

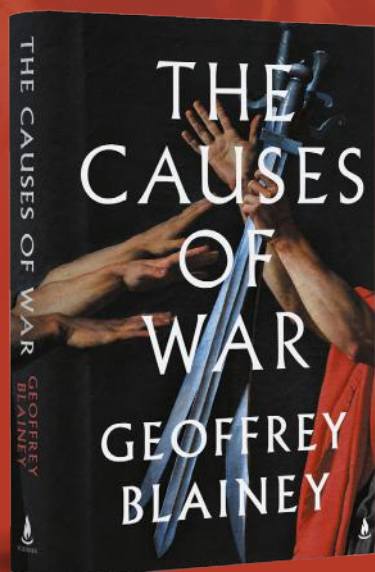
A vertical collage of illustrations featuring the characters from 'The Cat in the Hat' (a red cat and a yellow cat) interacting with books. The characters are shown jumping, falling, and playing with books of various sizes and colors (teal, blue, white). The background is white.

Father's Day gift ideas

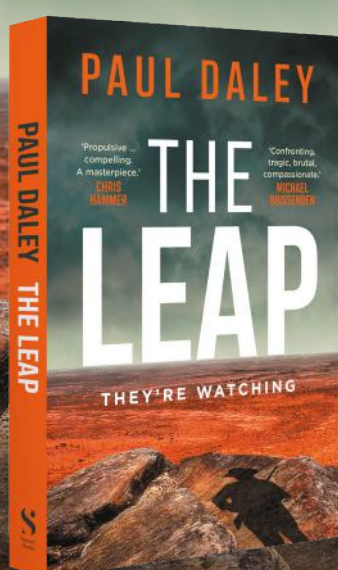
New books from
**Murray Middleton,
Rebecca Starford,
Jente Posthuma,
Tim Ross and
Rebecca Solnit**



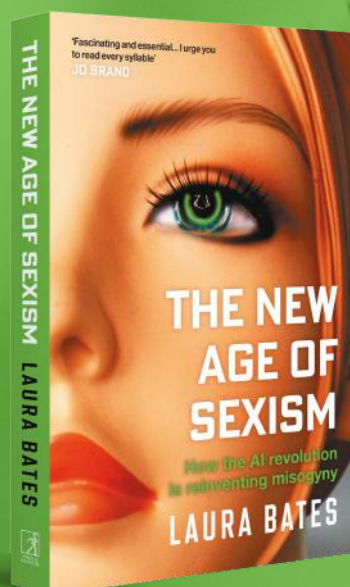
‘One of the most
comprehensive
and perceptive
studies of war
ever published’
HUGH WHITE



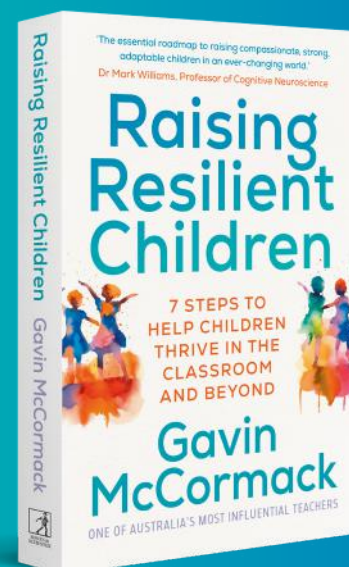
‘Propulsive,
confronting,
compelling.
A masterpiece.’
CHRIS HAMMER



‘Laura Bates
explains how they
built the future –
and forgot to put
women in it’
CAITLIN MORAN



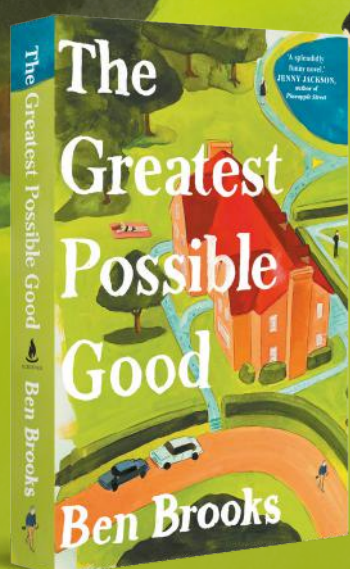
A life-changing
7-step program
for parents who
are struggling to
help their kids
navigate today's
complex world



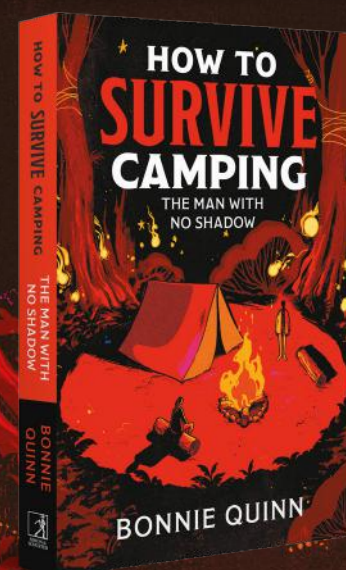
A campy,
funny horror novel
about the manager
of a haunted
campground
just trying to get
through the season

‘A sharp-witted
tragicomedy about
money, morality, and
a family teetering
on the brink’

JENNY JACKSON, AUTHOR OF
PINEAPPLE STREET



Simon & Schuster



News

Promos

Events

with Chris Gordon

Father's Day 2025

Father's Day is coming up on Sunday 7 September. This month, we've included some handy gift ideas in this issue to help you find the perfect bookish present. You'll also find plenty of ideas in our nine shops. Please note that our online shipping deadline for in-stock items is Thursday 28 August: any orders placed after this date will not be guaranteed to arrive in time for Father's Day.

Melbourne International Film Festival 2025

The Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) is this month! Running from 7 to 24 August, MIFF invites you to 'Look Closer' at stories from near and far. Browse the program and book your tickets at miff.com.au

Emerging Writers' Festival 2025

The Emerging Writers' Festival (EWF) is back for 2025. Running from 11 to 18 September, EWF is turning a new page with reimagined event formats and a program bursting with cross-disciplinary projects, community connection and bold creative energy. The program launches on Thursday 7 August. To find out more, head to emergingwritersfestival.org.au

Miles Franklin winner 2025

Siang Lu has been named the winner of this year's Miles Franklin Literary Award for his brilliant novel, *Ghost Cities*. With a prize of \$60,000, the Miles Franklin Literary Award is presented annually to a novel of the highest literary merit that presents Australian life in any of its phases. Congratulations to Lu for his much-deserved win.

20% off kids' science books

To celebrate National Science Week (9 to 17 August), we are offering 20% off a great range of science books for children. This offer is available online and at all Readings shops (except Readings Carlton and Hawthorn) until 31 August 2025. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.

The Great You & Me Drawing Competition!

Hey, you – yes, you! Do you want Bill Hope to draw YOU? Enter our drawing competition for your chance to win a portrait of YOU by Bill Hope, illustrator of the *You & Me* series by Andy Griffiths. Plus other great prizes! The competition is open until 31 August for children aged 6 to 12 in Australia. To find out more and to enter, pick up an entry form at any of our Readings shops or head to readings.com.au/news



Every winter has a spring, I repeated to myself as I trudged through the bleakness of July. Now, sweet buds appearing in the trees are evidence that the end of winter is close, and soon we can meet outside to discuss books while soaking up the

*sunshine. But until then, keep warm in August with our events, which will make you laugh, cry and cook. There's something on the agenda for those who want crime books, love stories, or even new considerations for engaging in politics, poetry or philosophy. Missed an event? Have a listen to *The Readings Podcast* while you skip towards spring.*

Murray Middleton in conversation

Thursday 7 August at 6.30pm
Readings SLV, 285–321 Russell St, Melbourne
Free, but bookings are essential

Join us to hear Murray Middleton discuss his bold and darkly humorous short-story collection, *U Want It Darker*.

Esther Freud in conversation

Friday 15 August at 6.00pm
Readings Carlton, 309 Lygon St, Carlton
Free, but bookings are essential

Join us to hear Esther Freud in conversation about *My Sister and Other Lovers*, a captivating novel about sisterhood, secrets, betrayal and love.

You & Me by Andy Griffiths

Tuesday 19 August at 5.30pm
Cinema Nova, 380 Lygon St, Carlton
\$20 for one adult and one child, includes a signed copy of You & Me and the Peanut Butter Beast.

Join us to celebrate the launch of *You & Me and the Peanut Butter Beast* by Andy Griffiths, a laugh-out-loud, action-packed, fully illustrated adventure series for ages 6–12.

Hetty Lui McKinnon in conversation

Thursday 28 August at 6.15pm
Cinema Nova, 380 Lygon St, Carlton
\$40 per person, includes a signed copy of Linger.

Join us to hear Hetty Lui McKinnon in conversation about life in NY, food, family and her brand new cookbook, *Linger*.

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



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



'We're after something that says, "Thanks for rescuing us from an evil witch, even though you left us to perish in the woods in the first place."'

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 August *Readings Monthly* cover features artwork from our Father's Day shop windows by Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta artist ENOKI, represented by Solid Lines, a First Nations-led illustration agency. See more of ENOKI's work at solidlines.agency/artists/enoki

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.

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

SHOP INFORMATION

See shop opening hours, browse and buy online at readings.com.au. Australian 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
EMPORIUM	Emporium Melbourne	03 9810 0850
HAWTHORN	687 Glenferrie Rd	03 9819 1917
MALVERN	185 Glenferrie Rd	03 9509 1952
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 <i>Readings Monthly</i>	
	Review
	Reading review
	Events
	Special price

The Life of Chuck

AUGUST 14

TOM
HIDDLESTON
CHIWETEL
EJIOFOR



BASED ON THE SHORT
STORY BY
STEPHEN KING



380 LYGON ST, CARLTON
CINEMANOVA.COM.AU

Foreword

with Joe Rubbo



Last month the Australian Bureau of Statistics released new data that painted an alarming picture of the trend in Australian reading habits. There is a marked decline in regular reading in the younger generations. Earlier this year, Australia Reads

released a report into behavioural insights about our reading habits that seem to back up these new findings. There has also been an ongoing decline in children's book sales that is causing concern among booksellers, publishers and authors.

How does this track against book sales in the Australian market? In March, Nielsen released their annual book sales report for 2024. The headline figures were not as dire as you might expect. Book sales in Australia for the year were the fourth highest on record, and while down 1.3% on 2023, they were well above pre-pandemic levels. Book sales, when looked at over the years, appear to be trending upwards.

It would seem the ABS data and the Australia Reads report contradict the hard data from Nielsen. The figures from Nielsen also contradict the anecdotal evidence that we see around us as technology creates more competition for our attention. I know for me, even though I don't use social media, a smartphone and streaming services have had an impact on my reading habits. My nieces

and nephews have not yet caught the reading bug, and I wonder if that will ever happen given the way technology is advancing so rapidly. It might be that these changes haven't yet baked in and won't show up in the sales data immediately. As a bookseller and someone who loves reading, this is something I worry about.

If you're reading this, then you are certainly a reader and a lover of books. I don't need to tell you that reading is one of the best ways to spend your time: a simple luxury that can reduce anxiety, bring down blood pressure and help you become a more empathetic, learned and better person. If you read before bed, it also helps you sleep better – what more could you ask for?

So, what are we going to do about it? Recently Creative Australia announced funding for a report to help develop new reader engagement strategies. Australia Reads, led by Anna Burkey, continues to do good work in this field and I encourage you to check out their website. Penguin Random House just announced a \$200,000 grant for Australian bookshops to develop initiatives to engage younger readers. All of this helps, but more needs to be done.

We opened our new shop in Chadstone in March and it has been really well received by the local community. We have been amazed by the strength of the Kids' section, which accounts for close to 25% of the shop's total sales. I believe that the love of books and reading is very much alive, it just needs to be nurtured.

Dear Reader

with Alison Huber



We're now well into the second half of the 2025 literary year, and it's in some ways a moment of calm before the publishing storm that happens from around mid-September onwards as we enter the summer gifting season. That's not to say that

there are not many new books to look out for this month in our shops (in fact, there are as many as ever!) but it's a time when publishers, particularly those with a local Australian list, give the work of emerging authors time to breathe outside the competitive commercial space of the year's end. Rhett Davis wrote the wonderful debut *Hovering* which was shortlisted for The Readings Prize in 2022 and one of my personal favourite books of that year, and we at Readings have been eagerly awaiting his follow up: it's *Arborescence*, a beautiful and unusual book, just as we hoped it would be, so it's our Fiction Book of the Month.

Another alumnus of The Readings Prize, Murray Middleton (shortlisted last year for *No Church in the Wild*), publishes *U Want It Darker*, a short-story collection, and we'll also see the work of more emerging Australian writers, including Patrick Lenton, Allie Parker, Natalia Figueroa Barroso, Monica Raszewski, and Zeynab Gamieldien, while Rebecca Starford (probably best known for her memoir *Bad Behaviour* and as co-founder of *Kill Your Darlings*) publishes her second novel, *The Visitor*. This month we'll also have the first novels commissioned by new Australian independent publisher, Pink Shorts Press, in our shops: a debut novel by Olivia De Zilva called (brilliantly) *Plastic Budgie*, and a debut collection of short stories by Alex Cothren called (equally brilliantly) *Playing Nice Was Getting Me Nowhere*. Our staff reviewers recommend both of these books to you, so now is the time to support a local independent publisher in its first year and two emerging authors at the same time: this is all kinds of new! Pink Shorts also dives deeper into Barbara Hanrahan's backlist, republishing her 1985 novel *Annie Magdalene*. There's a beautifully written review of Luke Patterson's poetry collection, *A Savage Turn*, published by Magabala, on page 10, and our Crime Book of the Month is *Don't Say His Name* by writer and filmmaker Rachel Givney, which had our reviewer on the edge of the proverbial seat, 'compelled and too chilled to the bone to look away'. And then of course there's a huge batch of international fiction coming our way too, much of it in translation, including the first novel that was written by Jente Posthuma (translated from the original Dutch by Sarah Timmer Harvey), whose second novel (but first to be translated) *What I'd Rather Not Think About*,

was shortlisted for last year's International Booker Prize. I loved reading *People With No Charisma* just as much.

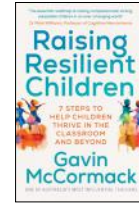
Our Nonfiction Book of the Month is a compelling exploration by two Australian journalists, Ariel Bogle and Cam Wilson, *Conspiracy Nation*. The time for this book is right now, and as our reviewer succinctly puts it, 'conspiracy theories aren't just a fringe concern, they're having real-world ramifications in local and global politics, education, health and communities', and the authors have written, 'a compassionate call to action' in trying to understand the contexts for and attractions of conspiracy thinking that takes popular hold. Another strong piece of local nonfiction publishing appears in the form of *Human Nature* by Kate Marvel, a book that goes some way into navigating the emotional impact of the climate emergency. The next book in the Thames & Hudson First Knowledges series is *Ceremony*, by Wesley Enoch and Georgia Curran; Tim Ross, comedian and enthusiast of architectural modernism and classic design, will delight all who pick up *What a Ripper!* with his curation of Australia's design history (it had me wondering on the whereabouts of our family Frij bag, long forgotten in a shed somewhere!). August is not traditionally the cookbook category's prime time, but I will point out the new book from Jess Elliott Dennison, called *Weekend Recipes*. Jess is a Scotland-based food writer and stylist who independently published the lovely *Midweek Recipes* last year, a book that has become a sleeper hit here at Readings. We're importing the new book directly from the author, and we will have it in August.

And finally, dear Reader, I went on a very brief holiday recently and while I was away off-grid, two very important things happened: the first was the delivery of the guilty verdict on Erin Patterson's very public murder trial which has transfixed people around the world; the second was the announcement of what will surely become the definitive book on the trial and its status as a cultural phenomenon, *The Mushroom Tapes: Conversations about a Triple Murder Trial*, co-authored by what can only be described as the authors our collective dreams would have assembled to write such a book: Helen Garner, Chloe Hooper, and Sarah Krasnostein. Between the three of these fine authors is unparalleled experience in researching and writing literary nonfiction about crime; in this book, as the blurb has it, 'the lone wolves became a team', and the result will be one of the publishing sensations of the year. It's very exciting! You can preorder your copy at any of our shops or on our website at the special price of \$29.99 (was \$36.99). **R**

Connection before curriculum

An edited extract from *Raising Resilient Children*.

In *Raising Resilient Children: 7 Steps to Help Children Thrive in the Classroom and Beyond*, Upschool co-founder and renowned teacher **Gavin McCormack** draws on neuroscience and his own extensive teaching experience in mainstream and Montessori schools to offer practical strategies for parents, caregivers and teachers to help children navigate life's challenges, learn with passion and grow into capable, confident and compassionate human beings. Here are a few preview pointers!



Raising Resilient Children: 7 Steps to Help Children Thrive in the Classroom and Beyond
Gavin McCormack
S&S. PB. \$36.99
Available now



Join us to hear Gavin McCormack in conversation at Readings Chadstone on Thursday 14 August, 6.00pm. Book your tickets at readings.com.au/events

Be on their team

In 2021, the UK's Mental Health Foundation and Swansea University conducted a study involving 2,349 British teenagers aged 13 to 19. Their research revealed that 69% of the participants reported feeling alone 'often' or 'sometimes' in the previous fortnight, and 59% felt they had no one to talk to during that time.

These stark findings, alongside other international research, tell us that although many children have 30 other kids in their class, a teacher at school and parents at home, childhood can be a lonely place. Our children often feel alone, especially as they move into adolescence.

Of course, they have friends, but friendships can shift from week to week, or even day to day. These sudden changes, along with all the other challenges childhood delivers, can be terribly stressful. Children need a reliable support network behind them – like the pit crews at a Formula 1 race. Whether the driver finishes first or last, their team is always there, cheering them on, backing them up, and pushing them to be better with positivity and unwavering support.

As parents and teachers, we have a huge impact on our children's future. The best thing we can do is let them know we're on their side. There'll be times when they need their 'tyres pumped up', and we might be the only ones consistently showing up for them. To do that, we must be actively present, offering words of encouragement and support, making sure they never feel alone no matter how difficult life may seem.

Use communication to lower their anxiety

Many children's fears come from the uncertainty of the unknown. A lack of clarity about their day can turn small worries into big stressors, impacting their ability to focus and thrive. Questions like these can race through their minds:

- *What lessons are happening today?*
- *Who will I sit with at lunch?*
- *Will my teacher be there?*
- *Who's picking me up after school?*

Now, think about how similar questions affect us as adults in our work or home life:

- *What's the agenda for today's meeting?*
- *Who will be there?*
- *Will I have enough time to finish my tasks?*
- *Who's picking up the kids?*

These uncertainties can leave us ALL feeling anxious, distracted or overwhelmed. If it's challenging for adults to navigate this unpredictability, imagine how much harder it must be for children, who lack the life experience and coping mechanisms we've developed. But don't worry – I've discovered several fantastic ways to ease these anxieties, which will make everyone's life a lot less stressful.

For parents, one of the simplest steps is to be on time for school. Of course, life happens, and being late

occasionally is inevitable – especially with multiple children in a busy city. But aim to be at the classroom door on time. Although it may seem like nothing if we arrive a few minutes late, when you're a child, it's quite the opposite.

On countless occasions, I've seen what happens when a child arrives late to class. First, they walk in, feeling vulnerable and out of place. The other children have already chosen their seats, figured out who they're playing with at lunchtime and caught up on the latest gossip. Whether it's the latest Pokémon card or the new song by Taylor Swift, it all matters and your child feels like they've missed out – much like walking into an important executive meeting late with everyone turning to look. Being on time helps your child start the day with equality and inclusion.

At home, having a weekly family meeting can work wonders for everyone in your household. If this feels like I'm turning your entire existence upside down, remember, take what you like with these ideas and leave what you don't. If you do like the idea of a family meeting, however, maybe start with a scheduled check-in where everyone talks about their week ahead. To complement this idea, you might have a calendar on the wall where everyone adds their plans:

- *Who's picking up the kids on Thursday?*
- *When is Daddy-Daughter Night?*
- *What homework is due?*

Once again, sticking to the plan as much as possible is key. Of course, life changes and plans shift – that's natural. But communicating any changes well in advance helps children feel secure and included. Children are highly perceptive. They'll notice if they're consistently being overlooked or if the plan changes at the last minute without warning.

In the classroom, with 30 children or more looking to find out what the week ahead is all about, preparation is just as important, if not more so. Teachers can outline the term's subjects, projects, excursions and expectations from Day 1. If you've made your medium-term planning documents, then why not share a simplified version with your students? One they can stick in their books or even take home. Children can then refer back to the plan as the term progresses and tick off events, signifying progress; it's something solid to rely on.

For teachers who wish to take this idea of communication one step further, a simple but effective strategy is to have a board by the classroom door that lists 'the daily plan'. Before the children arrive at school, you write up the plans for the day for everyone to see, with times and even the 'educational void' or 'free time' allocation, which many children look forward to the most.

For younger children, you can make it more visual and include pictures rather than words. Either way, breaking down the day like this helps children know what to expect as soon as they walk in and discussing this plan during your morning meeting or circle time gives them the chance to ask questions and feel in control before the day kicks off.

Although this may seem time-consuming, research shows that structure and routine foster a sense of safety and reduce anxiety in children, especially those who are neurodivergent. A study by Selman et al. (2024) found that consistent routines and clear communication significantly reduced stress and improved emotional regulation in children with autism, as well as those living in foster care or refugee settings. For all children, however, having a clear sense of what's coming next helps them stay focused and feel secure, allowing them to engage more fully in learning.

Plus, when children are aware of the schedule, they often become the guardians of time, reminding you if you stray from the plan by saying things like, 'Sir, I think we're 10 minutes late for the whole school assembly.' With this kind of efficiency, Google Calendar may soon become a thing of the past!

10 things to always tell your child

Here are ten things I believe every parent should consistently whisper into their child's ear before bedtime. These words are simple reminders that, no matter what, they'll never face life's challenges alone. There's always someone ready to lift them up, recharge their spirit or be there to catch them on the hardest days.

1. **I'm so proud of you.** 'Even when things don't go perfectly, I love how you try your best.'
2. **You can always talk to me.** 'I'm here to listen. No matter what's on your mind, big or small, there's never a bad time.'
3. **It's okay to make mistakes.** 'Everyone make mistakes, even grown-ups. What matters is that you learn and keep trying.'
4. **I'll always have your back.** 'No matter what, you can count on me to be there whenever you need me.'
5. **You make my life better.** 'Just having you around makes every day more special for me.'
6. **Be kind to yourself.** 'You're doing your best, and that's enough. Treat yourself the way you'd treat a good friend.'
7. **It's cool to be different.** 'The world needs people like you, with your unique ideas and dreams. Being yourself is what makes you special.'
8. **You're loved, no matter what.** 'Even if we argue or have tough days, my love for you never wavers.'
9. **It's okay to feel sad or angry sometimes.** 'Everyone feels sad or angry sometimes. I'm here if you want to talk about it or just need a hug.'
10. **I love spending time with you.** 'Whether we're doing something fun, chores or just hanging out, it's always my favourite part of every day.'

Fiction

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Australian Fiction



Arborescence
Rhett Davis
Hachette. PB. \$32.99
Available now

R Are we, as a species, the planet's most selfish housemate? The one who, when the heat reaches breaking point and the question is finally raised, the pointed finger will fall: who on earth caused this mess? For fans of Inga Simpson and Grace Chan, *Arborescence* by Rhett Davis explores our relationship to the planet, climate guilt, and what it means to hope for a better, greener future.

Set in Melbourne, our protagonist, Bren, works at a completely remote, seemingly purposeless job, and lives with his chaotic, unemployed partner, Caelyn. The couple face an early-20s ennui: Bren begins to think that his colleagues might just be artificial intelligence, and Caelyn finds a job but is fired for stealing. Then, the duo uncovers a strange community of people camping in the forest and attempting to transform themselves into trees. Initially existing only on the fringes of society, this peculiar phenomenon soon proliferates, and people begin to disappear while strange, beautiful trees subsume the world.

This intriguing, utterly original novel is an exploration of grief, hope, and the limits of personal sacrifice. Vignettes within chapters read like diary entries, piecing together a story of humanity amidst chaos. While a work of science fiction, the heart of this narrative lies in its relationships. Set over multiple years, Bren and Caelyn's story takes them across the world. Initially stumbling through their 20s, the pair must decide whether they'll grow together or apart

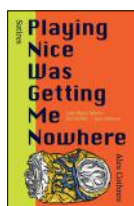
as their ambition and values gradually begin to divide them. Together, they navigate friendship and loneliness in a digitally saturated world. Rhett Davis's second novel leaves a lasting impression and rings with unsettling questions: What does the end of humanity look like? Will it be beautiful? Will it be for the best?

Aideen Gallagher is from Readings Emporium

Australian Fiction

Playing Nice Was Getting Me Nowhere: Satires

Alex Cothren
Pink Shorts Press. PB. \$32.99
Available now



R The short story is one of the most challenging forms to craft well – balancing creativity with restraint, densely packed world-building with trusting the reader and leaving space for the

story to expand outward after reading. Alexander Cothren, an award-winning short-story author and creative writing lecturer, achieves that delicate balance, with 16 short stories each featuring bold concepts wrapped around a kernel of intimate human emotion – a blend of dystopian social eco-horror with echoes of Ray Bradbury and *Black Mirror*. Creating characters that stay with you after reading a novel is no mean feat, but in as few as four pages? A craftsman is at work.

Whether through the form of traditional first-person narratives, records of a government inquiry, a collection of newspaper headlines or an academic journal article, Cothren deftly builds possible futures that seem just a stone's throw from our own. The variety of lengths, too, makes it an enjoyable read – each piece is exactly as long as it needs to be.

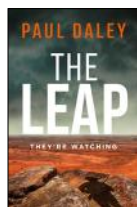
Stand-out stories include 'Day Gaming Trade Report', an electronic gaming room plagued by uncanny happenings and the protesting widow of a late VIP; 'Let's Talk Trojan Bee', reporting on the sudden arrival of unexpected bees, who save a devastated agricultural industry

and inspire a right-wing conspiracy; an interview with Mark Tavern in 'Quantum Custody Officer'; and the titular 'Playing Nice Was Getting Me Nowhere', a qualitative study reporting on an unnamed university whose staff keep suddenly and mysteriously dying. Reckoning with immigration, housing, domestic violence, gambling, education, the climate crisis, workplace politics, class, the media, virtual reality and internet forums, Cothren balances wit with empathy, and curiosity with caution, uniquely presented in a predominantly Australian context.

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

The Leap

Paul Daley
S&S/Summit. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R Plenty of journo go on to write novels. Few do it as well – or as imaginatively – as Paul Daley.

With *Challenge*, he started by sticking to the old adage 'write about what you know', creating a thriller with a comedic edge based on everything he'd learned covering Australian politics. Next was the boundary-pushing *Jesustown*, a kind of 21st-century *Heart of Darkness* – relocated to far north Queensland – that dived headlong into our colonial past and its ongoing repercussions.

In *The Leap*, Daley revisits those themes with a new ferocity, this time taking us deep into *Wake in Fright* territory. Benedict Fotheringham-Gaskill is a British diplomat returning from trauma-induced gardening leave to take up a post in Canberra. It's supposed to be a cushy halfway house before a well-paid retirement, but Ben soon finds himself

in circumstances that are anything but comfortable.

In a town called 'The Leap', Daley has created a milieu worthy of *Bosch* peopled by a gallery of grotesques, each more repulsive than the last. Ben's there to try and persuade a local landowner to forgive the sins of two British nationals facing the death penalty in Riyadh, but the Old Testament-quoting racist is having none of it.

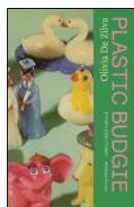
Even worse, Ben keeps getting sucked into nightmare scenarios that deliberately reference the Kenneth Cook classic (including a particularly disturbing pig-shooting expedition), pushing him to near-madness. And all this is set in the context of colonial crimes, modern-day corruption and bigotry, and against the appropriately hellish backdrop of the Black Summer bushfires.

While he does deliver us a final grace note, Daley is clearly passionate about our failure to come to terms with the brutality of British settlement and is unsparing in bringing both the past and present to life. In the process, he takes outback noir to whole new heights – or should that be depths?

Melinda Houston is from Readings Carlton

Plastic Budgie

Olivia De Zilva
Pink Shorts Press. PB. \$32.99
Available now



R Yes, as the blurb states, Olivia De Zilva's debut novel is funny, Y2K-reference-packed, and a charming account of being an embarrassed teenager. But it is so much more than that.

De Zilva, an Adelaide-based writer and winner of the AAWP Novella Award (amongst many others in her impressive bio), is so in touch with what it feels like to be a child on the outer that this memoir-meets-fiction work is full of the eerily wise observations we have as young people, even in primary school.

The Olivia in *Plastic Budgie* has a life which I imagine is almost a mirror image of the author's, yet maybe the beauty of this book is we don't really know where fiction starts or ends. Somehow, in 150 pages, you feel like you live her entire life in detail. The family leaps off the page, from the moment her mother gives birth (even though she believes her womb to be cursed) and her father misses the umbilical cord because he has one eye on the television. Throughout, Olivia appears not only as protagonist, but also as a fly on the wall, who is able to analyse her family and society astutely, even in the words of her childhood or teenage self.

Every experience is delivered by this beautifully blended voice, which is childlike, but never simplifies the darkness being faced by Olivia at that moment. This voice is everywhere, from Coles tantrums to sleeping among spirits in Hong Kong.

My highlights were Poh Poh and Gong Gong, Olivia's grandparents. Through their relationship, De Zilva conveys the push and pull of identity: to be dropped at your Adelaide private school by your Cantonese grandparents and worry about what they will bring to Grandparents' Day. To make food together, and their obsession with the Western capitalist god that is McDonald's. There is a lot of joy and sadness to be found in their generational gap.

The end of *Plastic Budgie* is where De Zilva proves herself as a literary force and pushes the boundaries of fiction and memoir. She bravely puts forward a novel form which explores the good and bad parts within us. This is the kind of voice we need in literature and I urge you to pick it up, for the exploration of cultural identity, for your inner lonely child, and especially for the ABC Kids references.

Grace Gooda is from Readings Chadstone

The Golden Sister

Suzanne Do
Pan Mac. PB. \$34.99
Available now



When Lili Berry's twin sister dies, her life in the coastal town of Swanning is upended. Setting out to discover the cause of Honey's death she meets Pete, a cultivated man who seems to live on the streets

and whose little boy disappeared 15 years ago. When Lili learns Pete was the one who found her sister's body, the two of them plunge head-first into a web of secrets and lies. Poignant and funny *The Golden Sister* celebrates families, unexpected friendships and the messiness of love.

Hailstones Fell Without Rain

Natalia Figueroa Barroso
UQP. PB. \$34.99
Available 5 August

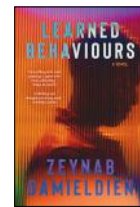


R Graciela is a Uruguayan migrant struggling to raise her three daughters in Western Sydney: her life feels like just one bill after another, and she's reaching breaking point.

Chula, her elderly aunt, is still waiting for justice after living through the civic-military coup of 1973 in Uruguay. And Rita, Graciela's eldest daughter, wants to escape the constraints of her family but finds herself indelibly tied to the ghosts of her mother's past. A pacy, multi-generational story with memorable, wise and sharply funny characters.

Learned Behaviours

Zeynab Gamielien
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99
Available now



R Part murder mystery, part love story, and part coming-of-age tale, *Learned Behaviours* is also very much a commentary on race and class in contemporary Australia – and a bloody good one. Zeynab

Gamielien's first novel, *The Scope of Permissibility*, was an engaging look at university life for a group of kids from the Muslim diaspora: a competent and thoughtful effort that often read like young adult fiction but still had plenty to say. This second novel is next level: in the complexity of its ideas, in the subtlety with which they're handled, in its many plot threads, and simply in the quality of its prose. It's a cracker.

Thirty-something Zaid Saban is reading to be a barrister with a prominent Sydney firm after a stellar career as a corporate lawyer. He's escaped the Western suburbs – The Area – and is looking forward to a glowing future. But

from the first pages it becomes obvious that Zaid's past success is not going to guarantee his unimpeded progress forward – especially when someone from his childhood re-enters his life.

Much of *Learned Behaviours* is distinctly and deliberately culturally specific. Gamielien is very good at evoking the Western suburbs milieu. But she's equally good at inviting us in. Regardless of the cultural context, plenty of us can relate to feeling like an outsider, at not being able to keep up with the cool kids, at becoming – gradually or suddenly – aware of the hidden class structures that rule Australian society.

Gamielien is also incredibly generous in her analysis of the issues, and the way they manifest in individuals. There are no villains here (well, maybe one). Just a bunch of people figuring out how to play the hand they've been dealt. The result is a yarn that's both a page-turner and a warm-hearted analysis of human nature, as humane as it is sophisticated.

Melinda Houston is from Readings Carlton

Annie Magdalene

Barbara Hanrahan

Pink Shorts. PB. \$32.99

Available now



Born at the turn of the century, Annie Magdalene grows up in a suburban cottage in Adelaide. She is devoted to her family but makes up her mind when she is 16 that she doesn't want a husband or

children, instead prioritising friendship, work, independence and a sense of self. In a style that is both simple and full of wonder, legendary Australian feminist artist and author Barbara Hanrahan creates a full portrait of life – its small pleasures, its beautiful flaws, and its inevitable intersections with death.

The Life Experiment

Jess Kitching

S&S. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Two strangers answer an ad seeking participants for The Life Experiment, a study claiming it can predict when people will die. Layla, a corporate lawyer in London, has foregone all relationships for her career. Angus, son of the esteemed Fairview-Whitley family, is struggling with his family's expectations after the death of his brother and a failed investment. Layla and Angus meet by chance in a café the same day they separately get their shocking results. Their attraction is instant, but can they open their hearts to more when their time might be brief?

In Spite of You

Patrick Lenton

Pantera. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Patrick Lenton's *In Spite of You* is a gloriously sharp and sparkling addition to the rom-com genre – one that swaps out grand romantic gestures for petty revenge plots, emotional avoidance, and a whole lot of spite. And it's all the better for it.

At the centre of this delightfully chaotic novel is Jeremy, a pop-culture journalist whose life is in shambles. He's broke, heartbroken, and spiralling after receiving an invitation to his 10-year writing program reunion, where his ex-boyfriend will be the guest of honour. Said ex not only cheated on Jeremy but also immortalised his infidelity in a smugly successful novel that painted Jeremy as a pathetic loser. Naturally, Jeremy decides the only mature response is to overhaul his life entirely and arrive at the reunion hotter, happier, and with a dazzling boyfriend on his arm. Enter Sam: Jeremy's complete opposite. Cheerful, beloved by all, and, infuriatingly, straight. Except, maybe not? What unfolds is a story about vulnerability, healing, and the terrifying prospect of letting someone see who you really are.

Jeremy is an utterly believable narrator: self-deprecating, petty, deeply insecure, and somehow still incredibly endearing. Lenton's writing captures the melodrama of Jeremy's internal world with comic precision, while also allowing for tender, authentic moments of growth. The supporting cast of Jeremy's anarchic co-workers and chaotic friends are scene-stealers in their own right, adding depth and ridiculousness in equal measure.

Set in a recognisably modern Australia, *In Spite of You* feels fresh and local without over-explaining or diluting its humour for a global audience. It's proudly queer, effortlessly funny, and refreshingly honest about the messiness of moving on. Highly recommended for rom-com fans who like their love stories messy, queer, and driven by revenge.

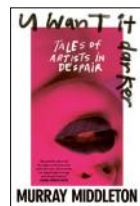
Nicole Vasilev is from Readings Emporium

U Want It Darker: Tales of Artists in Despair

Murray Middleton

Picador. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Murray Middleton is a writer unafraid to depict life at its grittiest. His 2015 Vogel-winning short-story collection *When There's Nowhere Else to Run* revealed characters at moments of great distress and emotional unravelling. His 2023 novel *No Church in the Wild* ratcheted up the tension another notch, with a visceral tale of violence and racial profiling set in Melbourne's inner west. So it is no surprise that his new short-story collection, *U Want It Darker*, focusing on the lives of artists, is every bit as real, raw and unflinching.

The book's title, referencing a Leonard Cohen song, alludes to the general mood. You won't find poets penning odes to their muses, painters enraptured by sunsets or the gauzy 'myth of the artist' here. Instead, these are stories of flawed and broken individuals who have built their lives around artistic work.

We meet a musician mother who loses access to her child, a radicalised puppeteer who commits an act of heinous violence, and a once-promising young photographer now confined to a jail cell. A consummate storyteller, Middleton often chooses not to make the artist the protagonist, instead offering the perspective of a child, an erstwhile artistic collaborator or a former lover. In one particularly memorable story, 'House with white fence', the entire narrative unfolds via a series of posts left on a Yelp-style

internet message board. In so doing, the artist's story is told with all the romance, glamour, and self-justifying rhetoric stripped away.

Like a series of modern-day fables for the creatively inclined, *U Want It Darker* points a paint-splattered finger toward the pitfalls of artistic life. Think long and hard about whether this is the path you seek, Middleton's stories seem to suggest, because some days will get very dark indeed.

James Marples is from Readings Chadstone

Until the Red Leaves Fall

Alli Parker

HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Alli Parker is back with another high-stakes historical novel, this time set in the Melbourne theatre scene and the Second World War internment camps which are a crucial yet often unspoken part of Australian history. Emiko 'Emmy' Darling is the loving wife of Sebastian Darling, a big up-and-coming playwright, and the granddaughter of Hiroki, a Japanese man who immigrated to Australia before the White Australia policy of 1901 was put in place. Virginia van Belle, owner of the magnificent Bellevue Theatre and the leading actress at the time, wants to bring Emiko and her family's time in the internment camps to the stage; the camps where anyone the government deemed a 'threat' were held for years in brutal and unfair conditions.

As Emiko begins to work with Virginia, resurfacing past traumas for her art, the play begins to go in a dangerous direction that could lead to real, physical consequences. During this time, Emiko finds comfort in the company of Isadora, an employee at a nearby coffee lounge, a safe haven.

I was absolutely captivated from the very first chapter of this novel. Emiko is such a compelling character. Her secrets multiply throughout the book, and the slowly building tension forces you to brace for the implosion you know is coming. I think any woman will empathise with Emiko, whether that's relating to making oneself smaller for the comfort of men, conforming to societal expectations, or being treated differently simply because of your heritage and culture. Emiko's identity is torn in two, and it made my heart bleed for the girl who was taught she's a 'danger'. This novel will make you mad for the injustices Emiko faced, but also happy for the love, self-acceptance, and courage to stand up for herself that Emiko finds.

Jacinta Richards is from Readings Chadstone

Crimson Light Polished Wood

Monica Raszewski

Transit Lounge. PB. \$32.99

Available 1 August



Crimson Light Polished Wood is, initially, a book about what we inherit, what we don't, and how that gap can divide us. Beneath this, however, there is a body of insight that, rather than demanding to be heard, invites a reader to listen.

Monica Raszewski's previous novel, *The Archaeology of a Dream City*, was

shortlisted for the 2022 NSW Premier's Literary Award for New Writing. In this new work, set largely within the familiar suburbs of Melbourne, author Raszewski writes about migration, loneliness, and the lasting consequence of displacement.

We begin with the death of Margaret, a schoolteacher who leaves behind her partner, Leonora, and her adversarial mother, Mrs Renfrew. What is an already tense relationship between Leonora and Mrs Renfrew descends into a bitter rivalry over the estate, fuelled by unspoken prejudice and unhealed trauma. Using legal documents and affidavits, the reader begins to piece together a fractured truth. While still grieving the loss of Margaret, Leonora befriends her neighbour, Anna, with whom she gradually develops an intense, complex friendship.

This is a story based equally on what is said and what is left unsaid. Told largely from the perspective of Anna's daughter, Lydia, the identity and past of each character is clouded by generational silence. Plain-spoken and succinctly written, this is a quiet novel that explores the interior life of characters still unknown to themselves. Lydia's understanding of her world is fragmented, punctured by her naïveté and emotion, leaving large gaps for a reader to create inferences of their own.

A tale rich in relational ambiguity and unresolved conflict, *Crimson Light*, *Polished Wood* provides ample material for book club discussions and character dissection; each reader will respond differently based on their own family complexities and experiences.

Aideen Gallagher is from Readings Emporium

The Island of Last Things

Emma Sloley

Text. PB. \$34.99

Available 12 August



Camille is a keeper at the last zoo in the world, on Alcatraz Island. She is happy to spend her days caring for the animals, safe in her routines, while nature crumbles and chaos reigns outside. Then a new zookeeper, Sailor, arrives. She is glamorous and reckless and talks of a secret sanctuary where wild animals roam free. Camille begins to imagine a new kind of life, with Sailor by her side. Sailor has a plan but is Camille ready to risk it all for the promise of a better world?

The Visitor

Rebecca Starford

A&U. PB. \$32.99

Available now



Laura escaped from her home in outback Queensland as soon as she became an adult, making a new life for herself in the UK. But years later, when she receives a call to tell her that her parents have passed away, Laura returns home with her husband and daughter, only to discover that her parents' deaths could not be stranger. For an elderly couple who preferred the comforts of their home, their bodies being stranded in the empty desert so far away doesn't make sense to Laura. Further secrets lurk inside her childhood home – the mysterious obsession with the outback that her

parents suddenly held; a nosy neighbour who seems intent on taking the home for herself; a haunting diary that recounts the last few days her parents were alive. Written from the perspectives of Laura and her daughter Tilly, we watch as supernatural events torment them in their home, corroding their sanity day by day.

The Visitor is a creepy yet touching exploration of grief, loss, and the ghosts of the past that refuse to leave. Readers will empathise with Tilly's endeavour to connect with her mother as she further distances herself from her family to solve the mystery of her parents' deaths. Rebecca Starford acutely captures the individual and complex struggles to come to terms with one's grief and how that changes who you are. She also writes with poignant beauty about the tragic guilt that Laura feels for not connecting with her parents more over the years, questioning, toward the end, whether she ever truly knew them at all. It is a clarifying reminder that we must cherish every moment we are given with the ones we love before it's too late, lest our regrets haunt us forever.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

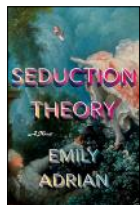
International Fiction

Seduction Theory: A Novel

Emily Adrian

W&N. PB. \$32.99

Available 12 August



The long summer holiday has begun on the campus of Edwards University. Simone is the star of the creative writing department, a renowned scholar, memoirist and campus sex icon. Ethan, her devoted husband, is a lecturer in the same department, though he hasn't published a novel since he was 26. Their marriage is long, strong and happy. But, over the course of that hot summer break, both will stray. And, as others become involved, new sides to the story of this apparently flawless marriage will emerge.

The Healing Hippo of Hinode Park

Michiko Aoyama & Takami Nieda (trans.)

Doubleday. HB. \$34.99

Available 12 August



Impressively, Michiko Aoyama has surpassed her debut novel *What You Are Looking for is in the Library* with her second translated work, *The Healing Hippo of Hinode Park*; centred on an aged hippo statue that has a mythical property said to heal anyone who touches it, wherever they feel pain. Through this suburban slice-of-life novel, we learn all about five distinct characters who each have individual concerns, anxieties, and worries with which we readers are more than likely to empathise. Ranging from the Grade 4 student Yuya, who fakes a sprain to escape participating in a relay, only for the pain to become real, to the 52-year-old editor-in-chief Kazuhiko who struggles to read anything in fine print, Aoyama gives life to these characters and makes them feel deeply relatable.

This leads into what I truly love about this book: while the hippo is certainly focal to the journey of healing and acceptance the characters go through, it is not overused nor needlessly mentioned. Aoyama gives each individual the space to breathe, allowing every character to forge their own unique path to recovery; the hippo serves merely as a comforting presence that reassures them and helps them uncover what they need to do to heal. I also enjoyed the casual mention of the other characters in each story, creating a sense of community around the people who live near Hinode Park – all rallying around this colour-faded hippo that miraculously brings joy and solace to all those who touch it.

If you enjoyed her first book, or any other cosy and whimsical translated fiction such as *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* or *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*, I can guarantee you'll love this one. In the age of comfy translated literature, Aoyama firmly cements herself as one of the best writers in the genre.

Anson Cheng is from Readings Doncaster

The Midnight Shift

Cheon Seon-Ran & Gene Png (trans.)

Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99

Available 12 August



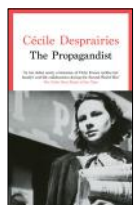
When four isolated elderly people die at the same hospital by jumping out of the sixth-floor window, Su-Yeon's colleagues at the police force dismiss the case as a series of unfortunate suicides. But Su-Yeon's dearest friend, Grandma Eun-Shim, lives on the sixth floor. As Su-Yeon begins her investigation alone, she meets the mysterious Violette, who insists that a vampire is behind the mysterious deaths. Su-Yeon is skeptical at first, but when a fifth victim jumps from the window, the body is completely drained of blood.

The Propagandist

Cécile Desprésaires & Natasha Lehrer (trans.)

Swift. PB. \$32.99

Available late August



In a grand Paris apartment, a young girl attends her mother's gatherings. They talk about fashion and exchange gossip, but the mood darkens when they mention her past, and the great love she is said to have known during the Second World War. When the girl grows up, she investigates the figures in and around her family. Who was the man her mother fell in love with? Why did they collaborate with the Nazi occupiers of France? And why did they remain for decades afterwards devotees of that lost cause?

One Night in Paris

Nina George

Michael Joseph. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Claire Cousteau is one of France's most esteemed biologists, with a seemingly perfect family life, but she has become increasingly frustrated by her marriage and her husband's affairs. As the Cousteaus prepare for a summer in

Brittany, Claire's son Nico asks if his new girlfriend, Julie, can join them? Julie has conundrums of her own and is unsure if Nico really is her match. But what the family don't realise is that Julie and Claire have met before, in a Parisian hotel during a night that Claire thought was her secret.

Mayra: A Novel

Nicky Gonzalez

Scribe. PB. \$29.99

Available now



Ingrid is surprised when she gets a call from her old best friend, Mayra, whom she had not seen for years – not since she fled home. She's even more surprised when Mayra invites Ingrid to a getaway in the middle of the Florida swamplands. But their anticipated reunion is spoiled by the unexpected appearance of Benji, Mayra's boyfriend (whom she failed to mention) and his labyrinthine house, where they will be staying. As the days pass, Ingrid loses her sense of time, place, and herself as everything slows to a halt – it feels like the sticky air is suffocating her and the cacophony of cicadas, owls, and frogs is deafening her with their white noise. Everything puts Ingrid on edge: Benji's constant presence and supervision, the endless hallways and rooms, and the mysterious diary she's found. But no matter how hard Ingrid and Mayra try to escape, the house has grown attached to them and will do anything to make them stay.

Switching between memories of Ingrid and Mayra's adolescence and the mystery they find themselves in now, *Mayra* is an eerie, dreamlike exploration of female friendship, the good and the ugly sides, and how they influence who we are and what we think of ourselves. Nicky Gonzalez writes with atmospheric and gritty prose about the abusive power dynamics, as Ingrid remembers everything she once admired and hated about Mayra, always getting caught in her web of lies, being left bruised and scarred.

Gonzalez's slow burn novel evokes an unsettling dread as Ingrid discovers the secrets kept in the house that has a life of its own. Although I wouldn't exactly call this a horror novel, *Mayra* possesses Gothic tropes such as a haunted house and a toxic female friendship reminiscent of that in Mona Awad's *Bunny*. This story builds to a vivid, surreal ending that is sure to creep out and bewilder all who read it.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Hakuda Photo Studio

Her Tae Yeon & Shanna Tan (trans.)

John Murray. PB. \$22.99

Available now



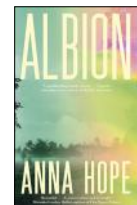
Jebi is tired of noisy, crowded Seoul and her dull job at a photography studio in the city. When she sees a billboard on her commute showing beautiful Jeju Island, she decides to quit her job and spend a summer there. On the last day of her trip, she loses everything: phone, credit cards, plane ticket. Wandering through a fishing village, she stumbles across a tiny photo studio. Staying to work there, Jebi takes photos which capture the magic of the island, its people and small-town life.

Albion

Anna Hope

Fig Tree. PB. \$34.99

Available 5 August



The Brooke family are gathering in their ancestral Sussex estate to bury Philip: husband, father, and around who their lives have all orbited for as long as they can remember.

Frannie dreams of rewilding and returning the estate to nature. Milo envisages a treetop haven for the super-rich where a new ruling class will be reborn. Isa hopes to seek out her childhood love as she questions her marriage. Clara arrives from America shrouded in secrets and with a truth that will fracture all their dreams.

Blowfish

Kyung-Ran Jo & Chi-Young Kim (trans.)

Wildfire. PB. \$34.99

Available now



A sculptor and architect cross paths once in Seoul, and they meet again in Tokyo. The sculptor has decided she is going to die. She is learning to prepare a fatal serving of blowfish. The architect's life has

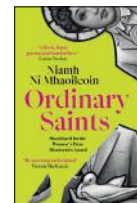
been marred by death. He too is pondering his own exit from this life. For the woman, the man is a pitstop on the road to her own suicide. For the man, the woman is a way to forestall his death and offer him an exit. Through the impressions they leave on each other, they reflect on their own lives.

Ordinary Saints

Niamh Ní Mhaoldéoin

Manilla. PB. \$34.99

Available 12 August



Brought up in a devout household in Ireland, Jay is now living in London with her girlfriend, determined to live day to day and not think too much about either the future or the past. But when she learns that her beloved older brother, who died in a terrible accident, may be made into a Catholic saint, she realises she must at last confront her family, her childhood and herself. An arresting, unmissable debut novel exploring family, grief, queer identity, and the legacy of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Muckle Flugga

Michael Pedersen

Faber. PB. \$34.99

Available 26 August

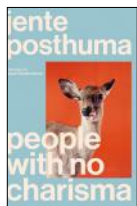


On the rugged isle of Muckle Flugga, the elements run riot. The only human inhabitants are the lighthouse keeper and his otherworldly son, Ouse, and the occasional lodger to make ends meet.

When one of those lodgers, Firth, arrives from Edinburgh, the limits of the world they cling to begins to crumble. A tug of war ensues between Firth and the lighthouse keeper for Ouse's affections, and his future. As old and new ways collide, and life-changing decisions loom, what will the tides leave standing in their wake?

People with No Charisma
Jente Posthuma &
Sarah Timmer Harvey (trans.)

Scribe. PB. \$27.99
Available now



R After being shortlisted for last year's International Booker Prize for the equal-parts funny, clever and heartbreaking novel *What I'd Rather Not Think About*, author and

translator duo Jente Posthuma and Sarah Timmer Harvey have returned with a newly translated work that was actually Posthuma's first novel. Originally written in Dutch in 2016, *People with No Charisma* is a humorous coming-of-age novel about grief, fraught parent-child relationships, and the identity crisis of being a young adult trying not to repeat your parents' mistakes while having no other role models to look up to.

As in *What I'd Rather Not Think About*, Posthuma employs humour to balance the more sombre elements of *People with No Charisma* – the narrator's mother's terminal cancer, and her emotionally absent father – as well as a non-linear chapter structure to zoom in on distinct moments in her narrator's life – her time in Paris trying to be a writer, a road trip from France to the Netherlands with her father, and her time in a psychiatric hospital postpartum.

I enjoyed seeing the origin of Posthuma's style that I so loved in her sophomore work, and it's interesting to see the evolution of the themes in her writing. Though perhaps not as narratively strong as her previously translated novel, Posthuma's debut is a quirky, cleanly written and compulsively readable novel about the absurdity of life, the doubt-filled reality of adulthood and the echo of our childhoods and parents as we grow into our own selves.

Tracy Hwang is from Readings Emporium

The Hole
Hye-young Pyun &
Sora Kim-Russell (trans.)

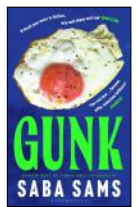
Doubleday. PB. \$34.99
Available now



The car accident that killed his wife has left Oghi in hospital, unable to speak or move, and under the control of his mother-in-law, as she grieves the loss of her only child. Oghi's world shrinks to the room he lies in and the memories of his wife, a sensitive woman who found solace in cultivating her garden. But as Oghi remains alone and paralysed, his mother-in-law is hard at work in the now-abandoned garden, uprooting what her daughter had worked so hard to plant and obsessively digging larger and larger holes ...

Gunk

Saba Sams
Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99
Available 19 August



Jules works alongside her ex-husband at a student nightclub in central Brighton, serving shots and watching Leon as he flirts with students. But then Leon hires 19-year-old Nim to work the bar. When Nim

discovers she's pregnant, Jules agrees to help. As the women's relationship grows, it emerges that Nim has her own unexpected gifts to give. Now, alone in her small flat, Jules is holding a baby, just 24 hours old, who still smells of Nim. But no one knows where Nim is, or if she's coming back.

Discontent

Beatriz Serrano &
Mara Faye Lethem (trans.)
Harvill Secker. PB. \$34.99

Available 26 August



Marisa has a great apartment in Madrid, her lover lives downstairs, and she's risen quickly through the ranks at a successful advertising agency. But behind it all she hates everything about her job.

One summer she spends her working hours bingeing on YouTube videos and getting high on tranquilisers. But Marisa's façade is in danger of being exposed when she's forced to deliver a talk on creativity at her company's retreat. Surrounded by toxic bosses, flirty facilitators and more, Marisa is pushed to the brink of a complete spiral.

The Place of Shells

Mai Ishizawa & Polly Barton (trans.)

Sceptre. PB. \$29.99

Available now



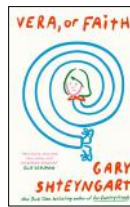
In the summer of 2020, as Germany slowly emerges from lockdown, a young Japanese woman studying in Göttingen waits at the train station to meet an old friend. Nomiya died a decade earlier in the devastating Tohoku tsunami, but he has suddenly returned without any explanation. Yet Nomiya's spectral presence destabilises something in the city: mysterious guests appear, eerie discoveries are made in the forest and, as the past becomes increasingly vivid, the threads of time threaten to unravel.

Vera, or Faith

Gary Shteyngart

Atlantic. PB. \$34.99

Available 12 August



The Bradford-Shmulkin family is falling apart. A very modern blend of Russian, Jewish, Korean, and New England WASP, they love each other deeply but the pressures of life in an unstable America are fraying their bonds. At the centre is young half-Jewish, half-Korean Vera, who wants only three things in life: a friend at school; Daddy and Anne Mom to stay together; and to meet her birth mother, Mom Mom, who will tell Vera the secret of her identity and how to ensure love's survival in this mad, imploding world.

Girl, 1983

Linn Ullmann & Martin Aitken (trans.)

Hamish Hamilton. HB. \$45

Available 12 August



Paris, a winter's night in 1983. She is 16 years old, lost in unfamiliar streets. On a scrap of paper in her pocket is the address of a photographer, K, 30 years her senior. Almost four decades later, as her life

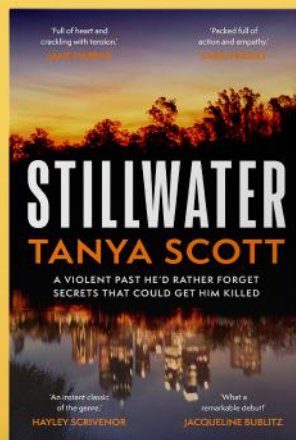
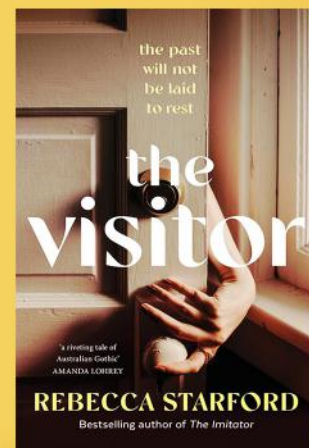


From the bestselling author of
What You Are Looking for is in the Library
comes a brand new healing fiction set in
a suburban community block

**A HAUNTING NOVEL ABOUT
THE GHOSTS WE CAN'T OUTRUN,
FROM THE BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *THE IMITATOR*.**

'A suspenseful, atmospheric and
deliciously Gothic tale that is
genuinely impossible
to put down.'

ELIZA HENRY-JONES,
author of *Salt and Skin*



**LUKE THOUGHT HE'D LEFT HIS VIOLENT
PAST BEHIND IN THIS SUSPENSEFUL
DEBUT CRIME THRILLER FOR FANS
OF LEE CHILD AND JANE HARPER.**

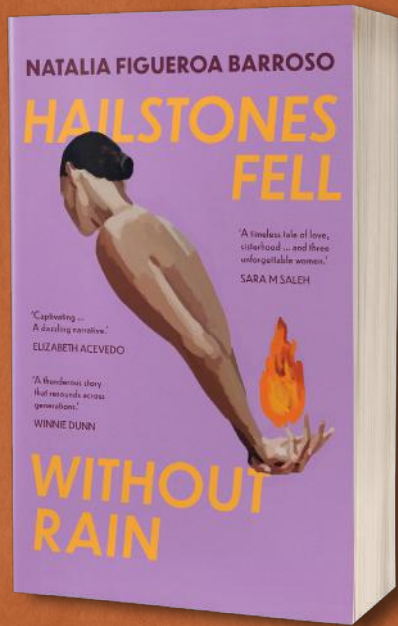
'A thrilling Australian debut,
full of heart and crackling
with tension.'

JANE HARPER,
author of *The Dry*

ALLEN & UNWIN

AUSTRALIAN. INDEPENDENT. FOR READERS.

A dazzling, multilayered and often sharply funny Uruguayan–Australian novel.



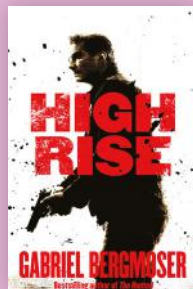
‘A timeless tale of love, sisterhood, and the struggles and triumphs of immigrants that simply sizzles off the page.’

Sara M Saleh

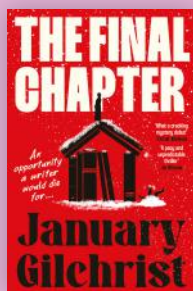
UQP 2025 Australian Small Publisher of the Year



A moving story of secrets and betrayal from the bestselling author of *At the Foot of the Cherry Tree*



A heart-pounding, high-stakes, action-packed thriller, from the bestselling author of *The Hunted* and *The Caretaker*



The new bold and gripping thriller about writerly ambition and revenge. Benjamin Stevenson meets *Nine Perfect Strangers* in 2025's best mystery debut



The companion volume to *Young Hawke: the making of a larrikin* from the award-winning historian and author of *Curtin and Chifley*

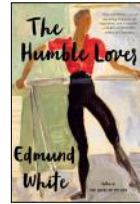
OUT NOW



and the world around her begins to unravel, the grown woman seeks to comprehend the young girl of before. Set in Oslo, New York and Paris, *Girl*, 1983 is a genre-defying and bravura quest through layers of memory and oblivion. A heartrending work of autofiction from one of Norway's most prominent writers.

The Humble Lover

Edmund White
Bloomsbury. PB. \$29.99
Available now



When Aldwych West, a rich octogenarian living alone in his Manhattan townhouse, sets his eyes on a stunningly beautiful soloist in the New York City Ballet, he decides he must have him. Soon they strike up a closeness that falls between the blurry lines of friendship, sponsorship, and love, and August moves in, eventually bringing home other men. But eventually August starts bringing home other men, and a formidable woman in Aldwych's circle named Ernestine. Messy entanglements and fierce rivalries ensue, and the result is an unforgettable, outrageous tragicomedy that explores the many layers of love and sexual desire.

Maggie; or, a Man and a Woman Walk into a Bar

Katie Yee
Brazen. PB. \$29.99
Available now



A man and a woman walk into a bar. It's the classic start to many a joke, but in *Maggie*, it's far from this. What was meant to be a date night of all-you-can-eat samosas with her husband turned out to be the night he decided to tell her of his affair with a woman called Maggie. As if that wasn't enough, not long after this fateful dinner and the resulting departure of her husband from the family home, our unnamed narrator finds a lump in her chest, is diagnosed with breast cancer and promptly names the tumour 'Maggie'.

What comes next is a captivating compilation of observations and vignettes over the ensuing months as our narrator's life changes and she adjusts to a world without her husband, the rollercoaster of being a cancer patient, becoming a single parent and re-establishing her place in the world. You expect this to be an uplifting – and at times humorous – story, but Katie Yee's writing delivers just that. Rather than getting bogged down in the heartbreak of the situation, Yee tells a story of friendship, identity reclamation, strength and resilience.

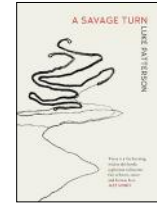
I loved how this story was told. These are not new themes, but what made it hard to put *Maggie* down was the fragmented style the narrator employs, which makes her so easy to relate to. Life is not linear, so it only seems natural for this story to be told in a nonlinear fashion. It gives you the opportunity to pause and reflect, to laugh and to commiserate. This is Yee's debut novel and given the pace with which I devoured this book, I am looking forward to seeing what she comes up with next.

Megan Wood is from Readings Emporium

Poetry

A Savage Turn

Luke Patterson
Magabala. PB. \$27.99
Available 12 August



R Gamilaroi poet Luke Patterson writes with an unapologetic, quiet urgency that is ever present throughout *A Savage Turn*. This collection of poetry is personal, but ever so vast

and expansive. I was instantly caught by Patterson's evocative, impassioned storytelling which explores his connection to Country, his Indigenous identity, the intimacy of family and culture, and a deep reverence for the Land and nature.

Divided into three parts, Patterson demonstrates an effortless ability to intertwine the past and the present. His writing immediately strikes me as visceral and strong, acting as a continuous unearthing of the postcolonial experience for him and for other First Nations people.

In his opening poem, 'Waratah', he writes, 'Grief grows a totem / Like a blown-out / Heart of an emblem'. I read and re-read this over and over. I researched totems and their significance in First Nations cultures. The weight of even just this one fragment of poem inspires in me a sharp inhale of breath.

The poet follows on in 'Australia: A Creation Myth' to play with gritty imagery and language that creates a potent, sensory experience of colonialism: '... The salt air turned foul like earth had opened / its bowels; an explosion signifying / what comes next: a well-oiled machine called colony. / It came and swallowed the birds and their pearls / of laughter heralding sunrise, then shut out / saviours.' Patterson finishes the poem with, '... It swallowed earth's / custodians, exquisite, ingenious, savage, always savage / but could not consume them.'

In the standout piece, 'Smutty Paperbark – A Post Colonial', Patterson continues to look at Australia through a lens of what was, what continues to be and what is, reflecting on language and storytelling. This poem, as with the entire collection, is imbued with an earnest fire that builds and builds, unrelenting.

Ocean Trimboli is from Readings Emporium

51 Alterities

Keri Glastonbury
Giramondo. PB. \$27
Available 1 August



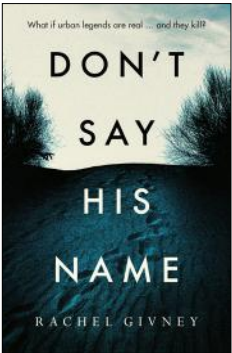
51 Alterities began as a loose adaptation of British poet Sam Riviere's 2012 debut *81 Austerities* which was written in response to the impact of UK austerity measures on the arts, and poetry's role

in the internet age. Wrestling with Antipodean 'alterity' more than 10 years later, as a female queer poet a decade older than Riviere's millennial male, Glastonbury responds to the threat of economic austerity, and to poetry's precarious place in a landscape dominated by billionaire tech bros and social media empires. **R**

Crime

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Crime



Don't Say His Name
Rachel Givney
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99
Available now

R'Twas the night before Christmas, when lights and ornaments adorn the trees and families reunite to celebrate the holidays, including our protagonist, Detective Stayer, who takes a job in the coastal town of Thoorgala, NSW, to reconnect with his estranged sister, Ruby. But, immediately, he is called to investigate the strange murder of a woman found on the beach. There are no bruises on her body, no blunt force trauma or poisons coming up on the autopsy report. The only clue is a symbol carved onto her hand, a symbol everyone in the town recognises as the mark of Tall Harry, a terrifying urban legend who sucks the soul out of his victims. As more bodies are found with this peculiar symbol, and more women go missing, including Ruby, Detective Stayer begins to question his reality, wondering if he ever really knew his sister at all.

Rachel Givney has concocted the perfect potion, weaving together a small-town murder mystery, folklore and witchcraft, and a mystifying blend of what's real and what's not. Detective Stayer, a sceptical cop, makes the perfect counterpart to his companion, Sister Catherine Kelley, a superstitious nun whose knowledge of folkloric and urban legends comes in handy as they try to uncover Tall Harry – and whether he is a man in a mask or the real (supernatural) thing.

Urban legends have always spooked me, maybe because they are inherently tied to modernity – there's a possibility

of their reality being closer to mine than any ancient myth or fairytale. This novel had me on the edge of my seat, compelled and too chilled to the bone to look away. We've all heard of Bloody Mary and Slenderman. Now it's time to introduce yourself to the horror that is Tall Harry. This book will cast a spell over you from the first page to the very last.

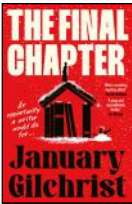
Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

High Rise
Gabriel Bergmoser
HarperCollins. PB. \$32.99
Available now



After a year of searching, rogue ex-cop Jack Carlin has finally found his estranged daughter, Morgan, in a rundown high-rise building. He doesn't know that Morgan doesn't want to be saved, and he also doesn't realise the city's entire criminal underworld is on the way, too. Due to his past, Jack has a price on his head. As bounty hunters and gang members converge on the building, father and daughter are thrown into a desperate fight for survival.

The Final Chapter
January Gilchrist
HQ Fiction. PB. \$32.99
Available now



The Final Chapter is a darkly addictive novel that highlights every author's fears: procrastination, writer's block, and the possibility of being murdered, of course.

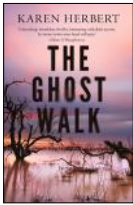
Thorne House is haunted to say the least. With the dark history of the Thorne family's tragic deaths – all except for the daughter, Evelyn Thorne – the estate then became home to Australia's worst serial killer, Byron Jackovic, who buried the bodies of his victims in the forest behind the house. Despite this, Thorne House has now become a cosy writer's retreat, its quiet location in the Blue Mountains making it the perfect spot for aspiring or well-established authors to block out the rest of the world and focus on writing their next novels.

When a vicious snowstorm traps a group of authors inside with no wi-fi or access to the nearest town, our protagonists – awkward, self-deprecating Desley; vain, high-profile author Colette; and ambitious, vengeful Maia – are stuck with the strict manager and two other male guests, one of whom seems especially suspicious. While some guests have come to write, others have come to kill.

January Gilchrist writes a slow-burn drama of increasing tension, feuds, and hatred between the guests that builds to a nail-biting crescendo in the last 100 pages and leaves you frozen in place until you finish the final chapter. Full of witty banter and stinging barbs, secrecy and plenty of motives for revenge, each character has something to lose and a reason to kill. With echoes of Stephen King's *The Shining*, the macabre history of murders in Thorne House fuels each character's fear and rage, putting their morality to the ultimate test. *The Final Chapter* is a wickedly entertaining thriller that is bound to make you binge-read it in one go – or at least make you question your holiday choices.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

The Ghost Walk
Karen Herbert
Fremantle. PB. \$34.99
Available now



RAre ghosts making their way back into our zeitgeist? Certainly, this is not the first novel I have read this year with ghosts playing a character, but it is the first I have read that combines their presence with solving a crime. That is not to say that the ghosts in this book have a significant impact on this plot-driven thriller, but they are there, and they count.

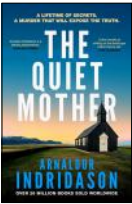
Dr Gabriel Beaufort is found dead close to the Ghost Walk, a place where previous deaths have occurred. His secret lover, Ruby Rose, is in hospital that night suffering from an infection brought on by her lung replacement due to cystic fibrosis. Ruby Rose is the narrator of the story and she knows this is murder. Despite being immunocompromised, she's determined to trace Gabriel's movements before the police do. After all, she knows him better than anyone else; they had been intimate friends for years.

This novel does some heavy work: it exposes the hierarchy in medical research; it illustrates the constant compromising demanded by our modern world if you have a disability and the effect it has on your family; and it gifts you a classic page-turning crime story. Who wanted Gabriel Beaufort dead, and why? The answers lie in the clues dotted throughout the novel. It is a quirky tale, designed to entertain and educate.

There is much to admire in this novel, Karen Herbert's fourth, and readers of classic crime will be pleased. For me, the power of this novel lies with the descriptions of Ruby Rose's life now and in her rebellious early adult years. What decisions do you make if you know you are going to die early? *The Ghost Walk* offers insight into this question, and along the way gives you the ultimate armchair detective experience.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

The Quiet Mother
Arnaldur Indridason
Harvill Secker. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 August



A woman is found murdered in her Reykjavík home. On her desk lies a note with retired detective Konrad's phone number. Days earlier, she had begged him to find the child she gave up nearly 50 years ago. But reluctant to reopen old wounds, Konrad turned her away. Haunted by guilt, he vows to uncover the truth. As Konrad digs into her past, he is drawn into a web of secrets, lies, and betrayal which point to a hidden life that connects her death to a decades-old murder, and to shadows from Konrad's own family history.

King Tide
Luke Johnson
Affirm Press. PB. \$34.99
Available now



RThe revelation of a long-buried body in the aftermath of a storm and king tide brings a general sense of foreboding to Lagunes Bay, a fictional coastal community on Victoria's western coast.

The trio of friends at the heart of this novel, newly adults, are fracturing, each subject to different forces that play on their personalities and identities.

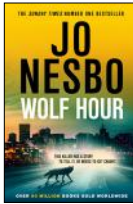
For Tate, his sense of self is shifting and growing as he grapples with adulthood and family loss. His best friend Luther is stuck in his own rut, caught between a 'bad boy' image he can never shake off and burning regret. For Brylie, the return to Lagunes Bay with her vicar father reawakens bitter feelings from when their family suddenly left the town, and new suspicions about why they did. But it is Hayley, the dead girl,

the one whom everyone seemingly forgot, whose story threatens to tear the whole damned lot asunder.

In crime fiction books like this one there are often several truths. Two of these are that small towns are always full of secrets and deep-seated resentments, and that terrible things usually happen in multiples. Congratulations are in order here for the way in which debut author Luke Johnson sensitively tells this story. The events of this book all feel quite real, and immediate, and there is great pathos for the three central characters. Though there is also a great deal of empathy for the women in this book, particularly Hayley, and Tate's mum, there is also deft handling of ideas around masculinity, and what it is to be a 'good' man. Johnson is a fresh new voice in the genre, and fans of Jane Harper, Mark Brandi, and Margaret Hickey will be drawn to this book.

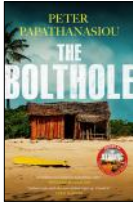
Julia Jackson is assistant manager at Readings Carlton

Wolf Hour
Jo Nesbo
Harvill Secker. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 August



When a small-time crook is shot down in the streets of Minneapolis, all signs point to a lone wolf – a sniper who has vanished into thin air. When the shooter strikes again, maverick detective Bob Oz is called in to crack the case. They don't think this victim will be the last. As the body count rises, Oz suspects something even more sinister is at play. And the closer he gets to the truth, the more disturbed he becomes. Because this serial killer reminds him of someone dangerous: himself.

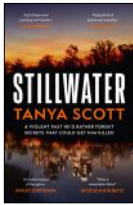
The Bolthole
Peter Papathanasiou
MacLehose. PB. \$34.99
Available now



Over the centuries, Kangaroo Island locals have cultivated a sense of self-sufficiency, resilience and independence. But times are changing, and the quiet paradise is being transformed into a bolthole

for the rich. When a wealthy 'blow-in' goes missing, a shark is blamed but things don't add up. Detective Sergeant George Manolis and Senior Constable Sparrow reunite to locate the missing man, but their investigation is derailed by a civil war over limited resources, a fragile environment, and fractured community dynamics.

Stillwater
Tanya Scott
A&U. PB. \$34.99
Available now



RAfter years away from Melbourne, Luke Harris is back on track. All he wants is a normal job, his own house, and a dog. But Luke's past is not easily forgotten nor forgiven. He is reluctantly dragged back to his old life when he crosses paths with Gus Alberici, the criminal he worked for as a teenager. Luke's father has vanished, along with a chunk of Gus's cash. As his past and present collide, can Luke keep his long-held secrets, and outsmart a man who will stop at nothing to get what he wants?

Nonfiction

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Australian Studies



Conspiracy Nation: Exposing the Dangerous World of Australian Conspiracy Theories

Ariel Bogle & Cam Wilson
Ultimo. PB. \$36.99
Available now

R During the pandemic, conspiracy theories seeped out from the shadowy recesses of the internet and into the mainstream, but they've been a part of Australian culture for far longer than you'd think. Even before the internet, everyday Australians have been fascinated by conspiracy theories about the Port Arthur massacre, vaccines, fluoride and the legitimacy of the Australian legal system, just to name a few. Journalists Ariel Bogle and Cam Wilson investigate homegrown and imported conspiracies, with first-hand accounts from friends, family and communities left behind, and some of the rare few who've come through the wormhole to the other side.

Conspiracy Nation engages with scholars, researchers, activists and experts, and takes readers on a tour through time, on the internet and into the streets, even covertly infiltrating Pete Evans' \$2,750 per weekend wellness retreat. Painting vivid but compassionate portraits of conspiracists, their followers and victims, Bogle and Wilson do not catastrophise, but instead focus on the causes and consequences of conspiracy theories, and our shared responsibility to take action.

Delving into the histories and perpetrators of the Port Arthur, Christchurch mosque and Wieambilla shootings, Bogle and Wilson interrogate the root causes of conspiracy-seeking – isolation, fear, inequality and feelings of powerlessness – providing thoughtful insights into potential interventions that might provide relief to these symptoms before conspiracies take hold. *Conspiracy Nation* also highlights the ways that conspiracy theorists co-opt language and divert attention from movements working to address real injustices in a chapter on First Nations

sovereignty with Gumbaynggirr man Roxley Foley.

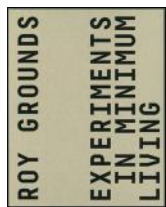
Conspiracy theories aren't just a fringe concern; they're having real-world ramifications in local and global politics, education, health and communities. From pseudolaw to the 'plandemic', conspiracy-motivated racism and homophobia to conspiratoriality, *Conspiracy Nation* is a fascinating insight, a compassionate call to action, and an altogether unputdownable read.

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

Architecture

Roy Grounds: Experiments in Minimum Living

Tony Lee
Kerritane. HB. \$65.99
Available 1 August



R When architect Tony Lee purchased a studio flat in Moonbria in Toorak, his intention was to clean it up and sell it, but a meeting with fellow architect Donald

Hendry Fulton changed that and led Lee on a journey of discovery – and on to this book.

Roy Grounds is best known for his monumental buildings, particularly the National Gallery of Victoria and the adjacent Arts Centre with its distinctive spire, but his early career was influenced by personal circumstances and by the concept of the 'minimum flat' whose goal was, in the words of Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, to provide 'every grown-up person his own room even if it is the very smallest.' The idea was to develop a low-cost, well-designed, efficient space in which essential furniture and equipment were provided which could accommodate couples or singles. The minimum flat concept was introduced to Melbourne from the UK by architect Best Overend with his Cairo project in Fitzroy. Grounds worked in London around this time and also came into contact with

the movement. Grounds returned to Melbourne in 1934 and soon got work for wealthy clients. One of these was Betty Ramsay, wife of Thomas Ramsay, managing director of Kiwi Boot Polish. Grounds worked on their home in Toorak and was then commissioned by Betty to design a small house overlooking the bay in Mt Eliza; Betty used her own money to fund the project and the budget was constrained so Grounds drew on the principles of the minimum flat to keep construction costs to a minimum.

The relationship between Grounds and Betty became an intimate one and her husband took Betty and the children to London. A besotted Grounds followed Betty to London and Betty announced that she wouldn't be returning to Melbourne; Ramsay cut off all payments to Betty and the young couple were left unemployed, with little money and by necessity had to live in small, frugal spaces. How to make spaces like these work became an intellectual challenge for Grounds. With war imminent, the couple returned to Melbourne and through Betty's connections Grounds got his first major commission – a block of eight flats in Armadale. It was the first of four apartment projects, Clendon, Quamby, Clendon Corner and culminating in the ambitious Moonbria development where, almost 60 years later, Toby Lee purchased his apartment. All these developments were built to rent and were mostly studio or one-bedroom apartments for singles or couples. Grounds drew on the principles of the minimum flat to design and develop the projects. Often the

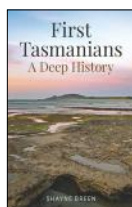
furnishings were built in and designed by Grounds. They were designed to be comfortable, economic, efficient spaces that used local materials and were low-cost to build. In this wonderful book, Toby Lee records a groundbreaking era in Australian architecture that became an intellectual precursor to today's Nightingale projects.

Mark Rubbo is the chairman of Readings

Australian Studies

First Tasmanians: A Deep History

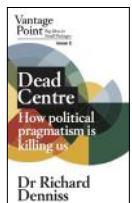
Shayne Breen
Miegunyah. HB. \$49.99
Available 12 August



In *First Tasmanians*, historian Shayne Breen traces over 40,000 years of Aboriginal exploration, land settlement, hunting practices and controlled burning on the island. In just 30 years of the 19th century, this carefully nurtured collective life was destroyed by an imperial power and replaced by a narrative of Aboriginal resistance, struggle and protest. With a complex legacy that endures to this day, this is a story of courage, continuity and an unwavering commitment to revitalising connections between country, culture and community.

Dead Centre: How Political Pragmatism is Killing Us (Vantage Point, Issue 2)

Dr Richard Denniss
Australia Institute. PB. \$19.99
Available 5 August



The sensible centre. Evidence-based policy. These are not the same. In fact, they are at odds with each other. In this essay, economist and executive director of The Australia Institute Richard Denniss, explores the contradiction between centrism and evidence that sits at the heart of democratic debate in Australia. He shows that when both major parties oppose reform then the position of the sensible centre becomes indistinguishable from blind support for keeping things as they are.

Bomb Season in Jakarta: A Personal Account of a Turbulent Period in Australian Diplomacy

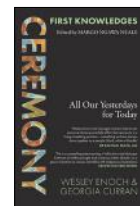
Grant Dooley
Affirm Press. PB. \$36.99
Available now



In the history of Australian diplomacy, the Jakarta post between 2004 and 2007 looms large. During those years, there was a terrorist bomb attack on the embassy, the Boxing Day tsunami, a bombing in Bali which killed 20, members of the Bali Nine were convicted, a Garuda flight crashed, and more. Working in a diplomatic posting at the time, Grant Dooley bore witness to it all and dealt with emergencies, constant terror threats and the delicate management of Australia's political leaders. *Bomb Season in Jakarta* is an up close and personal account of that unparalleled time.

Ceremony: All Our Yesterdays for Today (First Knowledges)

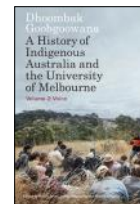
Wesley Enoch & Georgia Curran
T&H. PB. \$26.99
Available 5 August



We perform ceremonies every day. Some are personal, some highly organised and others are repeated for generations. For First Nations Australians, ceremonies create the backbone of cultural practice across time and place. *Ceremony: All Our Yesterdays for Today* tells how Indigenous ceremonies link people today to those of the past in a continuum of inherited stories, places and memories – from rites of passage to smoking ceremonies and Welcomes to Country, and many others.

Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne – Volume 2: Voice

Ross L Jones, James Waghorne & Marcia Langton (eds)
MUP. PB. \$39.99
Available 12 August



Dhoombak Goobgoowana Volume 2: Voice reveals the pivotal role played by Indigenous people in the history of the University of Melbourne. Following the revelations of *Dhoombak Goobgoowana Volume 1: Truth*, *Volume 2* shows how Indigenous communities challenged and disrupted the University, how they contributed to its research endeavours and exhorted it to introduce Indigenous knowledge into the academic sphere. Gradually, and often reluctantly, the University began to change. But there remains much work to be done.

What a Ripper!: 60 Everyday Objects That Shaped Australia

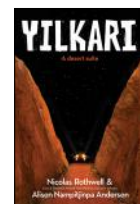
Tim Ross
Murdoch. HB. \$39.99
Available now



Celebrating 60 objects that were designed and made in Australia, Tim Ross transports us back in time and pays tribute to objects that you might be lucky enough to still find in your home or backyard shed. From the Stackhat to the Speedo there are colourful photos, previously untold stories and fascinating narratives, making this book equal parts retro-design celebration, pop-culture treasure trove and nostalgic adventure. It also reveals the high standard of design in this country, which is often overlooked.

Yilkari: A Desert Suite

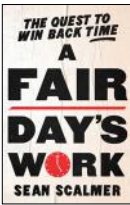
Nicolas Rothwell & Alison Nampitjinpa Anderson
Text. PB. \$34.99
Available now



In this genre-defying book, award-winning author Nicolas Rothwell and his wife, acclaimed artist Alison Nampitjinpa Anderson are both characters and guides. *Yilkari* reveals its secrets through the dialogues of its characters

and their journeys into landscapes where space and time are aspects of each other. This is a book of coincidences, of interlinked dreamings, of chance encounters in living landscapes where the thread of sound is almost too faint to hear when the evening sun is low, the best time for telling stories.

**A Fair Day's Work:
The Quest to Win Back Time**
Sean Scalmer
MUP. PB. \$34.99
Available 12 August



The length of the working day and the challenges of work-life balance are pressing issues for many Australians. Historian Sean Scalmer traces 150 years of labour campaigns which reduced the working week from 60 to 38 hours. Progress has stalled since the 1980s with laws failing to control excessive hours. Women are increasingly shouldering long hours of paid and unpaid labour, creating a social crisis. Scalmer's work affords us a way to understand the past so we can win back our time – collectively.

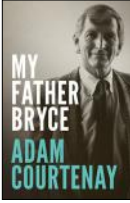
Fathering: An Australian History
Alistair Thomson, John Murphy, Kate Murphy & Johnny Bell, with Jill Barnard
MUP. PB. \$39.99
Available 12 August



The first comprehensive history of Australian fathering, *Fathering: An Australian History* transforms our understanding of men's experience of parenthood, showing how fathers from diverse backgrounds, including migrant and Indigenous dads, have negotiated their role in changing circumstances. The 21st-century father is expected to be actively engaged in the everyday care of his children, as epitomised by the celebrated dad of children's cartoon *Bluey*, the blue heeler Bandit. The authors' groundbreaking research reveals the forces that have shaped Australian family life and fathering since the early 20th century, and how Australian fathers have managed the evolving role and its responsibilities.

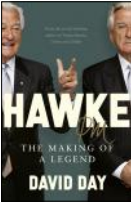
Biography

My Father Bryce
Adam Courtenay
Hachette. PB. \$34.99
Available now



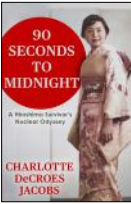
Dynamic, complex and driven, Bryce Courtenay was one of Australia's highest-selling and most-loved authors. A natural-born storyteller and occasional fabulist whose tales never quite felt true, Courtenay was a man who forever publicly grieved the loss of his son Damon, the subject of *April Fool's Day*, but who seemed reluctant to connect with his remaining two sons. To his son Adam he was larger than life, mercurial, and impossible to know completely. In this unforgettable memoir Adam searches for the real Bryce.

Hawke PM: The Making of a Legend
David Day
HarperCollins. HB. \$49.99
Available now



Bob Hawke was an influential figure in 20th century Australia. Firstly, as its most powerful trade union leader in the '70s, before rising to become the longest-serving Labor prime minister in the '80s. Enjoying an unprecedented level of popularity Hawke transformed the Australian economy, reinforced ties with Asia, did much to transform social welfare measures and called for Indigenous recognition. It was a time of renewed confidence for Australia. This definitive biography explores his legacy and its importance to modern Australia.

**90 Seconds to Midnight:
A Hiroshima Survivor's
Nuclear Odyssey**
Charlotte DeCroes Jacobs
MUP. PB. \$39.99
Available 12 August



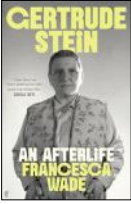
In 2015 Setsuko Nakamura Thurlow proclaimed at the United Nations, 'Humanity and nuclear weapons cannot coexist.' She was only 13 when an atomic bomb was dropped on her city of Hiroshima and has since dedicated her life to shifting the global discussion from nuclear deterrence to humanitarian consequences – the key to crafting the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. *90 Seconds to Midnight* recounts Thurlow's journey from devastation to global advocacy and Nobel Prize winner.

**So Gay for You:
Friendship, Found Family, and the
Show That Started It All**
Leisha Hailey & Kate Moennig
St. Martin's Press. PB. \$36.99
Available now

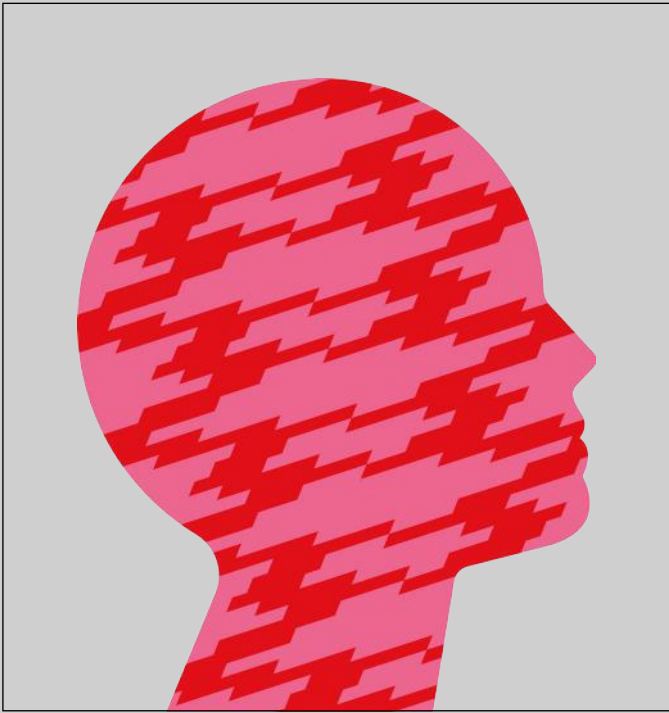


Kate Moennig and Leisha Hailey met at auditions for what they thought was just an unknown little TV show about lesbians living in LA, with the first ever cast of openly queer female characters. What they didn't foresee was just how huge *The L Word* would become and how it would change their lives. *So Gay for You* is a love letter to a life-defining friendship over the decades, following Kate and Leisha's unlikely and extremely entertaining journey stumbling from closeted queer kids to LGBTQIA+ activists and more.

Gertrude Stein: An Afterlife
Francesca Wade
Faber. HB. \$39.99
Available 26 August



Francesca Wade delves into the creation of the Stein myth. From posing for Picasso in Paris to salons with Hemingway and dazzling American crowds on tour, Stein was a veritable celebrity. Yet she hoped to be remembered for her work and charged her partner Alice B. Toklas with securing her place in literary history. Drawing on unseen archives Wade



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uncovers the origins of Stein's radical writing revealing new depths to the storied relationship which made it possible. This is the real Stein: captivating, complex and human.

James Baldwin: The Life Album Magdalena J. Zaborowska

Yale University Press. HB. \$39.95

Available now



James Baldwin was a pivotal figure of the 20th century whose words, image and persona remain current in our culture. Presented as a series of tracks on a vinyl record Magdalena J. Zaborowska

draws from archives and material legacy to offer a fresh look at Baldwin's understated and obscured private life. She recounts episodes from Baldwin's childhood including his struggles with sexuality and gender, the influences on his writing, as well as the growth of his unique worldview, 'Black queer humanism'.

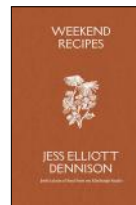
Cooking

Weekend Recipes: Joyful Plates of Food from My Edinburgh Studio

Jess Elliott Dennison

Elliott's Cafe. HB. \$51.99

Available 1 August



Following on from *Midweek Recipes*, Jess Elliott Dennison is excited to bring you these joyful dishes for exploring across the weekend. With chapters of Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Baking, Dinner, and Pudding, these are the flavours and methods for when work is on pause and there's slightly more time for connecting with your ingredients, kitchen and company. Includes everything from sherbet-y lemon curd, sweet roast pepper, charred silverskin onion and parmesan crostini, spaghetti and oregano meatballs, and more!

Cultural Studies

The New Age of Sexism: How the AI Revolution is Reinventing Misogyny

Laura Bates

S&S. PB. \$36.99

Available now



R I almost wish I didn't have to say Laura Bates has just written the most important book of our generation. Not having to say this would mean the issues she discusses and horrific realities she has researched may not be as threatening as they really are.

Anyone who has picked up a Bates book before will know there is no light reading to be done here, and those who haven't, I urge you to. If you are a parent, a man, a policy-maker or you work in tech, this should be required reading.

While many of us will be aware of generative AI such as ChatGPT or might have seen laughable parody images of

celebrities online, there are very real, very frightening things happening in the grossly unregulated tech world. The scale at which AI is already reinventing incel culture and misogyny is so much larger than we think.

Laura Bates needs to be thanked, by all of us, for what she puts herself through to research and write these books. Her 2020 publication, *Men Who Hate Women*, required spending hours upon hours in the incel corner of the internet, reading the vitriol of real men who do not believe women to be human, or do not believe they should be treated so.

For this book, Bates takes us to cyber brothels, to chat rooms with submissive AI girlfriends, to the real-life testimonies of women affected by image-based sexual abuse. We learn that 93% of deepfakes are fake pornographic depictions of people; 99% of these people are women. We learn that under the guise of addressing the 'male loneliness epidemic', purchases of sex robots are skyrocketing. Their main selling point? They are 'women' who cannot talk back.

If only there were an AI that could implant Bates's findings seamlessly into our brains, because ignorance is not bliss; we need to know about everything this book reveals, and we need to do something about it.

Grace Gooda is from Readings Chadstone

Empire of the Elite: Inside Condé Nast, the Media Dynasty that Reshaped the World

Michael M. Grynbaum

Coronet. PB. \$34.99

Available now



From its glitzy heyday in the 1980s through to the 2000s, American publishing empire Condé Nast and its magazines – including *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, the *New Yorker* and *GQ* – defined how to live the good life, with its editors and writers creating a vision of sophistication and luxury that shaped cultural and consumer trends and political beliefs the world over. *Empire of the Elite* is an exploration of how Condé Nast established itself as a global authority. But it is also a cautionary tale, exposing how class, hubris and technological change shook its dominance.

Every Monument Will Fall: A Prehistory of the Culture War

Dan Hicks

Hutchinson Heinemann. PB. \$36.99

Available 12 August



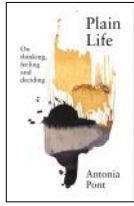
In *Every Monument Will Fall*, Dan Hicks traces the origins of contemporary conflicts over art, colonialism and memory, joining the dots between the building of statues, the founding of disciplines like archaeology and anthropology, and the acquisition of stolen art and ancestral human remains. Part history, part biography, and part excavation, what emerges is a speculative history of inheritance, loss, collective mourning that refuses to choose between pulling down every single statue or holding onto every vestige of a past that future generations could never change – a history that offers the possibility of a reconciliation yet to begin.

Plain Life: On Thinking, Feeling and Deciding

Antonia Pont

NewSouth. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 August



These days, it's easy to get the impression that people are very anxious. So what would it mean to be able to live a plain life? Would a plain life be unambitious, drab, routine, or would it be one in which we'd fret

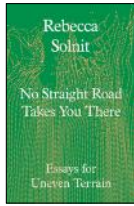
less, suspect ourselves less, and thus listen to ourselves and others in new ways? We may not need to do more and be more. In *Plain Life*, Antonia Pont questions our thinking about capacities, virtue, envy, wanting, love and kindness – suggesting that it might be fine, more than enough, to live a plain life.

No Straight Road Takes You There: Essays for Uneven Terrain

Rebecca Solnit

Granta. HB. \$36.99

Available 5 August



In her latest essay collection Rebecca Solnit explores responses to the climate crisis, as well as reflections on women's rights, the fight for democracy, the trends in masculinity, and the rise of

the far right in the West. Incantatory and poetic, positive and engaging, these essays argue for the long-term view and the power of collective action, making a case for seeding change wherever possible, and offering us all a path out of the wilderness.

Exophony: Voyages Outside the Mother Tongue

Yoko Tawada &

Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda (trans.)

Dialogue. PB. \$29.99

Available now



Are you formed by your mother tongue? How might the world unfold if you stepped outside of its rhythms? In this playful and daring interrogation of language Yoko Tawada reveals the poetics, politics

and potential of existing outside one's mother tongue. From Senegalese writers discarding colonial-enforced French to the increasing use of loan words in her native Japanese, Tawada deconstructs the ways in which the world shapes and is shaped by languages.

Searches: Selfhood in the Digital Age

Vauhini Vara

Grove. PB. \$36.99

Available 5 August



When Vauhini Vara was 14, her sister was diagnosed with cancer. Too terrified to discuss it with a human, Vara turned to the fledgling internet with her questions. Those early experiences influenced

her decision to become a technology reporter; decades later, she used a predecessor to ChatGPT to help her write about her sister's death. In this account of our interdependent relationship with technology, Vara examines the early days of the internet, the encroachment of

social media into our lives and how we might work with AI in the future.

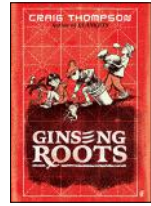
Graphic Narrative

Ginseng Roots: A Memoir

Craig Thompson

Faber. HB. \$49.99

Available 12 August



Ginseng Roots follows Craig Thompson and his siblings, who spent the summers of their youth weeding and harvesting rows of coveted American ginseng on rural Wisconsin farms.

Following an injury, Thompson rediscovers this herb and embarks on an extraordinary journey from his midwestern roots to north-east China. Suffused in a vibrant earthy palette, *Ginseng Roots* masterfully blends memoir, travelogue and cultural history to explore and illuminate ideas of creativity, doubt, healing and family.

Environmental Studies

A Barrister for the Earth: Ten Cases of Hope for Our Future

Monica Feria-Tinta

Faber. HB. \$45

Available now



Pioneering barrister Monica Feria-Tinta advocates not only for people but is at the forefront for those who have no voice: rivers, forests and endangered species. Seeking justice for

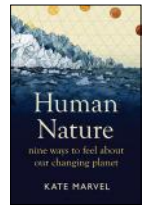
environmental wrongs Feria-Tinta takes us behind the scenes of 10 landmark cases as she argues against the destruction of cloud forest and for the sovereign state to account for inaction. Each of these are landmarks signalling that we are at an important juncture, in which the law can be a powerful tool for the lasting change.

Human Nature: Nine Ways to Feel About Our Changing Planet

Kate Marvel

Scribe. PB. \$36.99

Available now



Even before I started reading Kate Marvel's *Human Nature*, I knew it was going to be an important book – how could it not be, tackling, as it does, one of the largest, most universal problems of this century? What I wasn't prepared for was how gripping it would be to read.

Across nine chapters, Marvel draws you into an unapologetic and unflinching account of our climate: what has already happened, where we are now, and what sobering futures await us. From her wonder at our world and the climate models that she uses to study it, to the thick miasma of anger, fear and grief that hangs over any discussion of climate

change, and then to the hope and love that she cultivates nonetheless, this is a book steeped in emotion; a book that defiantly refuses to take an impartial, clinical view. Marvel wants us to feel.

If Marvel's passionate, personal voice is what makes *Human Nature* such a powerful read, it's her skill as a storyteller that makes it a wildly compelling one. Alongside a guiding emotion, each chapter is often shaped by a wider theme that brings a playful variety to the information presented, whether through lyrical allusions to Greek myth, tongue-in-cheek homages to bad movies, or topical comparisons to 16th-century witch hunts. However, where *Human Nature* is at its best is when those themes drill even deeper into the personal and, in sharing stories from her life, Marvel reminds us that the fight against climate change is as much about protecting the small, fragile corners of Earth that we love as it is about averting catastrophic collapse.

As a young person in these troubled times, I'm grateful that we have Kate Marvel: a brilliant writer who just so happens to also be a world-class scientist. I can't imagine a better voice to listen to about our collective future.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

Gardening

Planting for Native Birds, Bees and Butterflies: How to Create a Garden that Attracts Australian Wildlife

Jaclyn Crupi

Murdoch. HB. \$34.99

Available now



Writer and gardener Jaclyn Crupi shows us that protecting and fostering precious native wildlife starts in our own backyards. The first step: start planting! And choose native plants where possible. This alone presents endless opportunities for habitat creation – sometimes it's the smallest actions that make the biggest difference. With loads of practical advice for gardeners and novices alike this book can help make your garden more attractive to native birds, bees and butterflies, which will in turn benefit all species.

The Sceptical Botanist: Separating Fact from Fiction

Tim Entwisle

CSIRO. PB. \$39.99

Available 1 August



Through 50 beautifully crafted essays, former director of the royal botanic gardens in Melbourne, Sydney and Kew and self-confessed plant punk Tim Entwisle shines a gentle light on everyday questions about plants and gardens, guiding the reader through fact and fiction. Including the best of his contributions to gardening magazines and newspapers over four decades, as well as 24 pieces written specially for this book, *The Sceptical Botanist* is a tour de force of investigative writing from one of Australia's most thoughtful and inquisitive botanical minds.

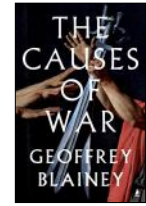
History

The Causes of War: From 1700 to Today

Geoffrey Blainey

Scribner. HB. \$49.99

Available now



Covering international wars from 1700 – and now updated to include Ukraine and Gaza – Geoffrey Blainey demolishes many widely held theories of why nations fight, arguing that peace is not the 'natural'

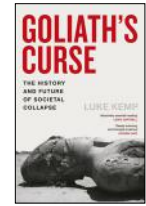
state of international relations and war is not an aberration. Both are best understood as means of advancing national interests: when one is failing, the other becomes more likely, and therefore understanding what causes 'the mystery of peace' is as urgent as understanding what causes war.

Goliath's Curse: The History and Future of Societal Collapse

Luke Kemp

Viking. PB. \$36.99

Available 5 August



Why do civilisations collapse? From the early cities of North America to the sprawling empires of Egypt, Rome and China, increasing inequality and concentrations of power hollowed out these

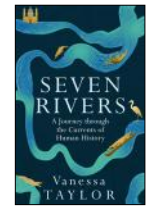
Goliaths before an external shock brought them crashing down. Our systems are now so fast, complex and interconnected that a future collapse will likely be global, swift and irreversible. We must learn to democratically control Goliath, or the next collapse may be our last.

Seven Rivers: A Journey Through the Currents of Human History

Vanessa Taylor

W&N. PB. \$34.99

Available 12 August



The Nile, Danube, Niger, Mississippi, Ganges, Yangtze and Thames have shaped civilisation. This global history of humanity reveals that what we do with our rivers tells us about who has power and

what we value. The story of empire-builders, river gods, slavery, rebellions, dreamers and more are woven through these rivers, but with the popularity of wild swimming and some of our major river systems dying, it has never been clearer that rivers are intertwined with humanity at our best and our worst.

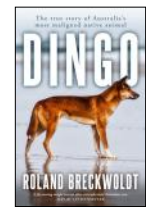
Natural History

Dingo: The True Story of Australia's Most Maligned Native Animal

Roland Breckwoldt

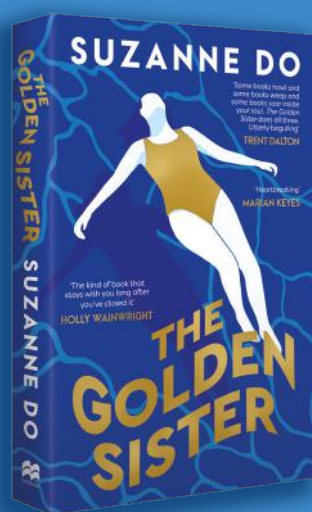
A&U. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Australia's dingoes are increasingly under threat of extinction after two centuries of mythmaking, bounties and poisoning. But the tide is turning. Science shows there's little interbreeding with

A twin sister's death, a lost child, a coastal community that's not always close-knit.



'Heartbreaking'
MARIAN KEYES

'Utterly beguiling'
TRENT DALTON

'Life-affirming'
HAYLEY SCRIVENOR

'Stays with you'
HOLLY WAINWRIGHT

'Distinctly Australian'
BENJAMIN STEVENSON



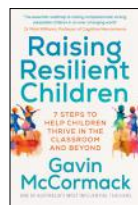
domestic dogs, and that dingoes play an integral role in maintaining ecological balance, including by keeping kangaroos and wild pigs and goats in check. Now dingo numbers are perilously low in many areas. Will Australia be willing to protect the dingo before it's too late? This is the story of a true Australian icon.

Parenting

Raising Resilient Children: 7 Steps to Help Children Thrive in the Classroom and Beyond
Gavin McCormack

S&S. PB. \$36.99

Available now



As school refusal, mental health struggles and social challenges in the playground continue to rise, trailblazing teacher Gavin McCormack is redefining what it means

to receive a 'good education'. Gavin's transformative methods can be used by parents, carers and educators alike. He highlights the power of modelling positive behaviour and prioritising essential life skills over academic scores, helping children build resilience, develop emotional intelligence, and thrive beyond traditional measures of success.

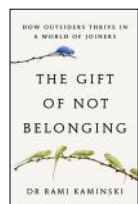
Personal Development

The Gift of Not Belonging: How Outsiders Thrive in a World of Joiners

Dr Rami Kaminski

Scribe. PB. \$32.99

Available now



The Gift of Not Belonging is the first book to explore the distinct personality style of the otrovert – someone who thrives in one-on-one relationships but lacks a communal impulse. Dr Kaminski, who has been

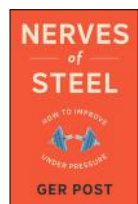
studying this personality style for over 30 years reveals its strengths: independent thinking, emotional resilience, and freedom from group conformity. This book urges otroverts to embrace their unique gifts and equips them with the knowledge and tools to thrive in a communal world.

Nerves of Steel: How to Improve Under Pressure

Ger Post

MUP. PB. \$29.99

Available 12 August



Nerves of Steel reveals what we can learn from athletes about thriving when the heat is on. Combining insights from statistics, philosophy and neuropsychology, Ger Post shows that the secrets of

famous clutch performances, beyond the hype, stereotypes and sexism, lie in doing what is right and smart, regardless of how we feel in the moment. The difference between choking and triumph is in improving our response to adversity and focusing on the things we can control when everything falls apart.

Prime Time: 27 Lessons for the New Midlife

Bec Wilson

Hachette. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Prime Time isn't just a roadmap to retirement – it's a playbook for a life lived with intention, energy, joy, and financial confidence. With Bec Wilson as your guide, you can embrace this

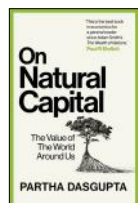
incredible stage and truly make the most of your Prime Time. Wilson guides you through the key pillars of power, money, health, work, purpose, happiness, family and travel. This isn't just about adjusting to a longer lifespan – it's about creating a richer, more fulfilling life.

Politics

On Natural Capital: The Value of the World Around Us
Partha Dasgupta

Witness. PB. \$36.99

Available 5 August



Our current economic models are incomplete. Telling us they are healthy because they are growing doesn't account for the fact they are driven by a resource we take for free and treat as infinite: nature.

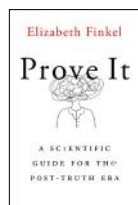
Renowned economist Sir Partha Dasgupta lays out a new approach to economics. Challenging everything that has come before, he asks, what if we were to put a value on nature just as we value everything else? This groundbreaking book is an urgent call to transform global economics, that could, truly, change everything.

Science

Prove It: A Scientific Guide for the Post-Truth Era
Elizabeth Finkel

La Trobe University Press. PB. \$36.99

Available 12 August



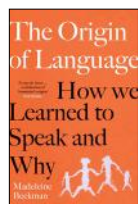
Humans developed the scientific method over centuries. Its departure from what came before was that theories should be fuelled by data, not opinion. Today, the institutions that underpin

democracy all rely on its central idea. In *Prove It*, Elizabeth Finkel describes how the scientific method plays out in a series of controversies. Through these tales of dispute and discovery Finkel captures the excitement of scientific discovery and debate and argues compellingly that its lessons are more crucial now than ever.

The Origin of Language
Madeleine Beekman

Scribner. PB. \$36.99

Available now



Evolutionary biologist Madeleine Beekman reveals the happy 'accidents' hidden in our molecular biology – our chromosomes, DNA and proteins – that led to one of the most fateful events

in the history of life on Earth: humans giving birth to less developed babies than those of the Neanderthals and Denisovans. Faced with highly dependent infants early human communities needed to cooperate and coordinate, and it was this need for communication that triggered the creation of human language – and changed everything.

Father's Day gift ideas

Fressko Coal Piccolo Ceramic Cup

Fressko. 118ml/4oz. \$34.99



Designed for espresso purists and short-coffee connoisseurs. Fressko's smallest cup yet features a smooth ceramic interior for a pure, refined coffee experience.

Health Sock Alpaca: Denim

Humphrey Law. Medium, UK size 7–10. \$34.99



An exceptionally warm luxury sock made with a blend of alpaca and wool. Alpaca fibre is soft, supple and smooth and contains microscopic air pockets which act as insulators keeping in the warmth provided by the wool. A Health Sock® with no tight elastic top.

Desktop Pickleball

Kikkerland. \$29.99



This is an easy to set up desktop pickleball set that includes two wooden paddles, a ball and a net that attaches to your desk with suction cups.

Shake Rattle and Roll: Deluxe Poker Dice

Iron & Glory. \$34.99



Played with five dice and two or more players, Poker Dice is a mash-up of card and dice games where the best poker hand wins! Comes with a lidded wooden shaker cup, and five black and gold dice.

Bike Crew Socks (Set of 2)

Gentlemen's Hardware. US size 9–12. \$19.99



Give a practical gift for the bicycle enthusiast in your life with this set of two bike crew socks from Gentlemen's Hardware. Have some fun with a pop of colour for a casual ride or daily commute wearing these soft combed cotton socks.

Vinyl Cleaning Kit

Gentlemen's Hardware. \$19.99

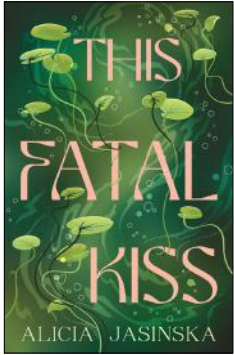


Designed for the discerning audiophile, this kit will ensure your vinyl collection sounds as pristine as the day you bought it! Includes a velvet cleaning brush, 50ml cleaning fluid and cloth. **R**

Young Adult

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Young Adult



This Fatal Kiss
Alicia Jasinska
Walker. PB. \$22.99
Available 1 August

R When Gisela drowned a year ago, she was transformed into a rusalka – a kind of water nymph notorious for drowning humans to avenge their own untimely deaths. And while Gisela hasn't drowned anyone in her year as a spirit, she has become a chronic nuisance to the local exorcist, Kazik, who sees her attempts to befriend and flirt with the local humans as the opening gambit in a plan to drag them to a watery grave. But when Gisela reveals that she's trying to get a kiss from a mortal in order to become human again, she and Kazik strike up a deal – he'll play matchmaker for her, and she won't let slip to the other spirits that his magic is waning. Despite their rocky relationship, Kazik is determined to do what he can to help Gisela, but unfortunately the mortal she has her eye on is the same boy Kazik has been harbouring a crush on for years.

Reading this book feels like looking at a gorgeous Art Nouveau painting of a water nymph, and then having the nymph come to life and start making jokes

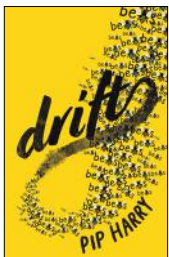
Reading this book feels like looking at a gorgeous Art Nouveau painting of a water nymph, and then having the nymph come to life and start making jokes – it's beautiful, surprising and will make you giggle. Alicia Jasinska manages to expertly bring together the lush, fairytale-esque setting with characters that are both funny and relatable – it's a tough needle to thread in a historical fantasy, but Gisela's wisecracking and Kazik's dry humour make the world feel more vivid, rather than undermining it.

I love a book that embraces grey areas, rather than purely the black and white, and *This Fatal Kiss* brings satisfying nuance to everything, from the queer love triangle to the magical setting, to the ending itself. I'm sure teen and adult fantasy readers alike will be delighted by it! Recommended for ages 13+.

Bella Mackey is the digital content lead

Drift

Pip Harry
Lothian. PB. \$17.99
Available now



R What would you do if a thousand bees settled in the walls of your house? What about if a video of the worst moment of your life went viral? You might have your own answers, but for Nate and Luna, the

two teenage voices of Pip Harry's new verse novel *Drift*, the key to solving their problems lies in each other. For Nate, recently uprooted from life in Singapore, Luna is the perfect first new friend and, more importantly, the perfect ally to help protect his bees from extermination. For Luna, new-kid Nate is the only person at school who hasn't seen the video and doesn't see her differently because of it. It also helps that they're next-door neighbours – friendship was almost an inevitability.

Although these two central sources of conflict in *Drift* – bees and internet infamy – are certainly exceptional, they both speak to real challenges of adolescence: with his dad still working in Singapore and his mum disabled by a slipped disc in her spine, Nate has already been thrust towards independence, but the swarm of bees becomes a responsibility he embraces and grows from. Likewise, while not every teen gets turned into a social pariah overnight, everyone who's been to high school knows the tensions and stresses of friendship

have only been amplified by the speed and anonymity of the internet. Add in Pip Harry's great use of verse to strike right at the heart of each scene and you get a thoroughly entertaining book that addresses a lot, without ever feeling overstuffed. For ages 12+.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

Weaving Us Together

Lay Maloney
Lothian. PB. \$19.99
Available now



R A coming-of-age novel about finding yourself in the face of adversity, *Weaving Us Together* is the debut book from Lay Maloney, a genderfluid author from the Gumbaynggirr and Gunggandji nations and South Sea Islander heritage. The story follows Jean, and the group of friends they make after moving back to their parents' hometown. Through the eyes of these kids, Maloney explores ideas of queer identity, and learning how to live outside what society tells you to be. The story of Jean and their friends is also one deeply rooted in culture.

Jean's father was stolen from his family as a child, and we follow Jean's journey reconnecting with their family. Maloney doesn't shy away from tragedies that many First Nations Peoples experience or are affected by, including forced adoptions and police brutality, instead challenging the reader to confront them

head on. Despite this, the story doesn't feel bleak. The suffering in this novel always sits against a backdrop of love, family and community.

Weaving Us Together is a reminder that even though life can knock you down again and again, there are people who love you and will fight for you, and that is such an important lesson for all young people to learn. I would recommend this book for young people aged 12+, particularly queer and First Nations youths, who are struggling to find their place in a world that often feels set against them. Content note: suicide, substance abuse, Black deaths in custody, homophobia and transphobia.

Alicia Guiney is from Readings Kids

Glorious Rivals

Jennifer Lynn Barnes
Penguin. PB. \$27.99
Available now

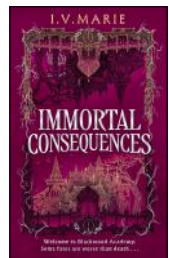


Seven players arrived on Hawthorne Island to play a billionaire's game. Now only five remain, and the race to the finish line is on. The heat turns up on the competition, and it becomes increasingly clear that no one will

emerge from the Grandest Game unscathed. Millions are at stake, but so are hearts – and lives. The puzzles, romance, and twists continue in this second instalment of the *Grandest Game* series.

Immortal Consequences

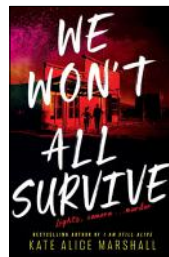
I.V. Marie
Farshore. PB. \$19.99
Available now



Welcome to Blackwood Academy, a boarding school on the edge of the afterlife. The only way out of Blackwood is to be chosen for the Decennial. Six students are nominated to face a series of magical trials where one is chosen to join Blackwood's elite or cross to the Other Side. Wren, Augustine, Irene, Masika, Olivier and Emilio have their reasons to win. Four trials. One victor. They are about to learn that some fates are worse than death.

We Won't All Survive

Kate Alice Marshall
Affirm Kids. PB. \$22.99
Available now



R Eight teens turn up at an abandoned location to compete in a reality TV show dreamt up by a male survivalist billionaire with the promise of a \$100,000 reward. The teens are all survivors of shootings, drownings, and other near-death experiences, with the PTSD to show for it. But Mercy Gray, the narrator, needs the prize money more than most. After she rescued her sister and others from a shooting, she had huge medical bills from treatment for the bullet she took, part of which remains lodged in her back. Her sister paid her bills but now can't afford to go to college, and Mercy is determined to pay her back.

The teens thought they would have cameras in their faces and staff telling them how to behave, but the location is completely abandoned. They must work together to find food and water to survive. And when one of them turns up dead after the first night, they realise this is no ordinary reality TV show. Something much more sinister is going on, and there may be a traitor in their midst.

I loved the author's other novels, *I Am Still Alive*, and *Rules for Vanishing*, which were both filled with a terrifying sense of impending doom. *We Won't All Survive* has the same atmosphere, with plenty of twists and turns to keep you reading right up until the final page. Those aged 13+ who love the writing of Karen M. McManus or Holly Jackson will devour this action-packed, well-written story.

Angela Crocombe is a senior buyer

The Wildest Dreams Bookshop

Gracie Page
HarperCollins. PB. \$19.99
Available now



Seventeen-year-old Anna is not having a good summer. Her boyfriend has dumped her, and she thinks she's flunked her exams. When her aunt invites her to stay at her bookshop by the sea for the summer,

she reluctantly says yes. Maybe she can get her life back on track. But she wasn't counting on the infuriating yet hot local surfer, or unwittingly agreeing to host a celebrity launch at the bookshop.

The Last Tiger

Julia Riew & Brad Riew
Penguin. PB. \$26.99
Available now

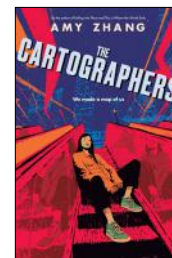


In a colonised land where tigers are being hunted to extinction and ancient magic stirs, two star-crossed teens – Lee Seung, a servant yearning for freedom, and Choi Eunji, a noble girl defying tradition –

join forces to reshape their fates. But as the ties between them are complicated by their conflicting loyalties to their families, tensions rise, especially when a charming princeling of the empire begins to rival for Eunji's affection.

The Cartographers

Amy Zhang
HarperCollins. PB. \$24.99
Available now



Ocean Sun has always felt pressure to succeed. After struggling with depression in high school, she's accepted into a prestigious university in New York City. Feeling emotionally raw,

Ocean defers (without telling her mum) and moves into a New York apartment with Georgie and Tashya. And she meets a boy on the subway, Constantine Brave. But everything falls apart when Ocean goes home for Thanksgiving, Constant reveals his true character, Georgie and Tashya break up, and the police get involved. **R**

Kids

PICTURE BOOK OF THE MONTH

Picture Book

Hello Cockey: A Stickybeak at the Cockatoo
Hilary Bell & Antonia Pesenti (illus.)
Scribble. HB. \$27.99
Available 5 August



R Cockatoos are smart and beautiful birds with boundless personality and vocalisations. This excellent new picture book perfectly captures the unique character of the cockatoo. It’s a wonderful rhyming story that is a complete joy to read aloud. Antonia Pesenti is well-known for her stylish, bold and fun illustrations. She has done a great job of showcasing the cheeky habits of cockatoos, as well as celebrating their striking looks. Pages that feature cockatoos sneaking a hot chip or two are sure to provoke lots of giggles and maybe even a few shrieks. This is another top-tier picture book, produced to the highest standard by Melbourne-based publisher Scribble, and everyone aged 2+ will have a great time sharing this book.

Kim Gruschow is the manager of Readings St Kilda

KIDS BOOK OF THE MONTH

Middle Grade

The Wicked Ship (Oceanforged, Book 1)
Amelia Mellor
Affirm Kids. PB. \$16.99
Available now



R *The Wicked Ship* is the first book in *Oceanforged*, a new series by Amelia Mellor, author of *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*. It follows the story of Cori, a young orphan girl who unwittingly becomes a pirate on a ship with a horrendous captain, crew and reputation. During one village pillage, she is sent into a decrepit, booby-trapped vault to find a weapon. It turns out this weapon is the Oceanforged Gauntlet: an instrument that belonged to long-forgotten champions who used to rule Cori’s world with fairness and strength. Much to her captain’s chagrin, the gauntlet has chosen Cori to be its champion – and so the fun begins! Cori must find the other pieces of armour before the captain does, with only the ragtag crew she pulls together to help – which I assume will be the genesis of the remaining books in the series. The sentences are short, the pace is quick, and the scene is set beautifully, making this a good read-alone or a fun read-along.

My eight-year-old was meant to review this book, and while he isn’t on the payroll, I think he gets enough perks (free books), however, when asked to put pen to paper he said, enthusiastically:

‘Five stars.’
‘Great,’ I said, ‘and ...?’
‘And what?’
‘You need to give the people more than that!’
‘It’s good, and they should read it.’

I tried to pull more out of him for three weeks and this is what I got: ‘Fun, interesting, entertaining; I want to read the whole series, when is the next book coming out? Where is *Oceanforged*? I want to read it again.’

The verdict is in!

Rosalind McClintock is the head of marketing
Contributing Reading reviewer: Hubert, age 8

R I liked this story very much and am looking forward to Book Two. Cori and her friends are adventurous and brave. The story is filled with detail, excitement and suspense. Some younger readers might get a little bit scared at times, but not too scared to stop you reading. Readers of the *Rainbow Magic* series may like this series because the characters also try to find things and make friends along the way.

Contributing Reading reviewer: Imogen, age 8

Picture Books

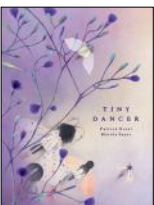
The Wind in the Wall
Sally Gardner & Rovina Cai (illus.)
Hotkey. PB. \$19.99
Available 26 August



In 18th-century England, a duke assigns his gardener the impossible task of growing prize-winning pineapples fit to show off in high society. The gardener is soon replaced by Mr Amicus, a pineapple ‘specialist’, who miraculously produces fruit to delight the duke. Suspicious and

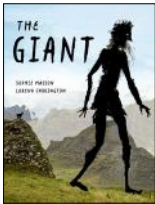
determined to uncover Mr Amicus’s trickery, the gardener sneaks into the pineapple hot-house, changing his own life forever.

Tiny Dancer
Patrick Guest & Mateja Jager (illus.)
Dirt Lane. HB. \$27.95
Available 1 August



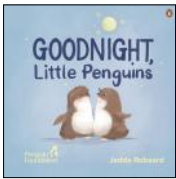
A gentle fable about living life to the full from acclaimed author Patrick Guest and illustrator Mateja Jager. Some creatures live for decades or even centuries, but mayflies live for just a day. Inspired by both the brevity of life and its unfathomable splendour, *Tiny Dancer* is about making each moment count.

The Giant
Sophie Masson & Lorena Carrington (illus.)
MidnightSun. HB. \$29.99
Available 1 August



On the day the giant wakes from a long sleep, he’s filled with joy at the thought of seeing his friends in the town again. But he’s slept so long that nobody remembers him, everyone hides from him, and his joy turns to a sadness that might engulf the whole town – until he hears the voices, calling to him...

Goodnight, Little Penguins
Penguin Foundation & Jedda Robaard (illus.)
Puffin. HB. \$24.99
Available now



When two fluffy little chicks hatch, their daddy keeps them safe and warm while Mama ventures into the wild waves to find their dinner. Will she be back before bedtime? A perfect bedtime story, starring the iconic penguins of Phillip Island.

Junior Grade

Paw Prints: Stuck in a Handstand!
Andrew Hansen & Jessica Roberts (illus.)
Walker. PB. \$12.99
Available 1 August



Pattie Cake would love to have a special talent, just like everyone else in her class. Luckily, her school principal has a magic fish. It grants Pattie the special talent she longs for – the ability to do handstands. The only problem is, she gets stuck upside down! Will she ever be the right way up again?

Middle Grade

Two-Faced Tales: A Book of Stunning Survival and Brilliant Betrayal
100 Story Building
Hardie Grant. PB. \$16.99
Available now



R This anthology of stories with the theme of survival and betrayal takes readers on a journey to the dark side. Written, edited and illustrated by young people, with 13 stories chosen by a collection of young editors aged 10–12, this book is a testament to their creativity, talent and hard work. With stories, quizzes, recipes, poems and even a cat-focused search-and-find amongst these pages, there is something for every reader. Author Alice Pung has also contributed a spine-tingling story to the collection. As each terrifying story is accompanied by illustrations on every page, this anthology is sure to entertain kids on a boring day and also inspire them to be creative themselves. Buying a copy will help support 100 Story Building, a social enterprise based in Footscray, which develops literacy and creativity in young people. These suspenseful stories are a delight for readers aged 9–12.

Angela Crocombe is a senior buyer

Run
Sarah Armstrong
Hardie Grant. PB. \$18.99
Available now



R When Cas runs off into the bush after a family disagreement, he soon finds himself lost and must do his best to survive on his own. When he meets two girls and their dog, he expects that his ordeal has ended, and they will lead him back to civilisation, but instead he learns that he’s not alone in running away at all.

This is a fast-paced survival story that also manages to thoughtfully address themes of family and forgiveness. Set in the bush, it's an exciting read filled with strong, memorable characters. The plot is gripping, yet written with sensitivity and an inclusive approach.

Survival stories (and survival television shows!) tend to focus on someone overcoming difficult conditions alone. This book offers a unique perspective, as characters grapple with relationships to other people, and prove to be just as challenging as the wilderness. *Run* is an exciting read for ages 9+.

Kim Gruschow is the manager of Readings St Kilda

The Locked Room

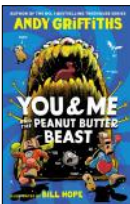
Adam Cece
Penguin. PB. \$19.99
Available 5 August



🔑 Andy and three other kids wake up in a locked room. The room has no windows, but it has a locked door, with a countdown clock above it. They have less than an hour to figure out how to get out of this room. But when they do ...? There's another locked room, and more locked doors. And they can't go back.

You & Me and the Peanut Butter Beast (You & Me, Book 2)

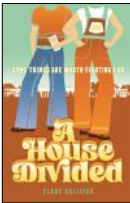
Andy Griffiths & Bill Hope (illus.)
Pan Mac. PB. \$16.99
Available 19 August



🔑 Hey, you – yes, you! Remember when we found that really deep hole and you jumped in and I had to jump in to rescue you and at the bottom of the hole we found the cave of the legendary Peanut Butter Beast? That was one of our deepest (and most dangerous) adventures ever! What? You don't remember? Well, have I got a story for you! Let me remind you how it all went down.

A House Divided (Our History, Book 2)

Clare Hallifax
Walker. PB. \$16.99
Available 1 August



When your dad has a key job in the federal government, even faraway crises hit close to home. It's 1975 and Juliet's excited for her last year of primary school. There are new attitudes, new opportunities and new friends. But politics is casting a long shadow over the country, and it seems nothing can save Juliet and her loved ones from the biggest crisis of all.

New Kid on Deck (Pirate Academy, Book 1)

Justin Somper
A&U. PB. \$16.99
Available now



The year is 2507. The oceans have risen. A new dawn of piracy has begun. Jacoby Blunt and Jasmine Peacock are students at the elite Pirate Academy. When a new kid arrives, everything changes. Suddenly, the dangers are no longer at sea and the students of the Pirate Academy must put everything they have learned to the test.

Welcome to Pirate Academy, where every day is a swashbuckling adventure!

A Gift from the Birds

Caroline Stills
Text. PB. \$16.99
Available now



📖 Despite her mum's worrying illness, Millie's 10th birthday party is perfect: lots of friends, cake, music, games and the best present of all – a silver heart necklace. But when her mum suddenly collapses, it's clear that something is really, seriously wrong. Overnight, their lives suddenly revolve around hospital visits filled with fear, confusion, and endless (occasionally horrible) casseroles.

Mum isn't getting better, and Millie wants to tell her about some mysterious crows that keep visiting, but she can't seem to find the right time. When Millie feeds the crows, they leave her a little present, yet for all their cleverness and kindness, they can't make her mum better, and neither can the doctors. When Millie loses almost everything, can her feathered friends help her find her way back to family, art and hope? *A Gift from the Birds* is a raw and tender exploration of grief, friendship and the healing power of nature, for children aged 8+.

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

Kids Nonfiction

This Bird: Noticing Our Urban Birds

Astred Hicks with Holly Parsons
CSIRO. HB. \$32.99
Available 1 August



Discover the birds that share our urban spaces. What's so fancy about this bird? What's so clever about that bird? Perhaps it's a weightlifter, a marathon flier, an artist, or even a liar. You don't need to go far to see intriguing birds, even in the city. From colourful parrots to artistic bowerbirds and fancy fairy-wrens, there's lots to notice in our local backyards, streets and parks.

Find Me on the Coast

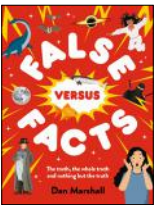
Jess McGeachin
Lothian. HB. \$29.99
Available now



Embark on a journey around our world's coastlines and meet the fascinating plants and animals who call them home. From towering kelp forests and coral reefs to rocky shores and muddy mangroves, discover how life thrives and survives on the coast in the most remarkable ways. This book for young nature lovers is the first in the *Find Me* series by award-winning author-illustrator Jess McGeachin.

False versus Facts

Dan Marshall
Walker. HB. \$19.99
Available now

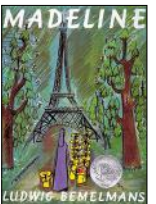


Get ready for the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth! *Can you really see the Great Wall of China from Space? Is there such a thing as the five second rule? And was Napoleon really that short?* Separate truth from lies, bust some myths and discover once and for all – what is false and what is fact. The truth may surprise you!

Kids Classic of the Month

Madeline

Ludwig Bemelmans
Puffin. PB. \$14.99
Available now



📖 Some books are so familiar, so sturdy and welcoming, reading them feels like arriving home. Rereading *Madeline* for the first time in years felt like entering a time machine, brimming with nostalgia. As I read, I could only hear the words in my mother's bedtime-story voice, which I hadn't known I remembered.

Only Ludwig Bemelmans could pack so much into so few words that have continued to resonate for over 85 years. Twelve little girls, two straight lines, our bold and irreverent protagonist, and a medical emergency, all sealed with the universal adolescent experience of comically misplaced jealousy.

This book had such an impact on me because of its simple but expressive illustrations and the steady beat of its prose. The image of a rabbit-shaped crack in a hospital ceiling lives in a permanent spot in my mind.

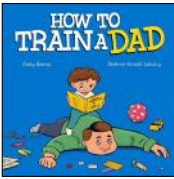
Equal parts precious and mischievous, it is easy to see why *Madeline* is a classic that has stood the test of time. If it's been a while since you've read it, I'd highly recommend refreshing your memory. For ages 2+.

Celeste Perry is from Readings Emporium

Father's Day books to read and share

How to Train a Dad

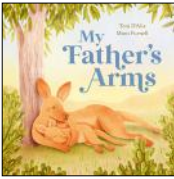
Sally Barns & Noémie Gionet Landry (illus.)
Affirm Kids. HB. \$19.99
Available now



If you are reading this manual, then you have decided to take on one of life's most difficult challenges ... Training a dad. We'll start with the basics, like tea parties and bear hugs. Soon you'll unlock trickier features, like dad jokes. (But be careful – some of these features are hard to switch off!) By the end of this manual, you'll be equipped with a fully trained dad. Good luck!

My Father's Arms

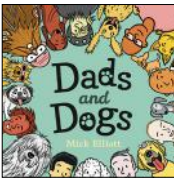
Toni D'Alia & Mimi Purnell (illus.)
Little Hare. HB. \$22.99
Available now



My father's arms are magic. They tell me he loves me. In my father's arms is my favourite place to be. From bestselling Australian creators Toni D'Alia and Mimi Purnell comes a joyous celebration of all the tender, connected and loving dads out there.

Dads and Dogs

Mick Elliott
Walker. BB. \$16.99
Available 1 August



A delightful dad-full, dog-full celebration of dads and dogs! The paw-fect gift for Dads, dogs and everyone who loves them! *Dads and Dogs* is a romp of a picture book featuring lots of different dads with all their different dogs. A joyful celebration of togetherness, and all the fun, chaos, mischief and laughter that dad's best friend brings to the family.

My Nonno Loves

Adelle Frittitta & Claudia Frittitta (illus.)
Little Hare. HB. \$22.99
Available now

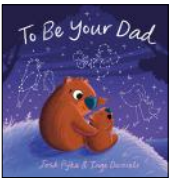


🔑 *My nonno loves being in his garden, with a coffee in hand and songs in the air. But most of all, my nonno loves me!* Perfect for grandparents to read aloud to their grandchildren, this joyful picture book, with tenderly drawn

illustrations and heartfelt text, is the ideal keepsake for grandfathers everywhere.

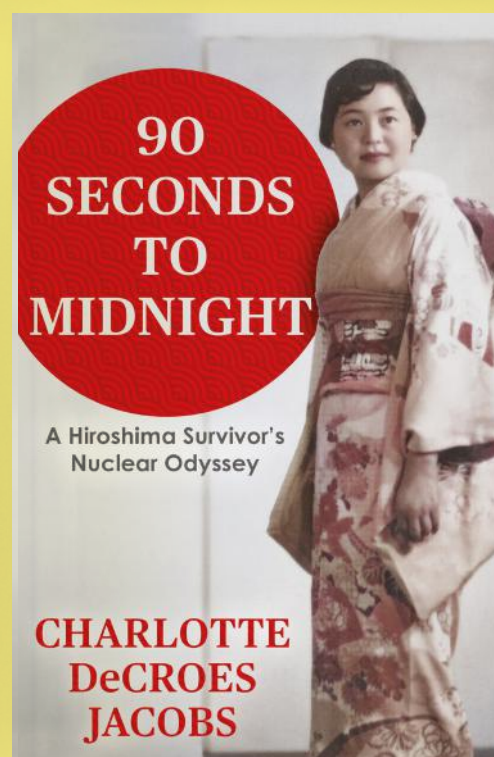
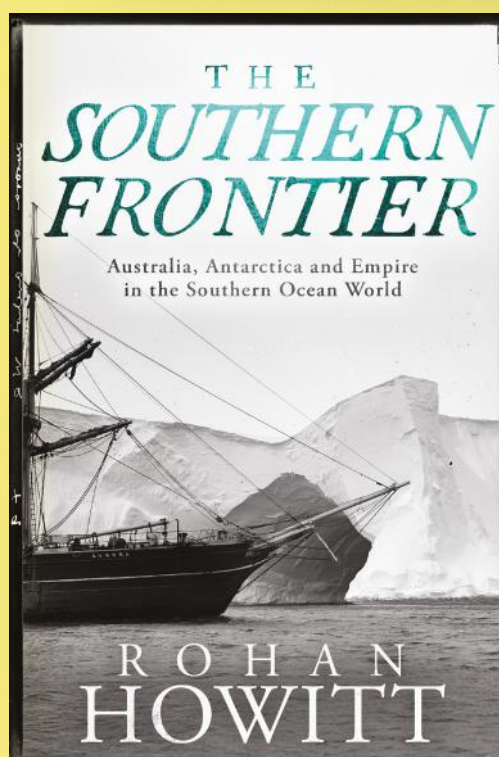
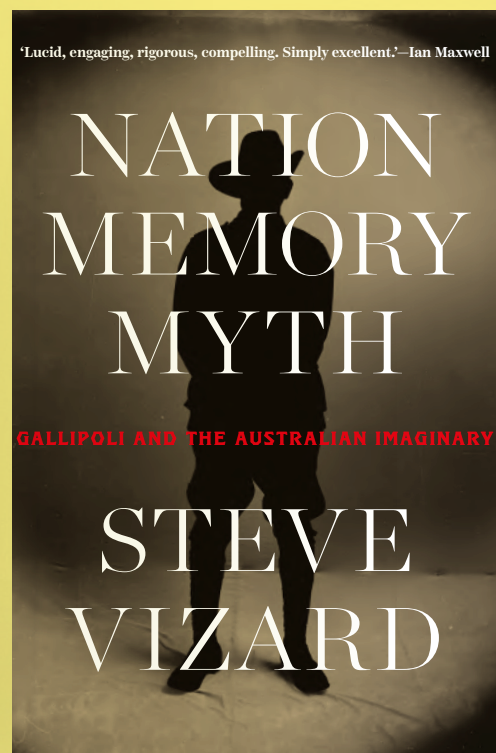
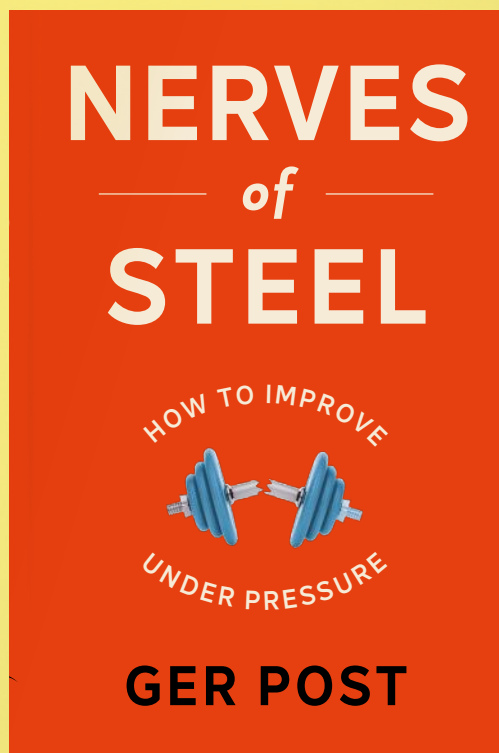
To Be Your Dad

Josh Pyke & Inge Daniels (illus.)
Scholastic. HB. \$19.99
Available now



What does it mean to be your dad? It means jokes are more gigglesome, cuddles more warm, an 'I love you' more soul-deeply true. It means the universe never held so many wonders, the most wondrous of all being you. **R**

Father's Day Reading



Nerves of Steel How to Improve Under Pressure by Ger Post. **The Southern Frontier** Australia, Antarctica and Empire in the Southern Ocean World by Rohan Howitt. **Nation, Memory, Myth** Gallipoli and the Australian Imaginary by Steve Vizard. **90 Seconds to Midnight** A Hiroshima Survivor's Nuclear Odyssey by Charlotte DeCroes Jacobs