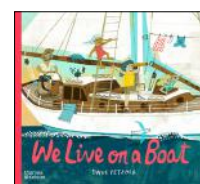
Claudia sees an opportunity to befriend the two coolest kids in school, Yasmin and Zayn, enlisting them and another kid, Orphi, to help solve the mystery. Together, the four kids embark on a quest to uncover the truth behind what is going on at Boonside Heights Retirement Home. Over the course of their investigation, the reader gets to know the eccentric community of elderly residents in the home.

While the mystery is fun, I think the real heart of this story is watching Claudia slowly uncover the stories of the people around her. Through her detective work, Claudia and the reader get to know the intricacies of each character, and it becomes clear that with every one of them there is more than meets the eye. This book is perfect for ages 8+.

Alicia Guiney is from Readings Kids

We Live on a Boat

Dave Petzold
T&H. HB. \$26.99
Available now



We live on a boat. She's called *Lucky Sea Legs*. We call her that because we always tumble into good things. From the bestselling author of *We Live in a Bus* comes a windswept family adventure about sailing the open seas, swimming in the moonlight and living a life less ordinary.

The Dream Keeper

Anna Walker
Walker. HB. \$27.99
Available 1 May



In a forest of dreams lives a turtle – the Dream Keeper. In a small boat, the turtle heads on a tumultuous journey to deliver dreams to sleeping souls. Meanwhile, a young girl, scared by the shadows in her room, cannot sleep. Both the turtle and the girl will find courage and overcome fears, as their worlds collide in the most wonderful, magical way.

Junior Grade

Edith: The Girl Who Was 100 Years Old

Catharina Valckx & Antony Shugaar (trans.)
Gecko. PB. \$17.99
Available 1 May



R As a newborn, Edith was gifted two things from the fairies: the power to animate objects, and eternal youth. By the time her 100th birthday rolls around, Edith, who stopped growing at age seven, is bored and lonely. In need of a friend, Edith brings a lemon to life, names it Squirt, and along with her dog pal Bolster, forms an oddball crew and embarks on an adventure.

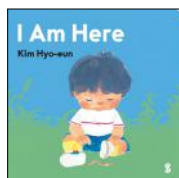
This is a fairytale of sorts; it's hilarious and philosophical. Some objects become quite unhinged when animated; I was in tears laughing when the grandfather clock, named Old Father Chimes, threw a tantrum, and again when an old boat started running around on little legs and yelling. Gecko Press is known for publishing extraordinary junior fiction and this new book certainly delivers. *Edith* has been translated from French, and readers may be familiar with Catharina Valckx as the author of *Zanzibar* and *Bruno*, among others. Lively illustrations make this a great read-aloud, and highly recommended for anyone aged 5+.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Board Book

I Am Here

Kim Hyo-eun & Aerin Park (trans.)
Scribble. BB. \$19.99
Available now



R Even the smallest books for the youngest readers can be profound and beautiful. *I Am Here* is a fold-out board book that captures the world from the viewpoint of a baby – first looking up, out of a pram or in an embrace, they are under the clouds, under a rainbow, under a hat. As the baby grows, crawls and eventually stands, there are many new things around them to notice. They are beside a cat, beside ants, beside rocks.

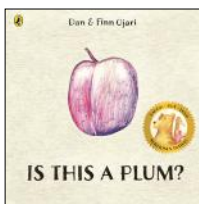
Clever and unique, this is a book that recognises the perspective changes that occur as children grow. The palette is bold, as blocks of colour and the use of watercolour give the illustrations a softness. Kim Hyo-eun is known for striking, clever picture books, including *I Am the Subway* and *How We Share Cake*. With *I Am Here*, she has crafted a special, thoughtful book to share with babies and toddlers as they discover the world they inhabit.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Picture Books

Is This a Plum?

Dan Ojari & Finn Ojari
Puffin. HB. \$19.99
Available 5 May



R From Oscar-nominated director and animator Dan Ojari and his then four (now-eight)-year-old son Finn comes a perfect parcel of surprises and slapstick, with each rhyming question revealing a delightful (and delightfully silly) answer.

Featuring quirky pencil illustrations and cheeky cut-outs that only reveal a portion of the next page, *Is This a Plum?* is a book that bursts into life from the very start: you're already reading the first line and peeking at the first illustration before you even open the cover!

From a plum to a hippo's bum, from a kite to a knight, little ones will love trying to work out what's coming next, and spotting all the matching pairs (and the pear!) on the final page. As well as a fun call-and-response for readers aged 2+, this book will also make for some great craft inspiration for older kids.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Middle Grade

The Apocalypse and Other Mild Inconveniences

Alex Dyson
Hardie Grant. PB. \$19.99
Available now



R Set in 2043, the second novel by broadcaster and comedian Alex Dyson is funny climate fiction for middle grade readers. Xavier lives in an isolated town where bushfires have become so relentless that politicians have come up with the idea that getting rid of trees will prevent catastrophes. Xavier gets sent away to boarding school while the trees are destroyed and there he meets his estranged neighbour, Charlotte, and a new friend Ted'ki, a refugee from New Caledonia, which has been inundated by rising tides.

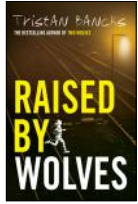
Xavier is a quirky character who likes to make a joke at the worst of possible times, but when he discovers that their houses will be bulldozed along with the trees, he and his new friends escape boarding school, and return to the town to try to save it. For readers aged 10+, this story effectively weaves lighthearted humour with serious

issues – including climate change, First Nations knowledge and political ineptitude – to create a satisfying adventure.

Angela Crocombe is The Readings Prize and Foundation Coordinator

Raised by Wolves

Tristan Bancks
Penguin. PB. \$17.99
Available 5 May



Twelve-year-old Olive Silver knows how to survive alone. She's had to – ever since her criminal dad abandoned her family. But now, he's back. Olive calls her big brother Ben – who's two days from graduating the police academy, and follows Dad through rain and darkness – desperate for answers. As the night spins out of control, Olive faces a choice: let Dad go or hunt him down and bring him to justice.

The Enemy's Daughter

Anne Blankman
Viking. PB. \$17.99
Available 12 May



1915. The world is at war. Marta and her father are on board the *Lusitania*, desperate to get home to Germany. When the *Lusitania* is attacked by a German submarine, her father is detained and Marta is alone in enemy land. Fortunately, she meets Clare, and her kind Irish family, who welcome her into their home. She can't risk revealing she's German. But could these people who have shown her nothing but kindness truly be her enemy?

The Wild Unknown

Emily Gale
Text. PB. \$16.99
Available now



R Emily Gale returns with an exciting new science fiction adventure set in the near future about AI, the search for the truth, and the importance of friendship.

In 2045, the world is unrecognisable. Technology and artificial intelligence are everywhere and involved in everything,

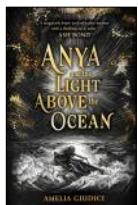
from political parties to schools and even domestic household items. This is all Eddie and his friends have ever known. But when no amount of technology can help the police find Theo, a boy who has been missing from Eddie's school for two weeks, Eddie begins to investigate the disappearance himself. As Eddie uncovers truths that shake his reality, strange things begin happening to his body. He begins growing feathers; he can run supernaturally fast; and he can breathe underwater longer than humanly possible. What does this have to do with Theo's disappearance? Have any other children begun to change too?

The Wild Unknown is a thrilling and suspenseful novel that explores the consequences of AI reliance and how this will shape our future. Emily Gale opens up a discussion, prompting children to ask what the benefits of AI are, and what should they be concerned about? She also hints at how AI might influence people in complex spaces, such as political parties misusing it for their own ends, or the media manipulating it. Through Eddie's transformation and search for Theo, Gale highlights the importance of human relationships, of being able to turn to each other for help and support, and the beauty of the natural world. For ages 9+.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Anya and the Light Above the Ocean

Amelia Giudici
Andersen. PB. \$18.99
Available 1 May

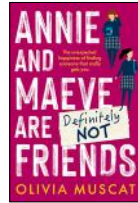


When her scientist mum disappears, Anya sets out on a boat to find her, in the middle of a storm. She encounters a strange light and reaches out to touch it. Moments later, Anya wakes in her boat. Returning home, Anya finds another girl living there, who's identical to her! The light has split her into two people. And

now Janus, the organisation their mum worked for, is seeking the power of the mysterious light and is after them!

Annie and Maeve Are Definitely Not Friends

Olivia Muscat
Fremantle. PB. \$17.99
Available now



R A funny and wholesome middle grade debut, *Annie and Maeve Are Definitely Not Friends* captures the very essence of navigating friendships in primary school. When Annie arrives for her first day at her new school, all the adults are very quick to insist that she makes friends with another girl, Maeve.

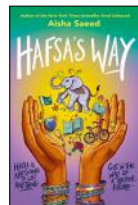
Why? Both Annie and Maeve are blind. Unfortunately, Annie and Maeve don't get along at all. Slowly, the two girls get to know one another better and learn not only to coexist, but also become good friends.

Their budding friendship explores ideas of tolerance, jealousy, and anxiety, ultimately demonstrating how much can be gained when people manage to look beyond their first impressions of someone. So much of the story is about finding compassion for yourself and those around you. The own-voices representation in this book is also great. Annie is learning to navigate the recent loss of her vision, while Maeve has been blind her whole life. Through their perspectives, the reader learns about not only the challenges that they face, but also the realities of their day-to-day lives. A heartwarming, hilarious book with such powerful messages of friendship and acceptance as this is rare to find. Perfect for readers aged 10+.

Alicia Guiney is from Readings Kids

Hafsa's Way

Aisha Saeed
Text. PB. \$16.99
Available now



Hafsa dreams of becoming a doctor and is thrilled to be accepted into a prestigious summer science camp. But she has enrolled in the wrong program and the other kids treat her badly. When she refocuses on climate change, she encounters an elephant with even bigger problems. She realises standing up for what's right sometimes means breaking the rules. But Hafsa's ready, even if it means getting in trouble.

Running in Circles

Shivaun Plozza
UQP. PB. \$17.99
Available now



R When crop circles appear in Dell's hometown of Tully, what she doesn't expect is that her mother, who left suddenly five years earlier, will turn up. Dell is a budding scientist who has made her own weather station and her best friend Teddy is dedicated to frog research. But her mother is a self-proclaimed

UFologist, convinced that the crop circles were created by aliens whose arrival in Tully is imminent. Quentin, a fellow UFologist, employs the language of pseudoscience and soon half the town is convinced aliens are coming.

Dell lives with her dad and three sisters, and the sudden reappearance of their mother – who they have missed dreadfully, yet become used to not having around – is tumultuous for all of them. Even more hurtful to Dell is the fact that her mother's return was not to see her family, but to investigate the crop circles. The tentative reunion teeters on the brink as old wounds are left unhealed and new wounds are opened.

At the heart of the book are complicated relationships between Dell and those around her: her sisters, her parents, and her peers. Meanwhile, the clash between science and pseudoscience plays out in the community, between those who are waiting for the aliens' arrival and those who scoff at the mere suggestion.

This book is a deftly crafted and engaging read that shows how misunderstanding and differences can unfold in everyday life and divide a community. But it is also a book about caring for each other: supporting your friends, loving your family and doing what you think is

right. A recurring theme is picking which battles to fight and knowing which battles aren't yours to take on. Dell, who is feisty, passionate and intelligent, is a wonderful main character to steer the story. Highly recommended for ages 11+.

Pauline Hopkins is the manager of Readings Hawthorn

Kids Nonfiction

Birds, Blooms & Bugs: In the Backyard

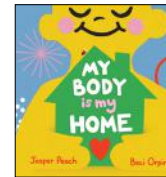
Megan McKean
Hardie Grant Explore. HB. \$24.99
Available now



This gorgeous seek-and-find explores native flora and fauna that can be found in Australian 'backyards'. By showcasing a range of locations, such as suburban backyards and front gardens, apartment balconies and verandahs, local parks, ponds and beaches, the concept of the 'backyard' is widened for children. The gorgeous illustrations truly capture the charm of Australian wildlife.

My Body Is My Home

Jasper Peach & Beci Orpin (illus.)
A&U. HB. \$26.99
Available now



R Bursting with colour, rhythm and joy, *My Body Is My Home* is an endearing and inclusive exploration of all the ways bodies can be and all the incredible things they can do! As well as a thorough primer on bodies in all their magic, author

Jasper Peach also covers some of the physical ways feelings can manifest and the people we can turn to when we need support.

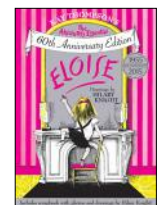
With cheerful, bold illustrations by multimedia artist Beci Orpin, *My Body Is My Home* is full of affirming language perfect for starting (or reinforcing!) conversations about empowerment, confidence, autonomy, consent, and inclusion. While it'll be best understood by little ones aged 3–6, you're never too young (or too old!) to learn to love your body!

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Kids Classic of the Month

Eloise: The Absolutely Essential 60th Anniversary Edition

Kay Thompson & Hilary Knight (illus.)
S&S. HB. \$34.99
Available now



R Eloise is the kind of ungovernable menace you can't help but look up to, despite her small stature. With her working mother away most days, Eloise can be found residing in the penthouse of the Plaza Hotel, making her own fun. Though with sidekicks like Weenie the pug, Skipperdee the turtle, her British nanny, and her own imagination to keep her company, Eloise is never lonely.

I have loved *Eloise* as far back as I can possibly remember. Isn't it every precocious little girl's dream to live in the penthouse of a glamorous hotel? Follow this intrepid child as she skibbles up and down the Plaza investigating its patrons, all the while kicking, snacking, and giggling at every chance she gets.

Written by Kay Thompson, that icon of the silver screen, and partially inspired by her goddaughter Liza Minnelli, this fully illustrated series is injected with an irreverent honesty and insight into the mind of a six-year-old New Yorker surrounded by high society.

If you have a fondness for tiny troublemakers, 1950s comics, the colour pink, or just good, old-fashioned fun, this one is for you. For ages 6+.

Celeste Perry is from Readings Emporium **R**

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