

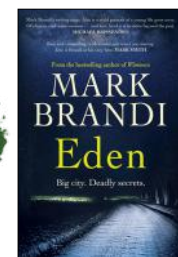
# ReadingsMonthly

FREE | JULY 2025

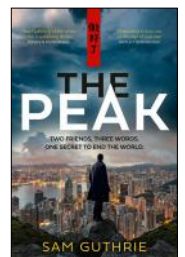
## BookPeople conference wrap-up

page 4

*New books from*  
**Moreno Giovannoni,  
Katherine Brabon,  
Irvine Welsh,  
Michael Robotham,  
Margaret Hickey,  
Jackie French and  
Gus Gordon**



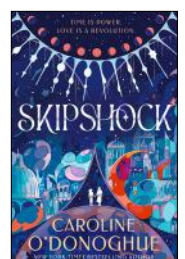
**MARK  
BRANDI**  
page 5



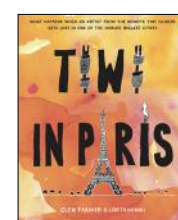
**SAM  
GUTHRIE**  
page 11



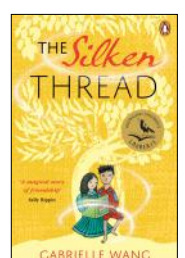
**QUENTIN  
SPRAGUE**  
page 12



**CAROLINE  
O'DONOGHUE**  
page 17



**GLEN FARMER  
ILLORTAMINNI**  
page 18

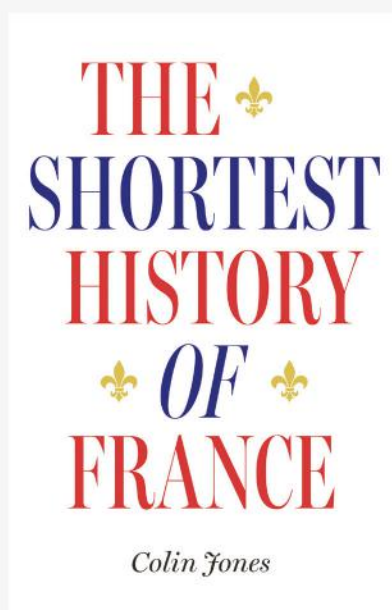


**GABRIELLE  
WANG**  
page 18

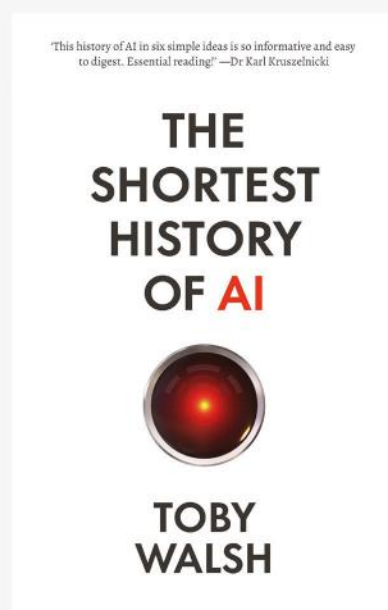


# Life is short; history is long

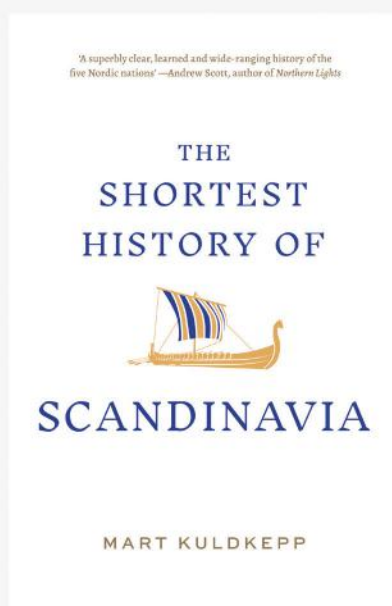
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The world-changing story of Turkey – a country caught between two worlds

News

Promos

Events

with Chris Gordon

Melbourne International Film Festival 2025

Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) is back for 2025, running from 7 to 24 August. This year, MIFF invites you to ‘Look Closer’ at stories from near and far. The program will be revealed on 10 July and tickets will be on sale from 15 July. Find out more at [miff.com.au](http://miff.com.au)

Open House Melbourne 2025

Running from 26 to 27 July, Open House Melbourne is a weekend to foster public appreciation for architecture and public engagement in conversations about the future of our cities. Kerstin Thompson Architects is hosting architect talks at our Readings Chadstone shop on Saturday 26 July. To find out more about this event and all the other incredible events, head to [openhousemelbourne.org](http://openhousemelbourne.org)

3 for 2 translated fiction

For July we have a great offer on a select range of translated fiction titles. Purchase two titles and get the third (of equal or lesser value) for free. This offer is available at all Readings shops (except Readings Kids) until 31 July 2025. Not available online. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.

3 for 2 manga

Calling all manga lovers! This July, we have an exciting offer on a select range of manga titles. Purchase two titles and get the third (of equal or lesser value) for free. This offer is available at Readings Chadstone, Doncaster and Emporium shops only until 31 July 2025. Not available online. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.

20% off Magabala children’s titles

NAIDOC week is just around the corner (6 to 13 July). To celebrate, we are offering 20% off an incredible range of children’s titles from Magabala. This offer is available online and at all Readings shops (except Readings Carlton) until 31 July 2025. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.



Here’s my plan for the middle month of winter: be engaged, be seen and remember how fortunate I am to be able to visit my favourite independent bookshop and be surrounded by words from writers and thinkers. And, if I time my

arrival right or simply plan ahead, I can meet those people at one of our incredible events. This month our events lineup showcases just how small our world is. So, take the time to visit a space where new ideas are welcomed. I promise being together is a known tonic.

Quentin Sprague in conversation  
Wednesday 9 July at 6.00pm

Readings Carlton, 309 Lygon St  
*Free, but bookings are essential*

Join us to hear Quentin Sprague in conversation about his new collection of essays. The 12 essays in *What Artists See* offer glimpses into the lives of some of Australia’s best contemporary artists.

NAIDOC Week: Leonie Norrington in conversation  
Thursday 10 July at 6.00pm

Readings SLV, 285–321 Russell St, Melbourne  
*Free, but bookings are essential*

Join us during NAIDOC week (6 to 13 July) to hear Leonie Norrington in conversation with Clare Wright about her new novel, *A Piece of Red Cloth*.

Jennie Orchard in conversation  
Tuesday 15 July at 6.00pm

Readings Emporium, 287 Lonsdale St, Melbourne  
*Free, but bookings are essential*

Join us to hear Jennie Orchard in conversation about *The Gifts of Reading for the Next Generation*. Orchard will be joined by Alice Pung, Maxine Beneba Clarke, Matt Ottley and Karys McEwen.

Poetry Winter Warmers #3  
Friday 25 July at 8.00pm

Readings Carlton, 309 Lygon St  
*Free, but bookings are essential*

Join Dan Hogan, Helen Jarvis and Peter Bakowski for an evening of poetry and a glass of red to warm your soul, hosted by Tim Loveday.

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](http://readings.com.au/events)



READINGS MONTHLY

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EDITOR

Elke Power

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Judi Mitchell & Lucie Dess

PROOFREADER

Nico Callaghan

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Natasha Theoharous

CARTOON

Oslo Davis

FRONT COVER

The July *Readings Monthly* cover features artwork from the cover of *Death and the Gardener* by Georgi Gospodinov & Angela Rodel (trans.), courtesy of the publisher W&N. Cover design by Tomás Almeida with artwork by Lizzie-May Amos. Read our review on page 8.

PRICES AND AVAILABILITY

Please note that all prices and release dates 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](http://readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

SHOP INFORMATION

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

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## Dear Reader

with Alison Huber



I've just returned from the annual gathering of Australia's independent booksellers, the BookPeople (formerly known as the Australian Booksellers Association) conference, this time held in the balmy climes of Brisbane. As it is every year, the conference schedule was packed with industry panels and author presentations (including but not limited to ones from Evelyn Araluen, Trent Dalton, Sofie Laguna, Heather Rose and Zoe Terakes), a huge trade show, an awards ceremony and gala dinner (at which our former colleague and outgoing CEO of BookPeople Robbie Egan received a Life Membership to the organisation in recognition of his contribution to the industry), and lots of networking between fellow booksellers and our comrades in publishing. In short, there was a lot of listening and talking, not much sleeping, and almost no reading (which I always find weird, given what we are there to honour). And now that I'm back on home turf, the thinking takes over for me, as I process all these encounters, discussions, and debates, and reflect on how they relate to what we are doing here at Readings, and my own work practice.

It's often noted at these gatherings that for an industry that is in a state of almost permanent crisis (The book is dead! E-books are taking over! Online retailers will kill the bookshop! Deep discounting is devaluing our businesses!), independent booksellers and their shops remain remarkably resilient, staring down each new challenge as it arrives: one view is that if there's one constant in life it's change, and change can be good and energising, especially when it's motivated by existential threats. Another view is that independent booksellers are a collectively stubborn bunch with a clarity of mission that keeps them keeping on in spite of it all.

A takeaway from this conference that is hard to ignore at this time, though, relates to the reading habits and literacy of Australia's children, who are of course the future's book buyers and book readers. Sally Rippin (who you might know for her *Billie B. Brown* and *Hey Jack!* book series, as well as *Polly and Buster* and the *School of Monsters*, among others) is the 2024–2025 Australian Children's Laureate. Sally gave a wonderful opening address to the gathering, armed with disappointing statistics about decreasing rates of engagement with books and reading in young people, with falling literacy rates which show that around one third will leave school without adequate reading skills, a fact that will impact more than just their engagement with books. Sally's response as a writer has been to think about ways that her books can engage young readers at different levels, including neurodivergent as well as neurotypical readers, and meet children where they are with fun and appealing stories that are interesting and exciting, stories with which kids can really feel the progress that they achieve as they move through the books and develop their reading skills: if reading is enjoyable, the kids will read more and for pleasure. Hearing about the steps involved in her own writing process, and the thinking that resulted in these hugely successful and popular book series was really inspiring to me, because her approach is both creative and pragmatic, and I think that methodology is one that really appeals to me as a way of solving problems of all kinds.

Another focus of discussion at the conference was emblematised in the panel, 'Indies supporting Indies', in which Ultimo publisher Robert Watkins hosted a discussion about how independent booksellers can support independent Australian publishers and vice versa. Regular readers might remember my first *Readings Monthly* column of this year, in which I suggested that every book purchase and reading decision has the potential to shore up an Australian publishing ecosystem that includes a healthy independent sector. There are many practical daily decisions that, when we all make them together, can work at a scale to support an independent sector in the face of increasing consolidation and multinational ownership.

As I've thought about it more, and continue to workshop this issue in my head, I'm not sure how much knowledge there is in the wider community about the finer points of publisher ownership and imprint histories,

and I think even amongst the bookselling community, the ownership of publishing companies is not always at front of mind. However, I do think there might be an appetite in our communities for more information, and that booksellers might be able to help tell publishing houses' stories; literary provenance can become part of the conversation. Celebrating and supporting independence is really important. At the same time, the idea that one might be discouraged from buying a great book or miss an incredible reading experience because it's published by a multinational company seems a fraught outcome of a discussion that might head in that direction without some care. Consumption is a many and varied set of cultural practices; moral consumption is not an easy path or a straightforward one. What booksellers can do at our end, though, is highlight the incredible work of our independent publishers and acknowledge the outstanding work of our local authors (whoever their publisher is) to make sure local content remains prominent on our shelves, and doing both of those things is what we've always done at Readings.

I fear this thought spiral I've been sent on might be making this conference sound terribly dry, but I promise you it wasn't, and I've barely touched the sides of the things that were covered across the weekend. It was another extremely (re)invigorating experience to share time with colleagues and reset for the second half of the year, and get excited about the huge books coming our way.

Meanwhile, in spite of spending a lot of time considering the future books of 2025 and the future of books in general over the last 72 hours, I must stand still, breathe deeply, and remember that it's actually July, and that a really great round of new releases is here for you already. One of them is *Eden* by Mark Brandi, our Fiction Book of the Month. We've been following Mark's career keenly since his debut novel, *Wimmera* (2017). Our reviewer (another of our favourite Marks) thinks this is his best work since that book, and I have to agree. Also out this month is a debut that took me by surprise, *Pissants* by Brandon Jack, as well as lots of other books our booksellers recommend, including second novels by two alumni of The Readings Prize, previously shortlisted authors Amy Taylor and Moreno Giovannoni. Our Crime Book of the Month is a debut thriller which our reviewer calls 'astonishing', *The Peak* by Sam Guthrie. Our Nonfiction Book of the Month is a standout work of essays, *What Artists See*, by award-winning writer Quentin Sprague. We also have one of our famous 3 for 2 offers available for the month of July in our shops on a range of translated works of fiction. The range on offer is not an exhaustive or even representative selection by any means, but rather a great starting place or library-building exercise if you'd like to join the growing interest in the creative work of talented writers who write in languages other than English, and the creative work of talented translators who give English speakers access to these works.

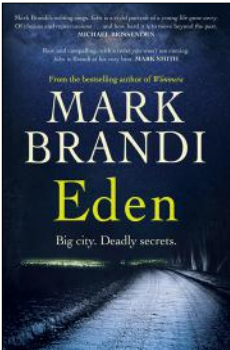
And finally, dear Reader, my colleagues in the Children's team have organised an offer on titles from Magabala Books. To my earlier point, Magabala is one of Australia's publishers whose story I know you'll be interested in. Based in Broome, this industry-leading Indigenous publishing house is Aboriginal owned and led. At this year's ABIA (Australian Book Industry Awards) night, Magabala's publisher, Rachel Bin Salleh OAM, was acknowledged with the Pixie O'Harris Award for her work in and impact on the world of children's publishing. In announcing the award, the Australian Publishers Association said, 'Rachel has quietly changed the Australian publishing landscape. From Broome in WA, she has encouraged the Australian publishing industry to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, while also being incredibly generous in sharing her knowledge of publishing First Nations stories'. To highlight this work, and in time for NAIDOC Week (6 to 13 July), we're offering 20% off a range of kids titles this month in shops and online, so now is the perfect time to familiarise yourself with and support Magabala's work. If you'd like to find out more about the publishing house and its history, there's lots more to explore on their website: [magabala.com.au](http://magabala.com.au) **R**



# Fiction

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Australian Fiction



**Eden**  
Mark Brandi  
Hachette. PB. \$32.99  
Available now

this situation, but he’s determined to put that behind him and to try to rebuild his life and rekindle the relationship that ended when he was sent to prison. As an ex-prisoner, his options are limited and they become even more limited when he loses his meagre savings from his prison work. We feel for him, for his lack of agency as he’s exploited and manipulated. Sleeping rough seems to be his only option, but that brings with it challenges of violence and police harassment. A chance comment that the cemetery is a safe place to sleep when the gates are locked at night leads him there and then by further chance to a job in the cemetery. Cyril, the overseer, offers him a lifeline; without asking questions, he seems to understand and have sympathy for Tom’s predicament. The work is strange but honest and gives Tom a place to stay – in the maintenance shed at the Macpherson Street gate. He tentatively reaches out to his old girlfriend; she’s in a relationship but Tom can sense that there’s still a chance for him – she doesn’t reject him outright. Maybe things are going to turn out okay.

But then Tom’s peace is interrupted by a journalist wanting to uncover why he did what he did, dragging the trauma of his crime back into the open. Tom’s equilibrium is also challenged when Cyril offers him a deal, one in which there can only be one winner – and it’s not Tom. Confronted by a moral choice and pressures from all sides, Tom struggles with what to do. In the cemetery, he thought he’d found his Eden, and now it looks like Hell.

I think this is Brandi’s best work since his award-winning debut, *Wimmera*; it’s an enthralling story with wonderful characters, mystery, moral dilemmas and, at its centre, the brooding hulk of the Melbourne General Cemetery. You won’t look at a grave the same way again.

Mark Rubbo is the chairman of Readings

**R** I’m fortunate to live near the Melbourne General Cemetery and my dog and I often walk through it on our way to Princes Park; I try to read the oldest headstones, particularly those that sit in a little meadow under a grove of peppercorn trees. It’s peaceful there and provides me time for reflection. Often, I pass the memorial for two dear friends, sisters Mietta and Trish O’Donnell, designed by architects Six Degrees; it’s a strikingly beautiful, simple, modernist structure sitting amongst the ornate marble memorials favoured by more traditional families. There are small rotundas dotted throughout the cemetery that have been useful when an occasional downpour hits. The late Boyd Oxlade set part of his darkly comic novel *Death in Brunswick* in the cemetery. On a number of occasions, I’ve run into writer Mark Brandi and his dog, either in the cemetery or in Macpherson Street, which runs along its northern boundary. I like Mark a lot; he’s a charming, compassionate and intelligent man. He’s also a writer whose books I’ve enjoyed and admired. Mark’s work demonstrates an empathy for the marginalised in our society. His books are often classified as literary crime, and in some sense they are; they race along with unexpected twists and turns, but they also explore experiences and emotions on more profound levels.

In his latest novel, *Eden*, Tom Blackburn is released from prison after serving nine years of a sentence for accessory to murder. We don’t discover until later how he came to be in

complicity that defined postwar Japan. Adams leans into these complex realities with a gusto that makes *The Occupation* all the more admirable as a reflection on this neglected corner of our history.

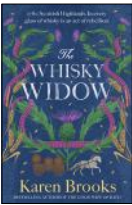
Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

**Cure**  
Katherine Brabon  
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



Vera writes for the internet: she constructs identities and scenarios for brands. Yet she also consumes the offerings of the online world: the addictive pursuit of a cure, the narratives she craves in which mothers and daughters find a way out of the shared experience of chronic illness. While on holiday in Italy, Vera’s daughter Thea writes in her journal. They have come to Italy to see where Vera’s family originates, but also to chase a promised cure. As they both grapple with their own narratives, all may not be as it seems.

**The Whisky Widow**  
Karen Brooks  
HQ Fiction. PB. \$32.99  
Available 2 July



1780 Scottish Highlands. When Greer MacAlister’s husband dies, she and her young daughter Fen find themselves in a remote whisky smuggling community in the heart of the Highlands. Here, illicit whisky making is a means of survival in a Scotland under occupation by the British, decades after the Battle of Culloden. The villagers are suspicious of the widow, however when Greer tricks excise officers away from their illegal stills with a courageous and daring act, they warm to her. But the excise men are out for revenge.

**What Did I Miss?**  
Holly Brunnbauer  
HarperCollins. PB. \$32.99  
Available 2 July



One of Makayla’s many regrets is marrying her high school dud. Newly divorced, determined to hold on to her independence and facing the Big Three-O, Makayla makes a list of all the things she missed out on while her friends were single and running amok in their twenties. But when her one-night stand turns up again, and revenge on her ex spirals out of control, she has to decide if some things are worth missing. And if Makayla can’t sort herself out before her birthday, she might face the biggest regret of her life.

**Dead Ends**  
Samantha Byres  
UQP. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



**R** When *Dead Ends* arrived on my desk with comparisons to *Deadloch*, *Top of the Lake* and *Too Much Lip*, I thought that was rather a lot to live up to. Fortunately, it did not disappoint – I couldn’t put this book down from the moment I started reading. Was I

further won over by the initial description of the main character, Nell, as an ‘all-round chaos merchant’? Well, yes – and she is, but arguably with good reason.

Nell has just returned to her hometown in Aotearoa New Zealand after being summoned from Sydney by her mother’s best friend, Jacqui, who also happens to be the aunt of her dead childhood best friend, April. Nell’s mum has had a stroke, and after her brother helped nurse their father through cancer, it’s Nell’s turn to step up and help. Fortunately, Nell has just lodged a complaint with HR against her ex-girlfriend, who is also her ex-boss, and is consequently at something of a loose end – one that is rapidly threatening to become thoroughly unravelling under the influence of her childhood home and small community. The fact that washed-up TV psychic Petronella, who Nell and April were obsessed with as teens, has also just arrived in town is a strange time-war coincidence.

When Nell’s mum needs to spend some time in the respite centre at which they and Jacqui used to work, Nell has even more time on her hands and even more guilt on her conscience. So, in a regrettable cheap-wine-influenced moment, she tells Petronella more than she probably should about her mum’s sister, who has been missing for decades, and starts sleeping with April’s married older brother, Mick, and Petronella’s beguiling assistant, Katya. What could possibly go wrong?

*Dead Ends* is a hilarious, tense and painfully real tale of prejudice and its many consequences, and of how people respond to loss, especially tragedies they feel they should have seen coming.

Elke Power is the editor of *Readings Monthly*

**Pissants**  
Brandon Jack  
S&S/Summit. PB. \$34.99  
Available 2 July



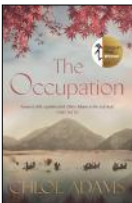
**R** If you’re a person that baulks at reading about sex, drugs, and debauchery, and is allergic to the dreaded f-word and its much more controversial swear-mate,

the c-word – this is absolutely not the book for you. But if you’re up for reading about these matters, are not shy of this kind of Australian vernacular, and are seeking a reading experience that is unlike any other you’ll encounter this year, *Pissants* is absolutely the book for you. It’s a raw, honest, and audacious take on the AFL machine that churns through so many young people in our community, and is eye-opening, eye-watering, and surprisingly emotional.

Brandon Jack (yes, the Brandon Jack who is a former Sydney Swans player and also wrote the critically acclaimed 2021 memoir, 28) has written this debut work of fiction, which leaves no detail of the club experience unexplored, using a range of creative writing styles (an interview transcript, a bingo card, a WhatsApp chat, internal monologues, along with more straightforward discursive modes), to get deep inside the psyches of Fangs, Stick, Shaggers, Elliott, and many others who form the secondary players and staff of the redacted Football Club. These multiple literary techniques are incredibly effective in building the picture of what might happen off the field, in the locker room and beyond, illuminating the

## Australian Fiction

**The Occupation**  
Chloe Adams  
Penguin. PB. \$34.99  
Available 15 July



**R** The Second World War is a period of history so defined by its most prominent atrocities that countless experiences are rendered marginal, hidden corners of a conflict so colossal as to be nearly impossible to fully capture. Itself set beneath the atomic shadow of the Hiroshima bombing, Chloe Adams’ *The Occupation* thrusts the reader into one such corner of history – Australia’s postwar occupation of Japan – and delivers a compelling, deftly textured narrative of empathy and independence.

Fitting for a novel about aftermaths, our first introduction to Mary – Adams’ thoughtful, reserved protagonist – is as an unmarried and pregnant woman

reluctantly ready to relinquish her child to a cousin. The past year, spent in Australian-occupied Japan, hangs silently over her with a gravity that can only be understood by following her into that world of uneasy peace where sunny picnics clash with ruined cities and two cultures struggle to coexist. It is a world made even more complicated for Mary by the charming Sully, a journalist determined to resist the racist narratives spread by the Australian occupiers and speak up for the ordinary people of Japan. As the two grow closer, their shy courtship turns to romance, and Mary’s moral convictions slowly begin to reshape themselves.

Partly drawn from Adams’ grandmother’s own experience of postwar Japan, *The Occupation* has, at times, a gentle pace and fluid structure which is testament to its commitment to a weighty and textural style that thoroughly immersed me in its historical setting. This weightiness also extends to Adams’ approach to the novel’s political preoccupations, whether they are the limitations faced by women in the 1940s or the difficult questions of retribution and

pressures on these young men, who are all so desperate to belong and be valued, and must seek and perform that belonging and value in a hyper-masculine corporate environment, relying on corporeal talents that are only one injury or bad decision away from obsolescence. It's intense.

As I was wincing and laughing my way through this narrative whose protagonists operate in a parallel universe to mine, I wondered whether my bookish self would ever be imagined as the ideal reader for this novel. I reasoned that on a superficial level I'm an unlikely candidate, if only for the fact that I've been to precisely one AFL game in my life. But the great big heart of this book is a critical take on so many of the things I want to read about: identity, passion, culture, language, and the always unfinished work of making the self, written with tremendous flair, sensitivity, and originality by a writer who is a reader and a thinker. Turns out, I f\*\*\*ing loved *Pissants*, and Brandon Jack just drop-kicked it straight into my heart.

Alison Huber is the head book buyer

### What Kept You?

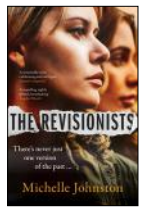
Raaza Jamsheed  
Giramondo. PB. \$32.95  
Available 1 July



As a child in Pakistan, Jahan was raised on her grandmother's stories, influenced by the demons of folklore and the memory of violence and forced displacement caused by the British partition of India. But her grandmother's life hints at another truth. Jahan rebels and migrates to Australia, where she meets her husband, whose family is from the Middle East. As she reckons with her body after a miscarriage, and the bushfires which threaten their home, she is forced to confront the violence that haunts her. This feminist anti-tale – written in a uniquely expressive voice that floats between English, Urdu and Arabic – explores survival, metamorphosis, and the radical freedom of choosing one's own ending.

### The Revisionists

Michelle Johnston  
Fourth Estate. PB. \$34.99  
Available 2 July



**R** I love it when a novel messes with your head. You begin to read it for the thrilling story promised in its blurb: a fast-paced story about places other than your own home, about women doing things that you could not possibly do, and it starts strong. You know you are going to get everything you want. And then, you realise this story is about more than you bargained for. It is a story of women's ambition, about memory and about how we all want certain things to be true, and by now these themes are making you reflect on your own life because it is a novel about everyone, really. I mean, we all want certain things to be true.

Christine Campbell is a former journalist, newly widowed, and attempting to write a memoir celebrating her bold and considered life and her recognised achievements in writing about the silencing of women during global conflicts. She has been the subject of a documentary paying homage to

her Pulitzer Prize-shortlisted coverage of the unrest in Chechnya in 1999. This documentary brings her oldest friend back into her life: Dr Frankie Pearson, who was in Eastern Europe with her back then. The two friends have been estranged for over 20 years. The story reveals the uncomfortable reasons why. Along the way, we are treated to scenery described in minute detail: the homes and the countryside all rendered beautifully.

This story is an emotional exposé of how truth can be manoeuvred to suit the teller. It is a detailed, ascetic type of novel, and readers of exacting prose will be pleased. If you want a quick and easy read, this is not for you; but for those who want to consider human behaviour, in all its complexity, this novel will delight you.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

### Big Feelings: An Anti-Romantic Comedy

Amy Lovat  
Pan Mac. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



**R** Sadie Thomas is obsessed with love stories, and whether hers stacks up. Desert island, all-time, top five things you need to know about Sadie: 1) The perfect love story is all Sadie has ever wanted. 2) Then she meets Chase. And falls in love with her. 3) Sadie is ready for her sail-off-into-the-sunset, credits-roll happy ending. 4) Self-sabotage is one of Sadie's greatest skills. 5) Cue the break-up. Hard truths will be uncovered and family secrets revealed, as Sadie tries to figure out how it all – love, life – went so wrong.

### The Haunting of Mr and Mrs Stevenson

Belinda Lyons-Lee  
Transit Lounge. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



**R** This gothic delight tells the story of Robert Louis Stevenson's friendship with the charming Eugène Chantrelle and the murder mystery that inspired Stevenson to write *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Told in his wife, Fanny's voice it is also the story of an unconventional literary relationship. From a séance with the Shelleys at Boscombe Manor to a haunted wardrobe made by an infamous Scottish criminal, this atmospheric novel is underscored by the story of two writers very much in love.

### All We Need

Magdalena McGuire  
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July

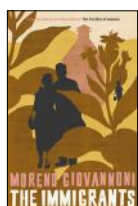


**R** While on a camping trip Sapphie rescues a baby from the sea. The baby belongs to Candace, a charity worker struggling with new motherhood. The rescue throws these strangers together and an intense friendship begins. Candace's best friend Alexia has her reservations about the new woman in their lives but discovers nothing in Sapphie's background. As the novel dives into the waters of love, duty and control, the women must navigate the

currents of their fears and desires to explore who they really are.

### The Immigrants: Fabula Mirabilis, or A Wonderful Story

Moreno Giovannoni  
Black Inc. PB. \$36.99  
Available 1 July



**R** The poverty of postwar Europe encouraged thousands of migrants to try their luck in Australia. Italians formed a large cohort of these migrants, but many of them didn't see their migration as permanent, rather as a chance to make some money and then return home to build a better life. The area around Myrtleford in Victoria attracted many Italians to work as tobacco growers, sharecropping, or later, farming their own plots. For many, their dreams were never fulfilled and their lives were 'founded on homesickness, disappointment and failure'.

Moreno Giovannoni's father, Ugo, was one of them. At his home in Tuscany, there was little prospect of making a decent living and in 1957, at the age of 30, he left his home and his young wife and son to try his luck in the 'English Colony'. In the 1950s, it was possible to make good money growing tobacco, providing the weather was good and you could keep the bugs down. Yet for many of these lonely men, Australia never felt like home; often when they had a little money they sent for their wives and children or fiancées to join them, but the goal of returning for good was always there.

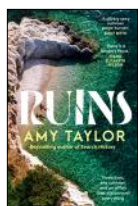
When Ugo's wife, Morena, arrived a few years later with their son, Moreno, she found the new world harsh and lonely. Moreno went to the local school and quickly picked up English, but he mourns his Italian. Twice the family returned to Italy and twice they were pulled back to Australia. Ugo and Morena separate and their alienation is compounded.

*The Immigrants* is a moving and fascinating fictionalised account of the experience of migration, written with great love and compassion by the author of the extraordinary *The Fireflies of Autumn*. The happy story of the immigrant who arrives and finds a home and place in their new country is not necessarily always the true one.

Mark Rubbo is the chairman of Readings

### Ruins

Amy Taylor  
A&U. PB. \$32.99  
Available 1 July



**R** *Ruins* is Amy Taylor's second novel after the hugely successful, and Readings Prize shortlisted, *Search History*. Both books explore modern-day relationships, tensions, deceit and privilege.

Where *Search History* is darkly funny, *Ruins* is more serious in tone; it is, in fact, a tragedy.

From the outset, we know that this story is not going to turn out well. Our protagonists' downfalls are hinted at in the prologue. This unease sits in the back of your head throughout the whole book, ensuring you turn over every angle and interaction looking for the rot, and of rot there is plenty.

In Act 1 (yes, there are three), we hark back three months to find Emma and

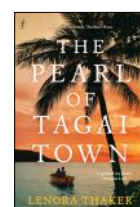
Julian in Corfu, where they are unwinding before they head to Athens to housesit for a friend. Julian is an academic who has seized the chance to be closer to the origins of his work; Emma has just walked away from a PR job she thrived in and is looking for her next move. We learn that after a mutual agreement to remain childless, Emma fell pregnant, but then miscarried. Since they first met, they had always been on the same page; however, recently they have been drifting apart. The hope is that this trip will bring them closer together. It is here on the island that Emma has a sexual fantasy that involves another person, which she becomes determined to make a reality. And from there the tragedy unfolds.

Taylor masterfully layers her characters: they are flawed, they are insufferable, they are human. Even though you know this story is not going to end well, it is unclear exactly how it is going to unravel – a marvel, really, when you consider the setup.

Rosalind McClintock is the head of marketing

### The Pearl of Tagai Town

Lenora Thaker  
Text. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



**R** Primarily set in far northeast Queensland in the decades leading up to, during and immediately after the Second World War, Lenora Thaker's debut novel, *The Pearl of Tagai Town*, is the tale of one young woman's extraordinary grit and vision for her life. It's also a love story to warm the coldest of hearts.

Pearl is growing up in a multicultural community in a shantytown that rises from a swamp just outside a remote coastal town. Pearl's family is from the Eastern Torres Strait on her father's side and the Western Torres Strait on her mother's side. Their friends, family and neighbours work on fishing boats, take in laundry, clean kole (white) people's houses, and raise their families. It's a precarious existence, and the arrival of the war renders it more so, but their community comes together at church each week, welcomes Black American soldiers when the war brings them to their part of the world, and they all pitch in to help each other where they can.

Pearl and her best friend Curly Anne have plans – for the annual dance and far beyond. When Pearl's bravery and initiative result in an offer to work for a kole woman in her haberdashery, it's a life-changing opportunity – even if her mother, Ama Rose, is sceptical about kole bosses. Ama Rose is even more doubtful about Teddy, a kole boy and the son of the local banker, who has taken a shine to Pearl.

This immersive, propulsive novel is a clear-eyed portrait of a time and a community navigating racism, including horrifying violence, segregation and oppression, wartime tragedies, and the general hardships and joys of life. The characters are irresistible, and the local languages woven throughout are as evocative as Thaker's narrative. This is the kind of book you'll want to read again immediately, and will appeal to fans of Kate Grenville, Pip Williams and Anita Heiss.

Elke Power is the editor of *Readings Monthly*



### The Far Side of the Moon: and Other Stories

Jana Wendt

Text. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 July



Jana Wendt, superstar of TV journalism, feature writer and role model for young career women, has now turned her hand to fiction. In these stories Wendt brings to life a brilliant parade of people,

living in a world we instantly recognise. Her characters grapple with fortune and misfortune, with memories of lives in interesting times. Couples are betrayed and redeemed. There are heart-stopping monologues and witty exchanges between friends and rivals. Tragedies alternate with enduring love.

### When Sleeping Women Wake

Emma Pei Yin

Hachette. PB. \$32.99

Available now



1941. The wealthy Tang family has settled in Hong Kong after fleeing Shanghai. As the First Wife of the family, Mingzhu leads a glamorous but lonely existence – mothering the son of her husband's concubine, overseeing her daughter's education, and directing their household of servants, including her long-time confidante, Biyu. When the Japanese invade the island, the three women's paths wildly diverge. As war rages around them, can they fight for their freedom and still find their way back to each other?

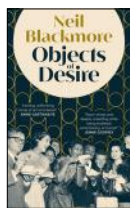
## International Fiction

### Objects of Desire

Neil Blackmore

Hutchinson Heinemann. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 July



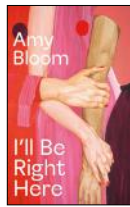
Hugo Hunter was the most celebrated gay novelist of the 20th century. He published two masterpieces, securing his place alongside the literary greats of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. But after decades of fame and excess, just as New York City enters the 1980s and the coming horror of AIDS, Hugo finds himself running out of money. Then, he receives a lifeline from his longtime publisher. Two million dollars, for a memoir and a new novel. But Hugo stole both of his novels. How far will he go to produce a third?

### I'll Be Right Here

Amy Bloom

Granta. PB. \$29.99

Available 1 July



Emigrating alone from Paris to New York after the Second World War, a young girl, Gazala, befriends two spirited sisters, Anne and Alma. When Gazala's beloved brother Samir joins her in Manhattan, this inseparable foursome becomes the

beating heart of an untraditional, multigenerational family. The decades are marked by erupting passions within everyday life. The four friends stand by one another through it all, steadfastly unapologetic about their authentic desires and the unorthodox family they have created.

### Hunger

Choi Jin-young & Soje (trans.)

Brazen. PB. \$29.99

Available now



Perfect for fans of *Crying in H Mart* and *The Eyes Are the Best Part*, Choi Jin-young's instant bestseller in Korea, *Hunger*, is a macabre romance that pushes the boundaries to see how far we would go to

prove our love against all obstacles, including death.

When Dam finds her boyfriend's dead body on the street, she carries him to her home, cleans him, and begins to eat his body. With each bite, she sifts through the bittersweet memories of her relationship with Gu, wondering how everything led to this. All she clings on to is the promise they made to each other: that should one of them die, the other would eat their body, so they can be together forever.

*Hunger* is the story of a most obsessive, depraved sort of love: one that you can't help but be both disgusted and softened by. Reading this novel is a fever dream of blurring narrators, points in history, and a bizarre dichotomy between heart-melting love and disturbing violence. In a bit over a hundred pages, you travel through Dam and Gu's childhood together, as their relationship blossoms from friends into high school sweethearts, their separation as adults, and their tragic reunion, which is soon followed by death and cannibalism.

It is not difficult to see this cannibalism as a metaphor for the meeting of souls; a love felt so strongly you become one with that person, and the very thought of losing them is enough to drive you insane from heartbreak. The actual cannibalism isn't central to the story; more so, it reflects on the troubled lives Dam and Gu led, finding solace in one another, and the gutting pain that comes with sudden loss and grief. *Hunger* is a morbidly beautiful story about lost love and the desperation it can leave in its wake.

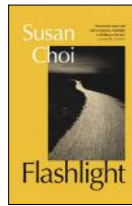
Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

### Flashlight

Susan Choi

Jonathan Cape. PB. \$34.99

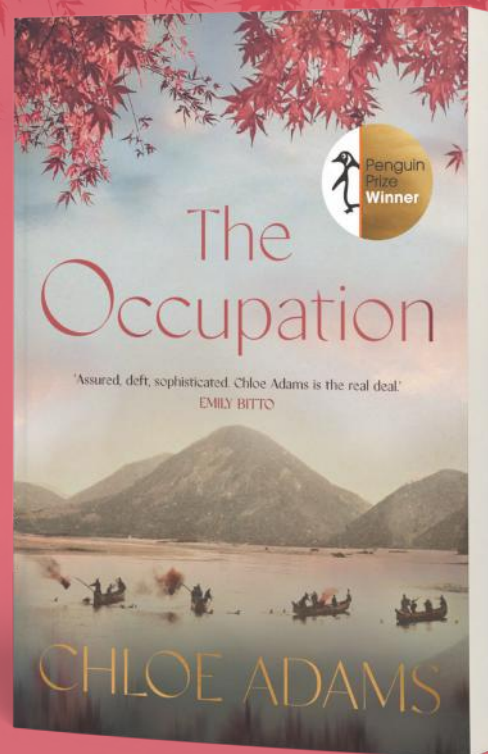
Available 15 July



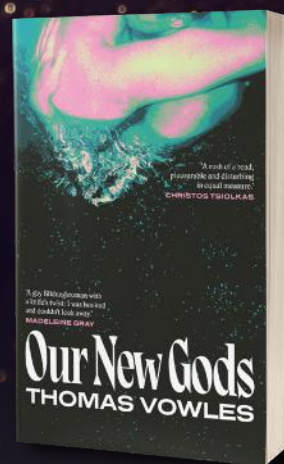
One evening, 10-year-old Louisa and her father take a walk out on the breakwater. They are spending the summer in a coastal Japanese town while her father Serk, a Korean émigré, completes an academic secondment from his American university. When Louisa wakes hours later, she has washed up on the beach and her father is missing, probably drowned. As Louisa and her American mother Anne return to the US, this traumatic event reverberates across time and space, and the mystery of what happened to Serk slowly unravels.

'Assured, deft, sophisticated.'

EMILY BITTO



Winner of the 2024  
Penguin Literary Prize



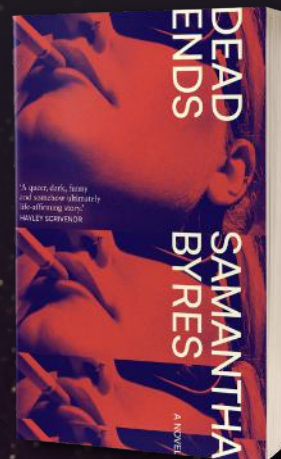
'A rush of a read,  
pleasurable and disturbing  
in equal measure.'

CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS

DELICIOUSLY ADDICTIVE

'A queer, dark, funny and  
somehow ultimately  
life-affirming story about  
what all those missing girls  
leave behind. I devoured it.'

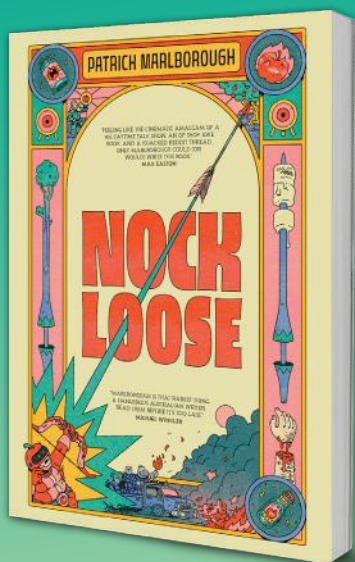
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### The Catch

Yrsa Daley-Ward

Merky. PB. \$34.99

Available 22 July



Twin sisters Clara and Dempsey have always struggled to relate; their familial bond severed after their mother vanished into the Thames. In adulthood, they are content to be all but estranged, until Clara sees a woman who looks exactly like their mother on the streets of London. But this version of Serene, aged not a day, has enjoyed a childless life. Yrsa Daley-Ward conjures a multiverse of daughterhood and mother-want, exploring the sacrifices that Black women must make for self-actualisation.

### Happiness and Love

Zoe Dubno

Doubleday. HB. \$34.99

Available 15 July



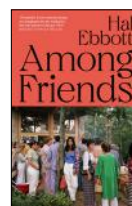
An unnamed narrator who, years ago, fled a set of pretentious New York artworld friends she despised, finds herself back at their dinner table for a single, hideous evening. Lured from London for the funeral of a mutual friend, a failed actress, the dinner party isn't even in honour of their deceased friend, but an up-and-coming actress. As the guests sip at their drinks and await the actress's arrival, the narrator, from her vantage point in the corner seat of a sofa, entertains herself with a silent, tender, merciless takedown.

### Among Friends

Hal Ebbott

Picador. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 July



Amos and Emerson have been friends for 30 years. Despite coming from different backgrounds, the two men now form an enviable portrait of middle age. They share an unbreakable bond, or so they think. Now, it is Emerson's birthday, and Amos and his family are heading upstate to celebrate in Emerson's beautiful home. Over the course of the weekend, rivalries emerge, and tensions escalate, until a final shocking act of violence threatens to tear the two families' finely made world apart.

### I Cheerfully Refuse

Leif Enger

Grove. PB. \$24.99

Available 8 July



Set in a not-too-distant America, *I Cheerfully Refuse* is the tale of a bereaved musician taking to Lake Superior in search of his departed, deeply beloved bookselling wife. Encountering lunatic storms and rising corpses from the warming depths, Rainy finds on land an increasingly desperate and illiterate people, a malignant billionaire ruling class, crumbled infrastructure and a lawless society. Amid the Gulliver-like challenges of life at sea, Rainy is lifted by beauty, humour, strangers and an unexpected companion in a young girl who comes aboard.

### Great Black Hope

Rob Franklin

Summit. PB. \$34.99

Available 2 July



An arrest for cocaine possession in the Hamptons on the last day of summer leaves Smith, a young Black Queer graduate, in a state of turmoil. Just weeks before, his beloved roommate Elle died, and he is still reeling. Fleeing to his hometown and the generations of his family who are doctors, lawyers and college presidents, Smith is haunted by the weight of expectation. A propulsive story about what it means to exist between worlds, to be upwardly mobile yet spiralling downward, and how to find a way back to hope.

### My Sister and Other Lovers

Esther Freud

Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99

Available 1 July



For as long as Lucy can remember, she's been caught between loyalty to her rootless, idealistic mother and devotion to her fierce and exacting sister, Bea. From her unsettled childhood to her turbulent teenage years, she's been forced to make a choice. But as the sisters come of age and embark on their own experiments, they find their lives, and their relationships, increasingly in turmoil. Can the love they have for each other transcend the damage of the past? Or is the past too dangerous to examine?

### Death and the Gardener

Georgi Gospodinov & Angela Rodel (trans.)

W&N. PB. \$29.99

Available 8 July



In *Death and the Gardener*, Georgi Gospodinov, winner of the International Booker Prize in 2023, delivers a profoundly moving meditation on grief, memory, and the end of childhood. The novel – part elegy, part autofiction, part philosophical treatise – traces the final month of the narrator's father's life. But it is far more than a personal account of loss: it's a story about the fragility of memory, the peculiar rituals we adopt in the face of death, and the redemptive, if imperfect, power of storytelling.

The narrator is a man watching his father die – tenderly, yet helplessly witnessing his father's decline. The act of witnessing becomes an act of writing, and writing a kind of survival. Death, as Gospodinov reminds us, is not to be conquered but perhaps quietly accepted, even dignified, through presence, through narrative.

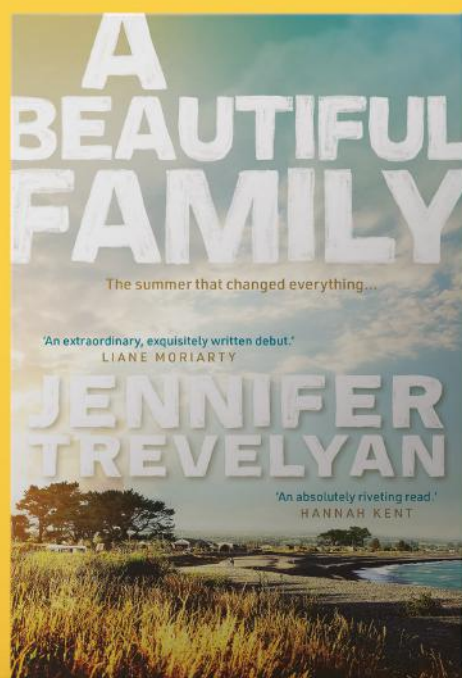
Like Epicurus before him, Gospodinov asks us to look squarely at the inevitable. But where ancient philosophy often feels abstract or detached, *Death and the Gardener* is devastatingly intimate. The prose – translated with grace by Angela Rodel – is gentle and unhurried, meandering like thought itself. The book is filled with digressions: absurd anecdotes, lists, reflections on illness and ageing, even a moment where a

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doctor, after delivering a grim prognosis, awkwardly asks for an autograph. These fragments don't distract; they mirror how we grieve – sidestepping, circling, pausing.

This is *Gospodinov* at his finest. His playfulness is still there, but it is tempered by a deep vulnerability. What emerges is a sincere, deeply felt novel that creates room for the reader – not just to observe a death, but to reckon with their own memories of fathers, gardens and final days. *Death and the Gardener* is a work that transcends borders and genres, inviting readers into the silent space between words, where grief and beauty intertwine.

Nicole Vasilev is from Readings State Library Victoria

### Problematic Summer Romance

Ali Hazelwood

Sphere. PB. \$24.99

Available now



Maya Killgore is 23 and cannot stop thinking about Conor Harkness. He is 38, her brother's best friend and the girl he never knew existed. It's such a cliché. But not everything is as it seems and sometimes clichés become plot twists. When Maya's brother gets married in Sicily, she and Conor end up stuck together in a romantic villa for over a week. There, on the Ionian coast, between ancient ruins and delicious foods, Maya realises that Conor might be hiding something from her.

### The Second Chance Convenience Store

Kim Ho-Yeon & Janet Hong (trans.)

Pan Mac. PB. \$22.99

Available 1 July



Seoul Station is home to Dokgo, a man with no memories of his past. One day he stumbles upon a lost wallet which triggers a chain of events that will change the course of his life. Enter Mrs Yeom, a retired history teacher turned convenience store owner, who, upon discovering Dokgo's act of kindness in returning her purse, offers him a meal as a token of her gratitude. A moving and joyful story of a woman fighting for her community and a man who has lost everything except the will to try again.

### Autocorrect: Stories

Etgar Keret, Jessica Cohen & Sondra Silverston (trans)

Scribe. PB. \$29.99

Available 1 July



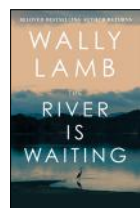
Imagine a world in which you could take back the stupid thing you just said, unspill the coffee, avoid the accident, roll life back 30 seconds and do it over again – this time the right way. In Etgar Keret's universe, all things are possible. Ranging from sci-fi scenarios to fictional thought-experiments and short vignettes, the stories here all deliver the irreverence, surprises, existential unease, hope, and humanity we have come to expect from one of the most original and entertaining storytellers at work today.

### The River Is Waiting

Wally Lamb

S&S/Marysue Rucci Books. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Corby Ledbetter is struggling. New fatherhood, the loss of his job, and a growing secret addiction have thrown his marriage to his beloved Emily into a tailspin. And that's before he causes the tragedy that tears the family apart. Sentenced to prison, Corby struggles to survive life on the inside. As he counts down his incarceration, Corby is buoyed by his kinships with a troubled teen, and a prison librarian, and by his mother's enduring faith in him. Can his crimes ever be forgiven by those he loves?

### Back in the Day

Oliver Lovrenski &

Nichola Smalley (trans.)

Hamish Hamilton. HB. \$34.99

Available 8 July



Ivor and Marco have been getting high since they were 13, started dealing at 14, by 15 they were carrying knives. At 16 years old, they hurtle from one trip to the next, one fight to the next, always watching their backs. Ivor dreams of getting out but the path he's on only leads one way. In flashes of firecracker prose, shot through with rare empathy, irrepressible wit and gut-punch pathos, Oliver Lovrenski gives voice to young men growing up in a brutal and chaotic world.

### Shape of an Apostrophe

Uttama Kirit Patel

Serpent's Tail. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 July



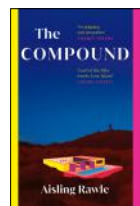
Lina Solanki is pregnant and newly orphaned, living with her in-laws in their opulent Dubai villa. While her husband fails to make concrete plans to find their own place and tensions in their marriage grow, Lina's mother-in-law interferes with every aspect of the pregnancy. When proof of a horrifying family secret arrives from Mumbai, Lina realises that she has a choice when it comes to her baby, her marriage and her place in the world – but is it a choice she wants to make?

### The Compound

Aisling Rawle

Hemlock. PB. \$32.99

Available 2 July



After a long day, there's nothing I enjoy more than watching a reality show. Whether it's a dating competition, a game show, or just a bunch of people summering in the Hamptons, I love it all! So, when I read the premise of *The Compound*, I was sold! *Love Island* meets *Lord of the Flies* – what more could I possibly want?! I went in expecting a fun read – and I couldn't have been more wrong.

Lily wakes up in a large house surrounded by desert. There are nine other women there, all beautiful. Then nine gorgeous men arrive. 'The Compound' is their new home, for as long as they can last. Together, the

contestants must complete tasks to gain things for the house: food, furniture, a front door; everything needed to make it a home. They can also complete personal tasks to receive luxuries for themselves. The harder or more embarrassing the challenge, the higher the value of the items. At the end of each day, the contestants must couple up or they will be banished. The cameras are rolling; the viewers are watching. Lily knows she must put on a good show: she must be the last one standing.

I consumed this book much like I would a reality show, delighting in the drama and devouring each delicious detail as it was revealed. I just had to know more about the contestants, the reality show and the world within and beyond *The Compound*. But the more I read, the more uneasy I felt. By the end, I was unable to comprehend what exactly I had read and I haven't been able to stop thinking about it since.

This is a dark, compelling read that will have you questioning everything. It's the perfect read for fans of reality TV, *Black Mirror* and anyone who enjoys a psychological thriller.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator

### All That is Left of Life

Roberta Recchia & Antonella Lettieri (trans.)

Dialogue. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 July



The Ansaldo family's life is built on routine, with days spent running their delicatessen and summers at their modest house by the sea. But when 16-year-old Betta sets off for a beach party and never returns, they are left only with grief and questions. The police are lost, and as the family fractures from their loss, no one suspects the burden Miriam carries. She has answers, but vows to tell no one. As she drifts into the orbit of a young drug dealer, he starts to pull loose the threads of Betta's fate.

### To the Moon

Jang Ryujin & Sean Lin Halbert (trans.)

Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99

Available 1 July



Dahae has always aspired to earn more from her mediocre career – at least enough to escape her studio apartment which floods after just a long shower. Despite her efforts,

however, she's perpetually stuck in an entry-level role within a dead-end division of the company for which she works, where every performance review offers no feedback beyond a dismissive 'Mid', giving her no chance of advancement. She's not alone in her frustration, but a glimmer of hope appears for her and her friends in the form of cryptocurrency, launching them into a chaotic journey of price tracking, risky investments, and the looming question: will they strike it rich, or lose it all?

Jang Ryujin's debut novel *To the Moon* offers an interesting twist on the corporate worker slice-of-life tale by utilising the relatively new phenomenon of cryptocurrency as a focal point. While it definitely receives the spotlight

throughout the novel, I was most drawn towards the friendship dynamic between Jisong, who spends her low salary on surfing lessons and trips to see her long-distance boyfriend; Eun-sang, who seizes any opportunity to earn extra cash and secure her future; and lastly, Dahae, who embodies a mix of both. From the outset, they bonded over their shared troubles and stressors at the company, and the introduction of cryptocurrency threatens to jeopardise their collective bond over having no real finances. What Jang does best is make these friendships seem real and earnest; placing them in situations that feel familiar and relatable – making this novel ultimately enjoyable to read and, occasionally, a high-stakes page-turner as the crypto prices rise and fall erratically.

If you enjoyed titles like *Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookstore* by Hwang Bo-reum, I think you will find a semblance of familiarity here. Either way, I know I am eager to read any books Jang writes in the future.

Anson Cheng is from Readings Doncaster

### My Sister

Emmanuelle Salasc & Penny Hueston (trans.)

Text. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 July



One summer's day in 2056 in the mountains of southern France, a warning siren goes off: inside the belly of the receding glacier above the spa-centre village, a large pocket of water is about to give way – just as it did 150 years earlier. Hundreds of people died in the floods that followed. Lucie and her twin sister Clémence, who has returned after 30 years, shelter beneath the glacier waiting for the worst. *My Sister* is a spine-chilling story of sibling rivalry and the ancestral fear of environmental disaster.

### A Thousand Blues

Cheon Seon-ran & Chi-Young Kim (trans.)

Doubleday. HB. \$34.99

Available now



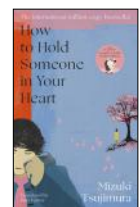
2035: In the shadow of a racecourse, two sisters grow up, helping their mother at the local cafe that serves renowned ramen. Family life is fractious especially when one of them loses their day-job to an automaton. What makes the sisters' hearts sing is their friendship with Today, a nationally famous racehorse. But after a lifetime of over-racing, Today is being sent to the knackers' yard. Urgently, the sisters plot to rescue their beloved horse. As their plan unfolds, one of them will commit the bravest act of their life.

### How to Hold Someone in Your Heart

Mizuki Tsujimura & Yuki Tejima (trans.)

Doubleday. PB. \$34.99

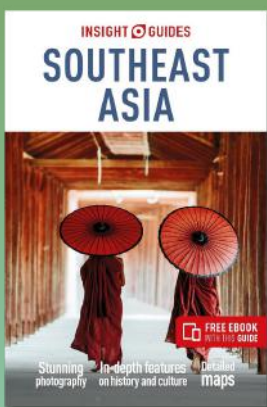
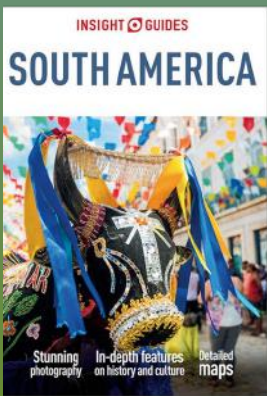
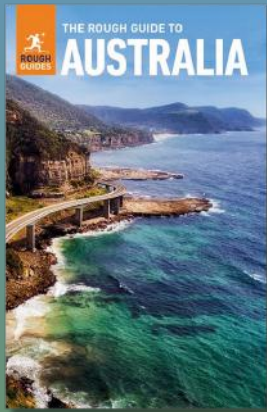
Available 1 July



Ayumi is a young man with special powers to bring back the dead to meet the living. A gift passed down in his family, he is able to arrange meetings according to strict rules and always under a full



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moon. After years in this role, he begins to question its meaning, and how his powers affect his own desires in the real world. Find out how Ayumi and his clients learn to lose their regrets, open up to the unexpected, and cherish what they already have in this profound and moving novel by Japan's leading storyteller.

**Wildcat Dome**  
Yuko Tsushima &  
Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda (trans.)

Penguin. PB. \$32.99

Available 15 July



**R** In the aftermath of the Second World War, the children of American GIs are born and surrendered to an orphanage. *Wildcat Dome* is hung on the frame of the lives of these orphans: we

follow Mitch as he wanders restlessly between jobs and across the world, Kazu as he seeks solace and connection in the natural world, and Yonko, who is not an orphan, but whose life has been shaped by them nonetheless. Over the decades, these three strive to create their own lives, but are continuously drawn back together and to Japan by a trauma they witnessed in their youths.

Early on in *Wildcat Dome*, a character describes the experience of childhood: 'It's like living in a cocoon inside a dream'. Some works of literature create clean, precise lines, bringing into focus that which you had never seen so clearly before. This novel of Yuko Tsushima's does quite the opposite. The characters' lives happen all at once, memories linking freely through time and space, with as many imagined conversations explored between them as real ones. There are no clear truths offered; the dream of these characters' lives is simply deepened and intensified with layered details.

There is, however, a second story being told beneath this one, where Tsushima turns her characters' lives and struggles into a metaphor for the all-consuming fear of radiation. The colour orange haunts the narrative, a reminder of the insidious nature of this poisoning and its long reach through time and space.

The result is a deeply impressionistic novel – an ambitious and experimental rendition of a nation's fears. It is a challenging read at times, but offers a rare insight into an underexplored facet of a complex nation.

Molly Smith is from Readings Emporium

**Portalmania: Stories**

Debbie Urbanski

S&S. PB. \$34.99

Available 16 July



In *Portalmania*, Debbie Urbanski wields sci-fi, fantasy, horror, and realism to build a dark mirror that she holds up to the ordinary world. The sharply imagined landscape of this collection dives bravely into the depths of betrayal, parenthood, revenge, murder, open marriages, asexuality, neurodiversity, and second chances. Portals are not only doorways found in children's classics, but separations, escapes, dead ends, desertions, and choices that will change these characters' lives forever.

**The Satisfaction Cafe**

Kathy Wang

Abacus. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Joan Liang's life is a series of surprising developments: she never thought she would leave Taiwan (and for all places, California), nor did she expect her first marriage to implode – especially as quickly and spectacularly as it did. She definitely did not expect to fall in love with an older, wealthy American and become his fourth wife and mother to his youngest children. Through all this she asks herself the question familiar to so many of us: what are we living for? And are we ever truly satisfied?

**Men in Love**

Irvine Welsh

Jonathan Cape. PB. \$34.99

Available 22 July



It is the late 1980s and a new era is about to begin for the *Trainspotting* crew. Separated after a bad drug deal Renton, Sick Boy, Spud and Begbie each want to feel alive. They fill their days with sex and romance, dancing, and trying to get ahead. When Sick Boy sets a date for his wedding to the rich and connected Amanda, he sees a chance for his generation to take control at last. But as the 1990s dawn, will finding love be the answer to the group's dreams or just another doomed quest?

**When the Museum is Closed**

Emi Yagi &

Yuki Tejima (trans.)

Harvill Secker. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 July



Recommended by her old university professor for her exemplary language skills, Rika Horauchi's new part-time job is to converse with a statue of Venus – in Latin – every Monday, when the museum is closed. Initially reluctant, Rika starts to enjoy her strange new job. As Venus comes to life in the quiet of the museum, they talk about everything. Venus opens up new worlds for Rika. They soon fall in love. But when the museum's curator makes it clear he wants to keep Venus for himself, what will Rika do?

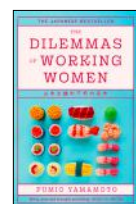
**The Dilemmas of Working Women**

Fumio Yamamoto &

Brian Bergstrom (trans.)

Virago. PB. \$32.99

Available 8 July



**R** First published in Japan in 2000, the late Fumio Yamamoto's bestseller finally hits our shelves with five complicated and poignant stories about the different lives of women in contemporary Japan.

In 'Naked', a divorced, unemployed woman makes stuffed Pokémon toys to pass the time. In 'Planarian', a woman struggles with everyone's frustration about her breast cancer, imploring her to move on. A mum worries about the

continual disappearance of her daughter at night in 'Here, Which is Nowhere'. The titular story focuses on a woman who feels pressured into marriage by her boyfriend, who she's not sure she loves anymore, if she ever did. And the final story, 'A Tomorrow Full of Love', depicts a strange relationship between a chef and a palm reader.

Yamamoto explores the pressures on women to pursue marriage and children, while also demanding they pursue a full-time career that leaves little time for oneself. What struck me was how raw this novel felt in comparison to the more whimsical and cosy Japanese translated fiction that is popular today. For Yamamoto's women, there are no magical cats or childhood recipes that can remedy their personal trials. Each of the five women is connected by their loneliness as they try to juggle their careers, relationships, families, and mental wellbeing while simultaneously always feeling like they are doing everything wrong. There are no catalysts to push them other than their own strength and will to pursue what they actually want – for the first time in their lives – rather than following someone else.

I think the most powerful thing about *The Dilemmas of Working Women* is how it has withstood the test of time and remains as relevant today as it did 25 years ago. Yamamoto beautifully captures the quiet resilience of women against the overbearing weight of societal expectations.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

**Sunbirth**

An Yu

Harvill Secker. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 July



As the sun starts slowly disappearing overhead and the lake freezes over, the residents of a remote town in the desert find themselves undergoing shocking transformations with no way to survive. A dazzlingly eerie and bewitching novel *Sunbirth* honours the unique relationship between sisters, their love for each other and their desire to be free. Richly surreal and anchored by searching curiosity and wisdom, it asks how much we can ever know about the deepest mysteries of the world.

## Fantasy

**A Forbidden Alchemy**

Stacey McEwan

Atria. PB. \$34.99

Available 2 July



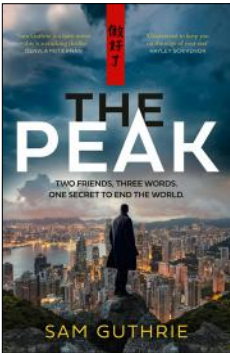
Nina Harrow and Patrick Colson are only 12 years old when they are whisked from their mining towns to Belavere City to be tested for magical abilities. Nina is chosen to be an Artisan, a powerful coveted elemental mage, while Patrick returns home to his family of Craftsmen. When a Craftsman revolution ignites years later, Nina is captured by Patrick's rebel group – and despite the years, he hasn't forgotten her. In fact, he needs her help for a mission that could shift the tides against Belavere City. **R**



# Crime

## BOOK OF THE MONTH


Crime



**The Peak**  
Sam Guthrie  
HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99  
Available 2 July

long and hard on crafting, and then fine-tuning, this plot. Set across a 24-hour period, this is an astonishing and thoroughly accomplished debut. Bring on the next book, please!!!

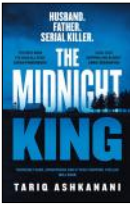
Julia Jackson is assistant manager at Readings Carlton

 **R** If you were to approach me in the shop and ask how I'd describe this book in three words, I'd say: unputdownable, propulsive, and explosive. After I'd recovered from the shock opening, the subsequent few hours I spent reading *The Peak* simply flew by. This is my kinda book, and it's definitely one for all the politics wonks and nerds out there whose Sundays begin with a panel discussion on the national broadcaster. You know who you are. Very likely you've got a subscription to the Quarterly Essay, you rewatch Paul Abbott's *State of Play* (2003), anything Armando Iannucci has done, and you reckon that the O.G. Francis Urquhart (in the BBC's *House of Cards*) was the best. At least, that's what's on my bingo card.

Political intrigue, contemporary geopolitics, and a national security threat all bubble away over the course of *The Peak* while Charlie Westcott grapples with the incredible events of the morning. Who, or rather, *what* had his best friend and colleague Sebastian Adler become? And what the hell is happening to the country? Why is the power out in Sydney and Melbourne? We've all had a shocker of a workday at some point, but this one takes the cake.

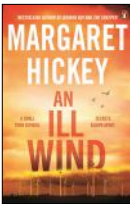
As with John Le Carré and Frederick Forsyth, whose careers in intelligence made excellent foundations for their thriller writing, so does Sam Guthrie's experience as a political insider in the diplomatic corps. From the attention to detail and the level of research, it is clear Guthrie worked


**The Midnight King**  
Tariq Ashkanani  
Viper. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



Lucas Cole is a bestselling writer beloved in his small town. But Lucas Cole is also a serial killer. Nathan has known the truth about his father since he was 10 and ran away as soon as he was able. But when Lucas is found dead, Nathan returns to his home for the first time in 17 years. There he finds his father's final unpublished manuscript, a fictionalised account of his crimes, and trinkets from his victims including a ribbon from a girl who disappeared only days before. Now, Nathan must deal with the consequences of keeping his father's secret.

**An Ill Wind**  
Margaret Hickey  
Penguin. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



 **R** Australia's talented stable of crime and thriller writers continues to amaze me with how they tackle the genre. Like Darryl Kerrigan from *The Castle* at the dinner table complimenting his wife's rissoles: 'Yeah, but it's what you *do* with them'. Margaret Hickey's latest offering, this time set on the Victorian plains, kicks off with a discovery of the local wind-farm operator and entrepreneur, Geordie Pritchard, hanging from the blade of a wind turbine. An imaginative way to go, don't you think? But is it murder? Whocouldadunnit? And why? The small town of Carrabeen is deeply divided. There are those who are happy to embrace renewables and the new jobs going in the wind-farming sector, and

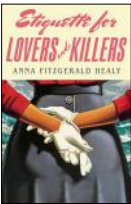
then there are the farmers – distrustful of the technology and the loss of farming acreage. Many had already sold up after years of drought and hard labour, but for those still left in agribusiness, there's an underlying negative sentiment. It turns out not many people like a tall poppy, and in this town there's lots to hide.

In *An Ill Wind*, Hickey's chief characters are the heavily pregnant Senior Sergeant Belinda Burney, and her bespectacled husband of the same rank, Will Lovell, who abandoned a privileged upbringing for a career in the police force serving the community. For Senior Sergeant Burney, who was brought up in Carrabeen by her single father, returning to this heavily divided community brings with it a sense of anxiety and inner turmoil.

This is a terrific novel with a great plot that reflects a lot of current issues. And gosh is it great to have two main characters with a pretty realistic workplace and recognisable personal challenges: housing affordability, job satisfaction and progression, general happiness, and that age-old question: 'Am I good enough?'

Julia Jackson is assistant manager at Readings Carlton

**Etiquette for Lovers and Killers**  
Anna Fitzgerald Healy  
Fleet. PB. \$34.99  
Available 8 July



It's 1964 in the tiny town of Eastport, Maine, and Billy McCadie is bored, with no sign of the intrigue or romance that fill the pages of her beloved novel collection. That is, until an engagement ring and a cryptic love letter turn up, addressed to 'Gertrude'. As Billy gets pulled deeper into a bizarre and

stranger-than-fiction mystery that the local police can't begin to handle she finds herself with no choice but to put on her detective hat. But as the body count rises, why does it feel like she's more than just a side character?

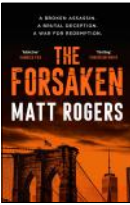
**The White Crow**  
Michael Robotham  
Hachette. PB. \$34.99  
Available now




As the daughter of a London crime boss, Police Constable Philomena McCarthy walks a thin blue line keeping the two sides of her life apart. On patrol one night she discovers a child

wandering alone. Taking Daisy home, Phil uncovers the aftermath of a deadly home invasion, as three miles away a prominent jeweller is found strapped to an explosive in his ransacked store. The crimes are linked, and all the evidence points to Phil's father. Phil's two worlds are colliding but who can she trust – the badge or her own blood?

**The Forsaken**  
Matt Rogers  
S&S. PB. \$34.99  
Available 2 July



 **R** It really heartens me, as Readings' consignment buyer, to come across an author who's scored a publishing deal after years of seriously hard graft writing and self-

publishing their books. One of the last Australian thriller writers to do this was Matthew Reilly – you know, of *Ice Station* fame. There is much to do as a self-published author: not only do you have to write the material, but there's also all the logistical stuff that comes after, such as printing, marketing and distributing your book. All this with no guarantee that you'll recoup what you have outlaid. Matt Rogers is a great example of someone who has done the research to find his audience and write for them. The book sales and readership from his Dante Jacoby series as an independent writer-publisher is a testament to that. To get a publishing deal is a terrific achievement.

*The Forsaken* is written with the same no-nonsense, direct style as his previous books. The action, which takes place over an almost 48-hour window, is gritty and relentless. I grew up on action series like *24*, and I love plots that are condensed to blocks of time. At its heart, this book is a corruption-busting revenge thriller. We follow the bitter ex-CIA strongman/assassin Logan Booth, a meat-popsicle version of the proverbial brick dunny, as he attempts to get to the bottom of why his best mate Jorge Romero is dead. What did Romero know that led to his assassination? While Logan is the titular 'forsaken', so too is Alice, who cuts a tragic figure grappling with her own demons.

Set largely overnight in the noisy environs of New York City, *The Forsaken* is a fast-paced, highly atmospheric book. Did I mention that it was action-packed?! I would be lying if I said I hadn't already cast this movie in my head. Read this if you love Terry Hayes; read it if you love *John Wick*, *24*, and the *Bourne* series.

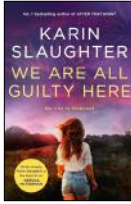
Julia Jackson is assistant manager at Readings Carlton

**Let the Bad Times Roll**  
Alice Slater  
H&S. PB. \$34.99  
Available 8 July



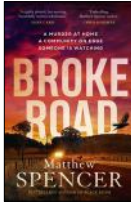
Then: Alone in New Orleans, Selina is struggling to fit in until a charismatic stranger, Daniel, invites her for a drink. Now: Daniel is missing. Worried, his sister Caroline hosts a gathering in her London home so those closest to Daniel can come together and compare notes. Caroline has also invited a stranger to the table, an accomplished psychic who claims to have met Daniel in New Orleans.


**We Are All Guilty Here**  
Karin Slaughter  
HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99  
Available 2 July



Welcome to North Falls. A small town where everyone knows everyone. Emmy Clifton has lived here all her life. She thinks she knows her neighbours. She thinks it's just another hot summer night. When her best friend's daughter asks for help, she thinks it's just some teenage drama. As the town ignites in the wake of the girl's disappearance, Emmy realises you never know a town until you know its secrets.

**Broke Road**  
Matthew Spencer  
A&U. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



 **R** Over the border in New South Wales, the body of a woman is discovered in her home. While the local ambulance-chasing media and other 'content creators' have pegged the woman's husband as the culprit, the police, headed up by homicide detective Rose Riley, are baffled. This is Matthew Spencer's second Rose Riley book. I confess I didn't read the first, but it's not essential before diving into the second.

*Broke Road* is thoroughly entertaining. This is more of a traditional police procedural, and there are lots of shifty and unsavoury characters you can love to hate. I was surprised by how the plot unfolds: at first slowly, but with a quickening pace as the momentum with the investigation shifts. This apparent single-murder case quickly morphs into a bigger, cross-border investigation with a greater sense of urgency. Rose is reunited with true-crime journalist Adam Bowman, who 'embeds' himself closer to Rose and the action.

Australia is full of fabulous wine regions, and the Hunter Valley and its small townships west of Newcastle provide a picturesque setting for this book. Sweeping landscapes of vineyards are easily conjured in the imagination of readers. In the genre, there's always an element to the landscape or setting that directly ties to the main character's personality and history. In *Broke Road*, it's Rose's own family background and grandparents' land, long since subsumed into the vast estates of a greedy local wine baron. With its twisty plot and satisfying end, this is a book to take on a weekend getaway to devour in front of the fire.

Julia Jackson is assistant manager at Readings Carlton **R**



# Nonfiction


## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Visual Arts



#### What Artists See: Essays

Quentin Sprague  
Monash University  
Publishing. PB. \$29.99  
Available 1 July

 **R** This delightful collection of essays explores the world through the eyes of an artist. Author Quentin Sprague has been immersed in the art world, variously working as a curator, an art coordinator, a researcher and as an artist. He is well known for his art writing and criticism, as a frequent contributor to various Australian publications, such as the *Monthly*, as well as writing for exhibition catalogues. His first book, *The Stranger Artist*, won the 2021 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Nonfiction.

Sprague's first essay opens into a scene familiar to many Australians who, like me, have grown up in the country. The long journey home from somewhere bigger and the landmarks that develop through retracing that trip over and over. He talks about the hill his mother named 'The Birthday Cake', a name handed down to him and his sister, which became a sign that they had re-entered their home landscape. What might just be a bump in the land for one traveller is a nexus of meaning for another. This beginning builds up the focus on idiosyncrasy across the essay collection, exploring the unique grain of artistic perception that shapes a person's artistic practice. What does it mean to see the world like an artist?

Sprague is also a talented writer, to say the least. Each of these essays pulls you into a different world. They are grounded in thorough research and interviews with artists. Delightfully, Sprague allows for contradictions and the rough edges to show, the moments of resistance from the

artists he interviews, when they refuse the narrative or his framing of them, which creates small but interesting bubbles of tension. I would recommend this book for people interested in the Australian art scene, lovers of biography in general, or even those fascinated by what makes people tick.

Stephanie King is from Readings Emporium


## Anthologies

### The Gifts of Reading for the Next Generation: Essays on Nurturing a Passion for Reading

Jennie Orchard (ed.)

Scribe. HB. \$35  
Available 1 July



 Remember the books that shaped your childhood, sparked your imagination, and ignited a lifelong love of reading? In *The Gifts of Reading for the Next Generation*, some of the world's most beloved

authors share their own transformative reading experiences – the books and stories that set them on the path of becoming the readers and writers they are today. By exploring the stories that shaped them, the authors provide a powerful guide to fostering a love of reading in the children and young people in your life.

## Australian Studies

### Lee Gordon Presents...: How One Man Changed Australian Life Forever

Jeff Apter

Echo. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



Postwar Australia didn't know what to make of trailblazing American promoter Lee Gordon, but one thing is undeniable: without Lee Gordon, there would be no billion-dollar entertainment industry in


Australia today. He promoted tours for almost 500 international acts during the '50s, from Sinatra to Buddy Holly, allowing Aussies to see showbiz legends in person, and by the time he died in 1963, Gordon had not only established the entertainment industry in Australia, but also changed the country's culture forever.

### The Last Outlaws: The Crimes of Jimmy & Joe Governor and the Birth of Modern Australia

Katherine Biber

Scribner. PB. \$36.99  
Available 2 July



 On a midsummer's morning in 1901, a Wiradjuri and Wonnarua man was hanged for murder at Darlinghurst Gaol. What marked the end of Jimmy Governor's life was the newly

Federated nation's first blood: an act which deepened routinised violence against Indigenous peoples and set the wheels of systemic racism in Federal law into its most extensive motion.

Katherine Biber's *The Last Outlaws*, developed from her NSW Premier's History Award-winning podcast of the same name, meticulously tracks Jimmy's story through written and oral records to illuminate a far broader history of colonialism's legal machinery. Jimmy and his brother Joe were the final two men in Australia proclaimed outlaws after the murders of Sarah Mawbey, three of her children and their schoolteacher Helena Kerz. Rather than examining Jimmy and Joe's actions as isolated incidents, Biber maps how persistent humiliation, dispossession and brutality through the brothers' and their family's lives fostered

circumstances capable of begetting further violence.

Biber's ability to slip seamlessly from past to present, from open wound to aching scar, gives *The Last Outlaws* a rare immediacy few writers of legal history can sustain through a saga as far-reaching as the Governors'. In clearly articulating how the threads of Jimmy and Joe's cases form the tapestries of our current judicial, political and cultural frameworks, Biber's resolute and compassionate account provides much-needed context for understanding the full scope of the last two centuries of Australian history. With an eye to the future of reconciliation, *The Last Outlaws* unravels the legacies of injustice that continue to haunt courtrooms and Country, challenging us to look beyond the punitive and toward truth-telling.

Gene Pinter is from Readings Chadstone

### The Last Tour: Paul and Eslanda Robeson's Visit to Australia and New Zealand in 1960

Ann Curthoys

MUP. PB. \$39.99

Available 16 July



When Paul Robeson, renowned singer and civil rights activist, with his wife Eslanda, civil rights activist and journalist were finally able to visit Australia in 1960 the world was at a crossroads

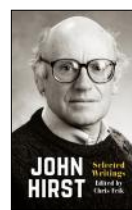
between the Cold War and the turbulent '60s. The tour encompassed concerts, talks to unionists, fans, peace activists, communists and women's organisations, plus engagement with Indigenous peoples. Ann Curthoys explores why their tour was a success and how it exerted a profound influence both at the time and over future generations.

### John Hirst: Selected Writings

Chris Feik (ed.)

La Trobe University Press. PB. \$36.99

Available 1 July



John Hirst was one of Australia's most original and substantial historians. He changed views of many aspects of the nation's history, including the early days of the British colony, the advent of democracy and the forging of Federation. He had a sociological imagination of great power, and the historian's gift of synthesising vast amounts of material and seeing new patterns and meanings. Edited by Chris Feik, this volume selects the cream of Hirst's historical essays, as well as key excerpts from his books.


### Deep History: Country and Sovereignty

Ann McGrath & Jackie Huggins (eds)

UNSW Press. PB. \$49.99

Available 1 July



 At numerous points across the 12 fascinating essays that make up *Deep History*, the collection's many contributors offer definitions of 'deep time' and 'deep history' that foreground the concepts' importance to building a just and informed national identity. The idea at play is both richly nuanced and effortlessly simple: the

history of Australia did not start in 1788. Indeed, 'deep history' extends far, far beyond the inception of colonial Australia, and into the tens of thousands of years of Indigenous occupation and ownership of Country that preceded it. It is a history made no less legitimate by the absence of written records – the benchmark of Western historical practice – and instead one that invites new forms of evidence: oral traditions, material culture and the land itself. By acknowledging this history, the collection argues, we might deepen our understanding of Australia's past not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, upending the conceptions of time and history that subconsciously shape our thinking.

*Deep History* is a work of high-level academic reflection and vibrant digression, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. As an anthology, each essay wields a degree of independence with which the authors explore topics ranging from literary analysis of Tara June Winch's fiction to an archaeological account of the preserved tracks at Lake Mungo. Such breadth of focus also manifests geographically, with chapters on traditional Māori food cultivation or the power of oral memory in Papua New Guinea, presenting both variation and congruence with our familiar Australian contexts. Nevertheless, within this variety, each essay maintains a steadfast commitment to the defining principle of *Deep History*: that to draw some line between colonial history and Indigenous prehistory is to erase the continuity and persistence of First Nations' cultures and consign them to the past. Such erasure silences voices. *Deep History*, as this collection argues, empowers them.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

### The Big Fix: Rebuilding Australia's National Security

Albert Palazzo

MUP. PB. \$29.99

Available 16 July



The character of war is constantly changing, and so too must our approach to national security. After more than 120 years of defence policy centred on dependency, the geopolitical situation

demands new thinking by politicians and policymakers to secure the nation for the future. In light of technological progress, the shifting balance of power in the Pacific and the worsening danger of climate change, Australia needs a new approach to chart its own course. In *The Big Fix*, defence strategist Albert Palazzo proposes how this can be done.

## Biography

### The Scientist Who Wasn't There: A True Story of Staggering Deception

Joanne Briggs

Ithaka. PB. \$36.99

Available 1 July



Renowned scientist Professor Michael Briggs was many things, but he had a secret. In 1986 research he conducted was revealed to be compromised and a scandal broke out.



Patients were also claiming that a pregnancy test he pioneered had caused devastating birth defects. When Briggs died soon after, he left behind hundreds of people who believe they are victims of his negligence. His daughter Joanne uncovers the secret that shaped her father’s entire life and made his story more fantastic than any science fiction.

**Dear Writer:**  
**Pep Talks and Practical Advice for the Creative Life**  
Maggie Smith  
Canongate. HB. \$39.99  
Available 15 July



Drawing from her 20 years of teaching experience, bestselling writing career and popular newsletter, poet and memoirist Maggie Smith offers a collection of meditations and essays on creativity and the craft of writing. Breaking them down into 10 essential elements: attention, wonder, vision, play, surprise, vulnerability, restlessness, tenacity, connection and hope, Smith provides tools that artists of all experience levels can apply to their own creative practices and carry with them into all genres and all areas of life.

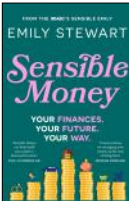
**Looking for Elizabeth:**  
**The Life of Elizabeth Harrower**  
Helen Trinca  
La Trobe University Press. PB. \$36.99  
Available 15 July



Why did Elizabeth Harrower – one of Australia’s most important postwar authors – stop writing at the height of her powers? In *Looking for Elizabeth*, Helen Trinca unravels this mystery exploring the personal and artistic forces that shaped Harrower’s writing. While also bringing to life the literary circles of this era Trinca draws a sensitive portrait of a wounded ‘divorced child’ and the legacy of abandonment she carried throughout her life. She probes the contradictions of a woman who wielded extraordinary insight into others’ lives but guarded her own fiercely.

Business

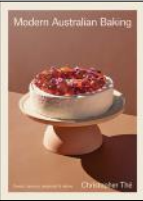
**Sensible Money: Your Finances. Your Future. Your Way.**  
Emily Stewart  
ABC Books. PB. \$34.99  
Available 2 July



ABC finance reporter Emily Stewart, aka Sensible Emily, has written this no-nonsense guide to making better money choices and gaining financial freedom. While most finance gurus assume a one-size-fits-all approach to financial prosperity, Sensible Emily focuses on educating her readers on personal finance and setting out different options, so that they can make their own decisions about what’s right for them and their families. With Sensible Emily as your guide, you will feel empowered to navigate your financial future.

Cooking

**Modern Australian Baking: Sweet, Savoury, Seasonal and Native**  
Christopher Thé  
HG. HB. \$60  
Available 1 July



Before you take home this most beautiful ode to baking by Christopher Thé, founder of Black Star Pastry and creator of ‘the world’s most Instagrammed cake’, I’m going to help you with some tips:

- You can purchase saltbush already ground, ready to use from your local deli or very good IGA.
- All Australian nuts are actually very easy to source. I purchase mine from my local market.
- Warrigal greens are relatively easy to get from any veggie shop.
- Yes, you should buy at least one fresh Australian truffle in your lifetime. (For one the size of a golf ball, it’ll cost you around \$50 but can be used in several dishes. It is bang for your buck!)
- Reading this book may influence you to start collecting pastel-coloured dinnerware. This is not necessary. The food will taste just as good without it as long as you follow the instructions: for the love of everything sweet, do not rush the steps. There is no point; you will only be disappointed.

Sydneysider Thé is internet famous and for a good reason. His food is utterly picture perfect and delicious. This book is a new type of baking bible which includes all the classics: bread, dough, pastry, cakes, biscuits and adds a sprinkle of Australian influences. For example, his saltbush scones are a revolution in your mouth with a deep, salty, earthy and sweet taste all at once. The winter chapter holds one of the most delicious recipes I’ve come across: truffle custard tarts. (Even writing it here has made my mouth water). And the best news is that it is as easy as pie to make.

This is the baking book you’ll keep reaching for. It’s possible you’ll buy it for a visiting friend but, truly, a better arrangement for everyone involved would be a jar of desert-lime marmalade (recipe included in the Summer chapter) for them, following the purchase of a new and pretty baking book for you. *Modern Australian Baking*: not just for those who photograph their food.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

Cultural Studies

**Sweet Nothings: Power, Lust and Learning**  
Madison Griffiths  
Ultimo. PB. \$36.99  
Available 1 July



Author, artist, and producer Madison Griffiths rips off the band-aid 30 years after Helen Garner’s controversial book *The First Stone* and launches a new discussion about

‘Under its foul-mouthed, laughing bravado lie deep wounds, a humble and endearing loneliness that moved me.’  
**Helen Garner, author of *The Season***

A gripping work of historical true crime and a richly revealing examination of our nation at its birth.





# Melbourne International Film Festival

7—24 August  
Look Closer

PROGRAM OUT  
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abuse, sex and power dynamics in Australian academia. Told through the accounts of real women, research, and personal experience, Griffiths is an unflinching voice in Australian feminist literature today.

*Sweet Nothings* delves into the stories of four women – Rose, Blaine, Cara, and Elsie – and their experiences as students who embarked on romantic relationships with university professors. Through their accounts, we examine how gender, power and sex is exploited in the university setting, with Griffiths providing a deeper analysis of the cultural and social acceptance and endorsement of imbalanced male-female expectations and authority.

*Sweet Nothings* almost feels novelistic at times with its tender, poetic prose as Griffiths handles the nuance and complexity of these difficult discourses with care and a quiet fury. Although elements of the story – including the women's names – have been fictionalised to preserve anonymity, this book is one of thousands of true stories that share the same outcome of exploitation, humiliation and heartbreak following from a 'sweet nothing': an empty promise of love and affection that makes you feel special and seen. Griffiths dissects the psychology of the female student and the male teacher – their individual desires, their expectations of what they deserve, and the lasting scars left behind.

Praised by Clementine Ford, Chanel Contos and Hannah Ferguson, Griffiths' candid and searing style of writing exposes the long history of pedagogy tied to abuse of power, particularly between male teachers and female students. With these stories taking place across Australia, openly naming many highly esteemed universities, *Sweet Nothings* is a tale that unfortunately feels close to home, perhaps bringing comfort to those who felt they were alone in this experience, but shocking all who learn the true prevalence of these experiences.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

## Hark: How Women Listen

Alice Vincent

Canongate. HB. \$36.99

Available 22 July



We're told women are good at listening, but we rarely examine what they're listening to, what their worlds sound like, or how it feels to be expected to listen in a world of noise made by men. Like so many of us, Alice Vincent had become overwhelmed by the sensory overload. And then, a baby's heartbeat arrived. What followed was a quest to rediscover sound as something alive and vital and restorative, and beyond music, takes her into new corners of listening.

## Bad Friend: A Century of Revolutionary Friendships

Tiffany Watt Smith

Faber. PB. \$34.99

Available 22 July



This is an interesting title for a historical take on women's friendships. However, I am not sure it does its subject justice because this book is all about how women support one another, in all

the various stages of life. Think of it as a history lesson on how women survive. The title, referenced often, is explained as indicating the way in which some friendships work for a time and then do not. It is about how particular friendships form for one reason or another – motherhood, illness, or even jail – but do not last the distance.

English historian Dr Tiffany Watt Smith has done an excellent job of leading us through the 21st century to illustrate how these friendship cycles have always existed. She moves us through the decades with examples from literature (Enid Blyton even gets a look in), pop culture, films, interviews, workplaces, and historical documents. The references at the end are mind-blowing in their conscientious length and detail.

I liked reading the interviews; the snatches of conversations from various women who have chosen a particular moment in their lives to recount. (After all, the personal is political.) I liked considering my own friendships against the examples she presented. I was drawn to the stories of women in their older years that rallied together to live close to one another in a self-made community: a coven of sensible women. I like that we learn about the author, in a comparable way to that experienced by readers of Lisa Taddeo's writing.

*Bad Friend* is full of examples of what women do well – acceptance, encouragement – and what women do fantastically well: disobedience. This thought-provoking exposé on women's lives is a (needed) reminder of women's strength and independence. I am buying a copy for my bestie; it is that type of book.

Chris Gordon is the community engagement and programming manager

## History

### The Shortest History of Turkey

Benjamin C. Fortna

Black Inc. PB. \$27.99

Available 1 July



Over more than nine centuries of change, Turkey has been a cultural melting pot, straddling Asia and Europe, and a nation-state bent on ethnic unity. It has seen conquest and reform, appeals to tradition and calls to modernise. It has been a home to Christians, Jews, Muslims and more, and it has pursued both secularisation and Islamisation. Benjamin C. Fortna offers a concise yet nuanced overview of this complex trajectory, revealing how persistent tensions between opposing visions for Turkey have shaped, and continue to shape, the country and its people.

### Scenes from a Roman Century 1924–2024

David Lane

Hurst. PB. \$39.99

Available 1 July

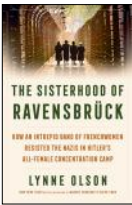


After half a century living in Rome, David Lane turns his eye on events and streetscapes in the Eternal City over the past 100 years. Beginning with the 1924 murder of Giacomo Matteotti and ending with



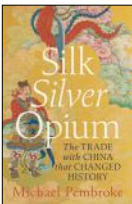
the organised crime and political violence of our own era, Lane sends readers meandering down the alleys, out towards the suburbs and to stand before the monumental architecture of the ancient city, capturing cultural and political moments from Rome’s past and present. He explores fascism’s material legacy across the city, terrorism and political extremism on the right and left, and the struggle to manage economic growth’s burdens. As pilgrims descend for the 2025 jubilee, what is next for this ever-changing city of history?

**The Sisterhood of Ravensbrück: How an Intrepid Band of Frenchwomen Resisted the Nazis in Hitler’s All-Female Concentration Camp**  
Lynne Olson  
Scribe. PB. \$36.99  
Available 1 July



Histories of the French Resistance have largely ignored the contributions of women, but *The Sisterhood of Ravensbrück* redresses that omission. It surveys the bond between four women who fought valiantly against Nazi oppression. While the women belonged to different Resistance movements and networks, they were united by a common thread: they were arrested by the Gestapo, underwent merciless interrogations and beatings, were jailed, and survived. Remarkably, they later joined forces to turn the horrors of the war into something good.

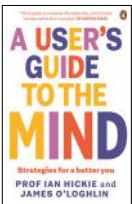
**Silk Silver Opium: The Trade with China that Changed History**  
Michael Pembroke  
HG. PB. \$37.99  
Available 1 July



Much about China’s modern relationship with the West is the product of its past interactions, conflicts, victories and humiliations. The South China Sea was the place from where the ultimately destructive European sailing ships arrived. *Silk Silver Opium* tells the dramatic story of trade between China and the West, the fascinating stories of silk and tea, porcelain, silver and opium, missionaries, mercenaries, about what became inevitable, how it changed the world, and the clear implications for the future.

## Personal Development

**A User’s Guide to the Mind: Strategies for a Better You**  
Prof. Ian Hickie & James O’Loughlin  
Penguin. PB. \$36.99  
Available 1 July

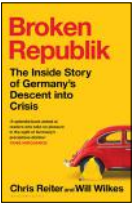


From the hosts of the popular *Minding Your Mind* podcast comes an empowering book that examines the key moments in our mental health journey – from the first search for identity and belonging, through to our most

important relationships, our hopes and ambitions, and inevitable times of crisis. The result is a practical guide that will put you on a path to deeper happiness, better relationships and a life of greater meaning.

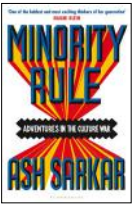
## Politics

**Broken Republik: The Inside Story of Germany’s Descent into Crisis**  
Chris Reiter & Will Wilkes  
Bloomsbury. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



For many years, the postwar recovery of Germany was an inspirational story. All of Europe looked on with admiration and envy as the nation rebuilt and set standards for the rest to follow. But, even at its zenith, there were signs of trouble, with a worrying lack of national identity at its heart. So, when events started to turn against Germany, the whole edifice began to crumble. Germany is not alone in the problems it faces but it is ill-equipped to deal with them. An essential read for anyone who wants to understand Germany’s slide towards the brink.

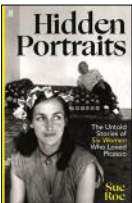
**Minority Rule: Adventures in the Culture War**  
Ash Sarkar  
Bloomsbury. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 July



Who is the ruling minority? Our world is defined by inequality, insecurity, lack of community and information overload. As the world burns, mega-corporations are reporting record profits. How are they getting away with it? Minority elites rule majorities by creating the culture wars that have taken over our politics, stoking fear and panic in our media landscape. Ash Sarkar exposes how a misdirection of blame is keeping the majority divided, while the ruling minority remain on top, facilitating one of the biggest power grabs in history.

## Visual Arts

**Hidden Portraits: The Untold Stories of Six Women Who Loved Picasso**  
Sue Roe  
Faber. HB. \$49.99  
Available 1 July



Fernande Olivier, Olga Khokhlova, Marie-Therese Walter, Dora Maar, Francoise Gilot, and Jacqueline Roque. These six extraordinary women shared Pablo Picasso’s life and were instrumental in his career, yet they have long been dismissed as simply passive models or muses. Covering 70 years, Sue Roe delves into the truth of these remarkable women’s experiences for the first time, revealing them to be unconventional, independent and talented, with each influential in taking Picasso’s art in major new directions. **R**

An exciting and gripping new espionage thriller and debut novel, perfect for fans of John le Carré, Daniel Silva and Robert Harris.

A thrilling and utterly compelling novel from the author of *Tiny Uncertain Miracles*, perfect for readers of Sarah Winman and Heather Rose

A fun and refreshing new romantic comedy, from an exciting debut author, perfect for fans of Mhairi McFarlane, Michelle Upton and Emily Henry

A guide on how to make better money choices for financial freedom, by the ABC's finance reporter, for readers of *She's On the Money* and *Girls That Invest*

OUT NOW

UQP 2025 Australian Small Publisher of the Year

First job. First crush. But it's complicated.

Nova Weetman is back with a sun-soaked rom com for readers aged 11+.



# Bargains

## The Terrace House

Cameron Bruhn & Katelin Butler (eds)

HB. Was \$44.99 **Now \$16.99**



With British precedents and working-class origins, the terrace house has a story of remarkable resilience. Today it is highly sought after for its nostalgic charm and inner-city locale. A new generation of homeowners is making a mark by working with architects and designers to reimagine the terrace house for a 21st-century lifestyle. This collection celebrates the incredible history and enduring appeal of these well-loved buildings.

## Being Bond:

A Daniel Craig Retrospective  
Mark Salisbury

HB. Was \$79.99 **Now \$19.99**

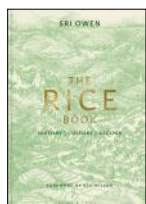


Daniel Craig started his tenure as James Bond with *Casino Royale*, the long-awaited film adaptation of Ian Fleming's 007 origin story. The most successful Bond film of all time on its release, Craig was credited with reinvigorating the franchise and went on to star in four more Bond films. This lavish coffee table book includes stories about the making of all five films, interviews, costume designs, and more.

## The Rice Book:

History | Culture | Recipes  
Sri Owen

HB. Was \$59.99 **Now \$19.99**



Rice is the staple food for more than half the world's population, and the creativity with which people approach this humble grain knows no bounds. From renowned food writer Sri Owen's travels and years of research come recipes for biryanis, risottos, pilafs and paellas from Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Korea, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Spain, Italy, Brazil and beyond. An instant classic when it was published 30 years ago, this updated edition is essential for every kitchen.

## The Big Earth Book

Lonely Planet Kids, Mark Brake, Dr Mike Goldsmith & Brendan Kearney (illus.)

HB. Was \$29.99 **Now \$10.99**

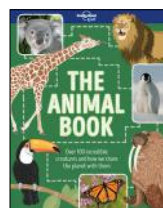


Planet Earth. Four elements. One incredible story. Lonely Planet Kids' *The Big Earth Book* takes children on a rollercoaster ride through history, geography, science and more to show how four elements – earth, fire, air and water – created the world and everything that exists today. Amazing facts, photography and illustrations bring our planet and its past to life in an exciting, engaging way.

## The Animal Book

Lonely Planet Kids, Ruth Martin & Dawn Cooper (illus.)

HB. Was \$29.99 **Now \$10.99**



Kids can discover the animal kingdom like never before in this beautiful encyclopedia featuring over 100 of the world's most diverse and fascinating mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and insects. Packed with facts and illustrations, it also explores our relationship with these animals and how we're affecting their lives and habitats. Animals are all around us, but sometimes we forget how remarkable they are.

## Spooky Stories of the World

Lonely Planet Kids, Wendy Shearer & Teo Georgiev (illus.)

HB. Was \$29.99 **Now \$10.99**



Packed with mind-boggling mysteries, real unexplained enigmas and traditional stories that are sure to send shivers down your spine, *Spooky Stories of the World* is the ultimate feast for Halloween-loving kids and readers in search of a fright. Meet vampires, werewolves and fearsome monsters that hide in the shadows in this one-of-a-kind round-the-world collection of hair-raising tales.

## The Weather Book

Lonely Planet Kids

HB. Was \$29.99 **Now \$10.99**

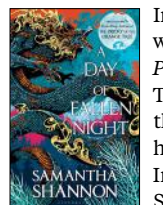


Packed with fascinating facts and stories that will bring the extraordinary world of weather to life, young readers can find out about different climates and weather patterns, discover the processes that drive them, learn the secrets of forecasting the weather, and read about record-breaking weather and weird weather events, such as 'animal rain', 'ice bombs', 'ball lightning', climate change and much more.

## A Day of Fallen Night

Samantha Shannon

PB. Was \$34.99 **Now \$10.99**



In this epic return to the world of the bestselling *A Priory of the Orange Tree*, Tunuva Melim is a sister of the Priory. For 50 years, she has trained to slay wyrms. In the Queendom of Inys, Sabran the Ambitious has married the new King of Hróth. Dumai has spent her life in a Seikinese mountain temple. When the Dreadmount erupts, these women must protect humankind from a devastating threat.

## Shy

Max Porter

HB. Was \$27.99 **Now \$14.99**



Things keep slipping up for Shy. All he wants is sex, spills and his own turntables, and for the red noise in his mind to disappear. He's been kicked out of two schools, cautioned, arrested and

more, but it's the taunts and teasing of his schoolmates that haunt Shy. At Last Chance he is surrounded by people who want to help him, but his night terrors aren't improving. So he's stepping into the night with the beginnings of a plan.

## Come and Get It

Kiley Reid

PB. Was \$32.99 **Now \$10.99**

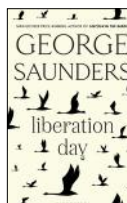


It's 2017 at the University of Arkansas. Millie Cousins, a senior resident assistant, wants to graduate, get a job and buy a house. So when Agatha Paul, a visiting professor and writer, offers Millie an easy yet unusual opportunity, she jumps at the chance. But Millie's starry-eyed hustle is jeopardised by odd new friends, vengeful dorm pranks and illicit intrigue. A fresh portrait of desire, consumption and reckless abandon, *Come and Get It* is a story about money, indiscretion and bad behaviour from the author of *Such a Fun Age*.

## Liberation Day

George Saunders

PB. Was \$29.99 **Now \$10.99**

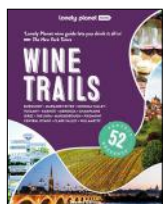


*Liberation Day* is a masterful collection that explores ideas of power, ethics, and justice, and the heart of what it means to live in community with our fellow humans. With his trademark prose – wickedly funny, unsentimental, and perfectly tuned – Saunders continues to challenge and surprise: here are stories that encompass joy and despair, oppression and revolution, bizarre fantasy and brutal reality.

## Wine Trails

Lonely Planet

HB. Was \$39.99 **Now \$12.99**

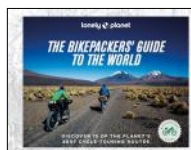


The second edition of Lonely Planet's *Wine Trails* features 52 weekend-long, guided itineraries through the world's most exciting wine regions. Discover the most interesting wineries and the best places to stay and where to eat in wine regions near major cities. Winemakers offer personal insights into what wines to taste and why they're special, and help you understand a place, its people and their traditions through the wine that's made there. This new edition features well-known wine regions such as Rioja, Burgundy, Margaret River and Sonoma combined with up-and-coming and offbeat regions, such as Priorat near Barcelona and Tamar Valley in Tasmania.

## The Bikepackers' Guide to the World

Lonely Planet

HB. Was \$44.99 **Now \$16.99**



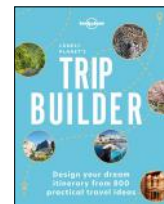
Bikepacking is a fast-growing adventure activity that gives people the freedom to discover the world in a sustainable and slow-paced fashion on their bicycles. Discover 75 of the most amazing cycling routes in every continent and use the detailed maps, directions, accommodation and practical information to plan your trip. Lonely

Planet's experts tell you how to prepare, what to take, when and where to go. Routes and countries covered include: The Tahoe Rim Trail, the Oregon Timber Trail and Missouri's Katy rail trail in the US; The Tour de Mont Blanc and Scotland's North Coast 500 in Europe; The Annapurna Circuit and Trans-Hokkaido routes in Asia; The Murray to the Mountains rail trail and New Zealand's Old Ghost Road, and more.

## Lonely Planet's Trip Builder

Lonely Planet

HB. Was \$44.99 **Now \$16.99**

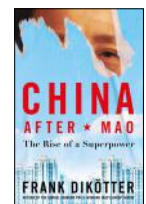


Discover 800 ideas for your next trip and begin to plan it with Lonely Planet's *Trip Builder*. Bike and hike the sights of Valencia, quench your thirst by following California's craft beer scene, experience Indigenous Australia on the Dampier Peninsula, or take a slow food and wine tour through Piedmont and Liguria. With wide coverage of regions across the world, there's something to appeal to all ages and interests. Lonely Planet's expert travel writers have been exploring the world for over 45 years and in this handsome hardcover book they simplify the planning process and present hundreds of practical ideas so that you can build the trip of a lifetime.

## China After Mao:

The Rise of a Superpower  
Frank Dikötter

PB. Was \$34.99 **Now \$12.99**



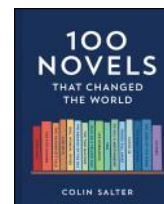
In *China After Mao*, award-winning historian Frank Dikötter explores how the People's Republic of China was transformed from a backwater economy in the 1970s into the world superpower of today.

Based on hundreds of previously unseen archival documents, this detailed chronicle unfolds with great narrative sweep, recasting our understanding of China's emergence as a world power with a sprawling security apparatus and the most sophisticated surveillance system in the world. Ultimately, the book concludes, the Communist Party's goal was never to join the democratic sphere, but to resist it – and then defeat it.

## 100 Novels that Changed the World

Colin Salter

HB. Was \$49.99 **Now \$16.99**



Before the novel, the world of books was dominated by scientific tomes, religious tracts and histories of the victorious in war. There had been stories and epic poems from

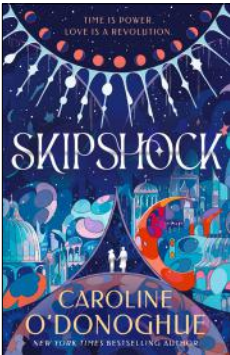
ancient times – Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* recounted ancient Greece, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was a chivalric romance in Middle English, but it was not until the 17th century, when the European middle classes had money and leisure, that anything so frivolous as a novel could be sold for entertainment. Looking at 100 inspiring novels that have left a significant mark on the world of literature and popular culture, Colin Salter traces the evolution of the novel from the earliest examples through to the postmodern best-sellers of the 21st century. **R**



# Young Adult

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Young Adult



**Skipshock**  
Caroline O'Donoghue  
Walker. PB. \$22.99  
Available 2 July

utmost authenticity and compassion, it makes you wish with all your heart that, against all odds, things will work out for them. My only complaint is that the cliffhanger ending will remain unresolved for readers until the sequel is published in 2026! *Skipshock* is an entirely original and utterly brilliant novel for adults and teens aged 14+.

Angela Crocombe is a senior children's book buyer

**R** I loved this book so much I read it twice! Caroline O'Donoghue is the author of the romance novel *The Rachel Incident*, a supernatural young adult (YA) series, and host of the popular podcast *Sentimental Garbage*, but her new YA novel *Skipshock* is unlike anything she's done previously.

When 17-year-old Margo is on a train to Dublin, something strange happens: suddenly she is on a different train in a world where no one has even heard of Dublin. The only other passenger is Moon, who, although the same age as her, has been working for years as a travelling salesman. Here, as in the *Railhead* series by Philip Reeve, trains transport people between worlds. However, worlds differ in the length of hours that constitute a day, and Margo has just landed in a world with only a six-hour day. 'Skipshock', like jetlag, is an unfortunate physical side effect caused by the challenge of moving rapidly between worlds.

There is a dominant power, the Semper, trying to control the trains and thus all the worlds. There is also a well-organised resistance called PACT; an ostracised race, the Lunati, to which Moon belongs; and a watch, given to Margo by her father, that can break trains connecting worlds. This watch makes Margo an important figure to both the Semper and PACT.

*Skipshock* is science fiction, with all the high concepts and fascinating ideas you'd expect, but it's also a character-based romance between Margo and Moon. Written with the

When the wedding ceremony is interrupted, Lark is saved by Alastair and his sister, Camille. The three must unite to face looming dangers and navigate an entangled romance. The relationship between Lark and the two siblings is tender and haunting. At times this is a slow burn, but with great world-building and strong atmospheric descriptions, I stayed hooked until the end.

*Tenderly, I Am Devoured* is a perfect blend of horror and young adult fiction. It reminded me of *House of Salt and Sorrows* by Erin A. Craig and is perfect for fans of *Aquaman* or *A Study in Drowning* by Ava Reid. For ages 14+.

Yasmin Baker is the manager of Readings Doncaster

**Where Shadows Meet**  
Patrice Caldwell  
HotKey. PB. \$22.99  
Available 22 July



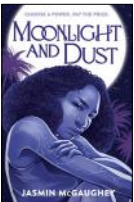
Long ago, a girl named Favre sacrificed her wings for love. Thana, the young goddess for whom she so willingly gave them up, sacrificed that same love for power. Now, a thousand years later, Leyla, the crown princess of the Malichora, must travel to the Island of the Dead after her best friend is captured. The closer she gets, the more she risks awakening an ancient evil and destroying everything she holds dear.

**The Nightblood Prince**  
Molly X. Chang  
Gollancz. PB. \$24.99  
Available 8 July



A prophecy claims Fei will become the Empress of All Empresses. So, she's torn from her family and raised in the palace to marry the Crown Prince. But Fei wants to seize her own destiny. When she meets runaway Prince Yexue, commander of an army of vampires, Fei may have found her freedom. Suddenly, she's torn between two princes and trying to stop the coming war.

**Moonlight and Dust**  
Jasmin McGaughey  
A&U. PB. \$24.99  
Available 1 July



**R** For Zillah, the trouble all started when her sister Nik stepped off a balcony, plummeting into a swimming pool and a mysterious coma. After that night of tragedy, Zillah's plan to leave her Brisbane boarding school and spend a year with Nik at the local Craigmont High becomes all the more daunting, as she's forced to step out of her sister's shadow and make a name for herself. But the more Zillah learns about Nik's world – and the closer she gets with Nik's distractingly handsome best friend – the more she realises there might be more to that accident than she thought.

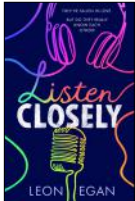
Craigmont High has a massive secret, and it comes in vials of glittering liquid that cost \$50 a dose. Everyone calls it 'Moondust' and the incredible abilities it confers are undeniable, but its dangerous consequences might be just as hard for them to ignore.

*Moonlight and Dust* is a well-plotted and inventive mystery, with a perfectly

calibrated cast of characters and a plot wound tightly enough to draw anyone in. It's made all the more notable by Jasmin McGaughey's commitment to depicting her own Torres Strait Islander culture, which proves central to Zillah's journey, whether in the broad and supportive family structure that supports her in her toughest moments or in the creole language she speaks with the friends she's able to find community with. Details like these add depth to Zillah as a character, ground the fantastical drama in lived culture and elevate this book from good to great. For ages 14+.

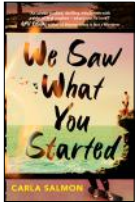
Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

**Listen Closely**  
Leon Egan  
HarperCollins. PB. \$19.99  
Available 2 July



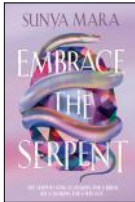
When Jude and Aiden are paired for an internship at a local radio station, things are awkward. Jude is quiet, withdrawn, and suspicious of everyone. Aiden is charming, outgoing, confident and popular. But after they discover a shared love of podcast dramas, Jude and Aiden realise they have more in common than they thought – including Jude's own podcast.

**We Saw What You Started**  
Carla Salmon  
Pan Mac. PB. \$19.99  
Available 1 July



**G** Otto was a star surfer back in California, but now he just wants a fresh start in Australia. When fires break out in Red Sands, the locals are suspicious. It's no coincidence that Otto's at the scene every time. Milly isn't so sure. Can Otto and Milly find the truth behind the fires? And what happens when you do the wrong things for the right reasons?

**Embrace the Serpent**  
Sunya Mara  
Hodder. PB. \$24.99  
Available now



The Serpent King is the most eligible bachelor in the land. Riches and power await his future bride. That fate is Saphira's worst nightmare. Orphaned by the Empire, Saphira enjoys invisibility and a rare gift

as a jewellsmith who can harness the magic in gemstones. When the king sends his most clever huntsman to find the best jewellsmith of all, Saphira must choose between falling into the Empire's grasp or marrying a monster: she chooses the latter.

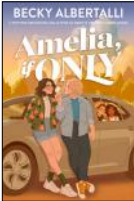
**Anna's War**  
D.J. Taylor  
Riveted. PB. \$17.99  
Available 2 July



When the Nazis begin deporting local men from 14-year-old Anna's town in German-occupied Holland to work in German factories, Anna's father hides in a secret cellar beneath their home. Then

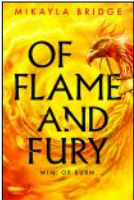
Anna meets a young German translator, whose kindness leaves her conflicted. As her feelings deepen, so too do the risks. **R**

**Amelia, If Only**  
Becky Albertalli  
HarperCollins. PB. \$19.99  
Available now



Amelia Applebaum isn't in love with Walter Holland. He just happens to be her favourite moderately famous, chaotically bisexual YouTuber. Who she just happened to invite to prom. Okay, maybe her friends are right: she's slightly parasocially infatuated. But Amelia just knows sparks would fly – if only she could meet Walter for real. But what if Amelia's butterflies aren't for Walter at all? A beautiful and heartwarming new romance.

**Of Flame and Fury**  
Mikayla Bridge  
Pan Mac. PB. \$26.99  
Available 15 July



**R** Phoenixes are unpredictable, wild and incredibly dangerous. But on the island of Cendor, many risk their lives racing them. Seventeen-year-old Kel Varra knows the risks

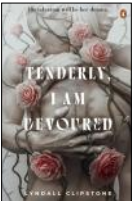
all too well. But despite her fierce need to protect her phoenix, Savita, Kel needs the prize money more. When her team, the Crimson Howlers, loses their rider, Kel has no choice but to join forces with her biggest rival, the arrogant and annoyingly charismatic Warren 'Coup' Coupers. Their new partnership attracts the interest of Canen Cristo, head of the powerful Cristo Industries, who offers to sponsor the Crimson Howlers. But as tensions rise on and off the track, and political conspiracies are uncovered, the Crimson Howlers are left with two options: win or burn.

*Of Flame and Fury* was my most anticipated read for 2025 and it did not disappoint. The characters are loveable, the story is fast-paced and the twists and turns had me on the edge of my seat! Mikayla Bridge has created a fantasy world like no other. The descriptions of the island of Cendor and the mythical creatures that inhabit it are so vivid and unique, I just couldn't get enough! Especially the phoenixes! I kept flicking back to the compendium at the front of the book to learn more about each subspecies!

This flawlessly executed debut fantasy novel will have you falling in love with phoenixes and the Crimson Howlers. It's the perfect read for anyone who loves rivals-to-lovers plots, steamy YA romance, found family and cheering for the underdog. Trust me, you won't be disappointed. For ages 14+.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator

**Tenderly, I Am Devoured**  
Lyndall Clipstone  
Penguin. PB. \$19.99  
Available 1 July



**R** *Tenderly, I Am Devoured* is an enchanting gothic romance fantasy. Woven with elements of horror, a sapphic romance and folklore, this story is mysterious, dark

and intriguing. It follows Lark, an orphan raised by her two older brothers. When she is expelled from her prestigious school and returns to her debt-ridden childhood home, Lark finds out that her brothers have arranged a marriage of convenience for her. But this marriage is not to just any ordinary man: Lark is betrothed to Therion, a sea god.



# Kids

## PICTURE BOOK OF THE MONTH

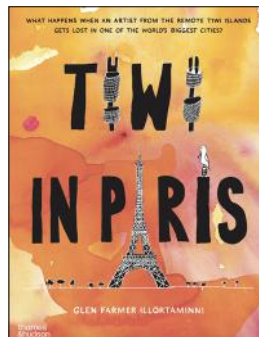
### Picture Book

#### Tiwi in Paris

Glen Farmer Illortaminni

T&H. HB. \$26.99

Available 1 July



**R** *I spoke English, they spoke French, nobody spoke Tiwi.*

In this brilliant picture book, Glen Farmer Illortaminni tells the story of accompanying his uncle, artist Timothy Cook, to Paris as an interpreter. They arrived in Paris from the Tiwi Islands, and following a dinner of frogs' legs and spaghetti, Glen found himself wide awake at nighttime and ducked out for a walk. Unable to speak French, and without a hotel key or phone, he became lost and spent days treading around Paris doing his best to stay warm and safe and to find his way back. He takes the Metro, returns to the airport, visits a big market and a hospital, and sleeps in a church, before finally making his way to the Australian embassy.

Although it must have been a very scary and stressful few days, Farmer Illortaminni tells his story in a calm, matter-of-fact tone and shares wonderful details about the people and places he encountered, and of his home, Milikapiti, which is 13,710 kilometres away from Paris's famous landmarks. An artist and printmaker, his illustrations feature colour washes that contrast beautifully with black ink and strong lines. On some pages the people are very small – tiny stick figures in a big city. Other pages showing time spent in company have a much closer perspective; kind strangers have character and smiles. *Tiwi in Paris* is a remarkable story, and an utterly unique experience of Paris. For anyone aged 3+.

Kim Gruschow is the manager of Readings St Kilda

## KIDS BOOK OF THE MONTH

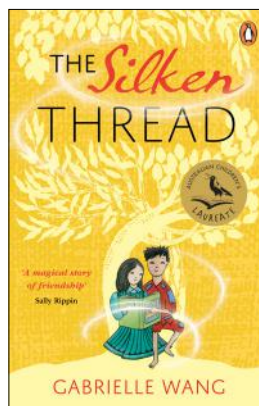
### Middle Grade

#### The Silken Thread

Gabrielle Wang

Penguin. PB. \$17.99

Available 1 July



**R** Stitching together 1930s Carlton with Chongming Island in China, Gabrielle Wang weaves a lushly realised tale about Moonie and Little Dipper, who both strive to live up to their own expectations, half a world apart. These two resilient kids both face the seemingly insurmountable challenges of loss, communication, financial uncertainty and discrimination. But with a little bit of magic, as well as a lot of friendship, hard work and creativity, they learn how to tap into their own strengths, and also that much more challenging lesson: accepting help from others.

... a vivid picture of Depression-era Australia and China through the eyes of two protagonists whose tenacity and friendship are the beating heart of the story.

This magical tale weaves a vivid picture of Depression-era Australia and China through the eyes of two protagonists whose tenacity and friendship are the beating heart of the story. Charmingly illustrated by the author herself, this book will whet your appetite for more – lucky then that this is one of many by the 2022–2023 Australian Children's Laureate! For ages 9+.

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

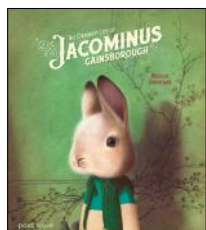
## Picture Books

### The Ordinary Life of Jacominus Gainsborough

Rébecca Dautremer & Charis Ainslie (trans.)

Post Wave. HB. \$29.99

Available 1 July



Journey through the life of the humble little rabbit, Jacominus Gainsborough. In 12 beautifully illustrated scenes that capture the changing seasons, this touching story celebrates life's simple joys and big moments, from happiness and love to challenges and doubts. Rébecca Dautremer brings a

universal message of the beauty of being alive in this stunning story.

### Where the River Runs Free

Vikki Conley & Jedda Robaard (illus.)

Windy Hollow. HB. \$29.95

Available 1 July



Wibble-wobble over the rumble-tumble stones and past peek-a-boo trees to where the rainbows sing. You never know who's flip-flap-floating your way! From the author of the CBCA award-winning book *Where the Lyrebird Lives* comes this delightful family adventure celebrating the magic, surprise and precious moments of a walk along the river.

### Once Upon an A to Z

Amy Dunjey & Deb Hudson (illus.)

Affirm Kids. HB. \$22.99

Available now



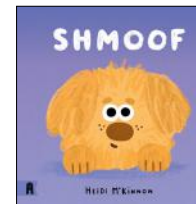
unicorns and more!

### Shmoof

Heidi McKinnon

Albert Street. HB. \$19.99

Available 1 July



A dog makes a great best friend – unless you are a cat! Shmoof is Shmoofy. Shmoof is super shmoofy. Shmoof is ready to be best friends. But Floof? Floof is not so sure ... This is a story to warm the heart of anyone who has ever loved a playful furball. An adorable picture book from the author of the bestselling and much-loved *Floof*.

### The Frog's First Song

Jazz Money & Jason Phu (illus.)

UQP. HB. \$24.99

Available 1 July



**R** *The Frog's First Song* is a delightful new children's book written by Jazz Money and illustrated by Jason Phu. Deep in a dark cavern, one frog decides they are sick of being alone, so they croak a song into the world. The other frogs are overjoyed to hear this music, realising they are also not alone, and they happily join in. The frogs dance their way to the outside world, sing a duet with the moon, and create their own community under the stars. Jason Phu's illustrations absolutely burst with character, capturing the joy of friendship and shared songs, while Jazz Money's words flow with a simple, undeniable beauty. I was blown away! *The Frog's First Song* is sure to delight and comfort kids, while tugging on parents' heartstrings and rousing warm memories of youthful enthusiasm. This book is a beam of moonlight and a warm hug all in one! For ages 3+.

Harvey Weir is from Readings Doncaster

### Rakali of the Riverbank

Stephanie Owen Reeder & Rachel Gregg (illus.)

CSIRO. HB. \$26.99

Available 1 July



As the sun sets, Rakali the Australian native water rat prepares to patrol the riverbank. He is on a mission to fill his belly, protect his pups and keep his home safe. But he must face feral foxes, disease-carrying black rats and toxic cane toads. Will he make it safely back to his burrow before the sun rises?

### The Enchantment of Golden Eagle

Margaret Wild & Stephen Michael King (illus.)

A&U. HB. \$24.99

Available 1 July



One day, Ella and her little brother Leif found a fledgling with a broken wing. They took him home, wrapped and fed him, and watched over him for a week. In time Golden Eagle was well enough to fly, but he loved the children, so he promised to stay with them at the edge of the dark forest. Until one day, the wind whispered and the breeze caressed his feathers, and Golden Eagle forgot his promise.

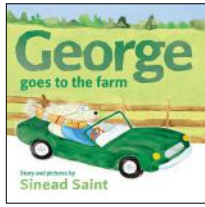


### George Goes to the Farm

Sinead Saint

Wild Dog. HB. \$24.99

Available 2 July



George is a city dog. He has a busy life of coffees, trips to the salon and meeting pals in the park. A country minibreak will be just what he needs. But when his farm friends need help, George will jump up and get the job done! A cheeky romp through the countryside that the whole family will enjoy.

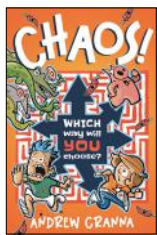
## Junior Grade

### CHAOS! Which Way Will YOU Choose?

Andrew Cranna

Walker. PB. \$15.99

Available 2 July



When Bodhi, Jemima and Kevin the pig find Grandpa's famous Amazonian chilli collection, they have no idea what sort of power is about to be unleashed. And now the fate of their world depends on the choices they make. Oh no!! That sounds like a recipe for disaster. Laugh out very loud at the most ridiculous, absurd adventures ever – where you get to choose what happens next!

## Middle Grade

### The Mushroom in the Sky

Jackie French

HarperCollins. PB. \$17.99

Available 2 July



1942: Japan has bombed Sydney Harbour. Sixteen-year-old Ossie lies about his age to protect his country, even though it means abandoning his only family, a one-eyed dog named Lucky. Thirteen-year-old Kat Murphy comes to the rescue and volunteers to care for Lucky. Somehow, Lucky can still see Ossie, and Kat and Ossie catch glimpses into each other's lives, too. In the 80th anniversary year, Jackie French explores the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, which ended the Second World War.

### The Last Journey

Stacy Gregg & Suzie Mason (illus.)

S&S. PB. \$17.99

Available 2 July



Pusskin and his owner 11-year-old Lottie have an unbreakable bond. But when the bird and insect populations are depleted, cats are made a scapegoat. Pusskin sets off on a journey to protect his cul-de-sac cat friends. When Lottie tries to bring him home, she realises that for Pusskin to have any chance of survival, she'll have to let him go. Could this be their final goodbye?

### Edie Tells a Lie

Ingrid Laguna

Text. PB. \$16.99

Available 1 July



Edie wishes she had a big, interesting family. She only has her mum. So, she invents a small story. Then the story grows, landing Edie in trouble. But then she finds a mysterious letter written in Polish, the language of her dad's family, and Edie discovers she has a famous great aunt! Edie wants to tell everyone about her

Polish heritage and amazing auntie. But, after her lie, will anyone believe her?

### Sonny & Tess

Nova Weetman

UQP. PB. \$16.99

Available 1 July



It's the end of Year 7 and Tess wants a summer job. Thirteen-year-old Sonny is staying with his uncle and aunt above their fish-and-chip shop, and it just so happens they're hiring extra staff for the holidays. When Sonny and Tess crash into each other outside the shop, sparks and dim sims fly. Soon they're both wondering if the other feels the same way. A delightful middle-grade romance.

### Candle Island

Lauren Wolk

Scholastic. PB. \$19.99

Available 1 July



In a place like Candle Island – cold, quiet and full of potential – there's a mystery around every corner. Alongside lost cats and orphaned birds, secret rooms and suspicious fires, perhaps the biggest mystery of all comes in the form of a 12-year-old girl called Lucretia. Lucretia and her mum – the famously reclusive painter Eliza Sanderson – have moved to Candle Island for a fresh start, but on an island clearly divided between year-round locals and summer holidaymakers, fitting in might be harder than they expected. Thankfully, Lucretia is up to the task, finding her place on the island whether that means befriending the reserved Bastian and his prickly cousin Murdock, standing up to the rude and thoughtless summer kids, or embracing her own creative powers.

*Candle Island* is a delightfully cosy read that perfectly captures the excitement and strangeness of moving somewhere new, with great characters, compelling mysteries and a fantastic message about self-confidence and empathy. For ages 10+.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

## Nonfiction

### The Incredible 3D Bug Hunt

Peggy Nille

T&H. HB. \$34.99

Available late July



Little Ladybird is bored, so she decides to go and see the world and make new friends. Join them as they head off on a journey through an exciting world populated by beetles, spiders, butterflies, frogs and many more colourful little creatures, each more beautiful and fascinating than the last. Clever 3D glasses will offer young readers a joyful and dynamic hunt among the jungle and its inhabitants!

### Weaving Country

Aunty Kim Wandin, Chris Joy & Ashleigh Pugh (illus.)

Walker. HB. \$26.99

Available 2 July



How wonderful to have a new First Nations picture book that uses local Wurrundjeri language integrated into the text! This is the story of a Gugung (grandmother) showing her grandchild how to gather and dry Djirra (reed) to weave into a beautiful Binak (basket). As they go about the process of making the Binak, at least one Boroin (blue fairy wren) appears on each spread. Two Boroin have made their nest in the reeds and will go on to hatch and teach their fledglings throughout the narrative.

With simple repetition of language and a glossary, it's easy for readers to pick up simple Wurrundjeri language. Written by Wurrundjeri Elder Aunty Kim Wandin, in collaboration with Chris Joy, with stunning illustrations by Ashleigh Pugh, a descendant of Whadjuk Ballardong, this is both a beautiful picture book and an important resource to educate young and old on Wurrundjeri culture and language. It's perfect for ages 4+.

Angela Crocombe is a senior children's book buyer

## Graphic Narrative

### Into the Bewilderness

Gus Gordon

Figment. HB. \$24.99

Available 1 July



I'm a huge fan of Gus Gordon's storytelling, so I was absolutely thrilled to discover this middle grade graphic novel that delves into his perennial themes – friendship, adventure, and existential musings. Luis (a bear) and Pablo (a mole) are the classic odd couple, living together

in bickering companionship in the woods, but Luis longs for more – theatre, adventure, excitement! When two tickets arrive in the mail to go to the Big City for a theatre production of *The Weary Mermaid*, this is Luis's big chance to explore. But who will he take with him (certainly not Pablo!) and will the Big City live up to his expectations?

This is a delightful and wacky graphic novel that will have adventurous spirits of all ages smiling as they follow this charming pair. The book doesn't talk down to readers, containing impressive vocabulary and concepts that work on a number of levels. It's a gorgeous little hardback and an absolute joy for ages 9+.

Angela Crocombe is a senior children's book buyer

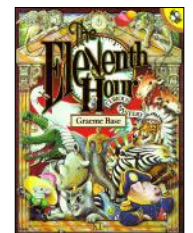
## Kids Classic of the Month

### The Eleventh Hour: A Curious Mystery

Graeme Base

Picture Puffin. PB. \$19.99

Available now



From the author of classic children's books such as *Animalia*, *Uno's Garden* and *The Waterhole*, this picture book, first published in 1988, is one of the greatest illustrated mysteries any child could ever hope for.

There is a birthday party, and a birthday feast is prepared, and games are played, and presents are gifted, and then – the feast has vanished before any of the guests have had a single bite! Who ate it? And when? And how could they eat so much, so quickly?

Despite appearances, this is not a picture book for the very young, but rather an intriguing whodunnit ... Every inch of every page could hold a clue, every picture reveals another layer.

Despite appearances, this is not a picture book for the very young, but rather an intriguing whodunnit, and one the reader will need to comb their way through again and again. Every inch of every page could hold a clue, every picture reveals another layer. And just when you think you've discovered every possible secret, trust me, you're not even close! For ages 5+.

Kate McIntosh is the manager of Readings Emporium **R**

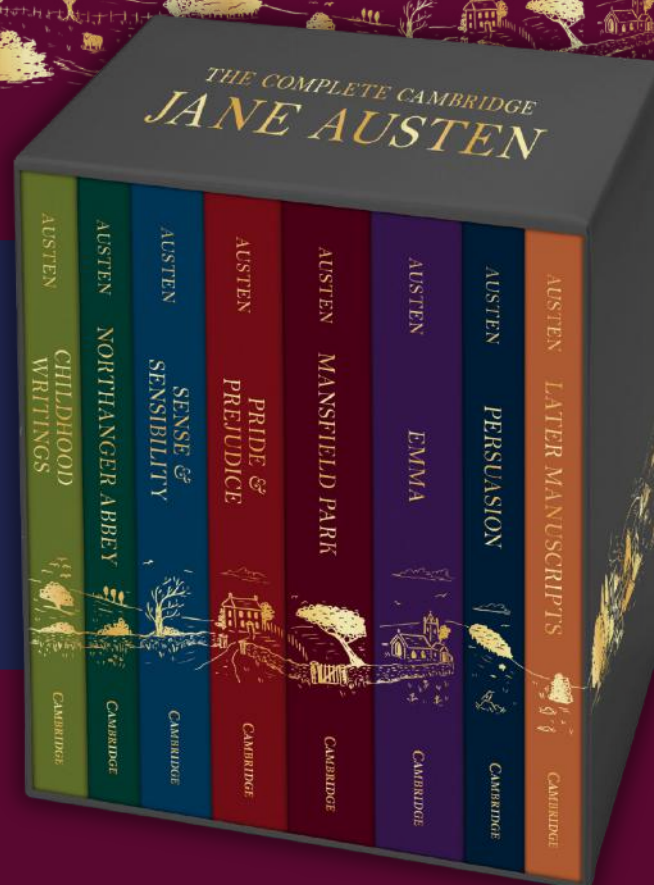




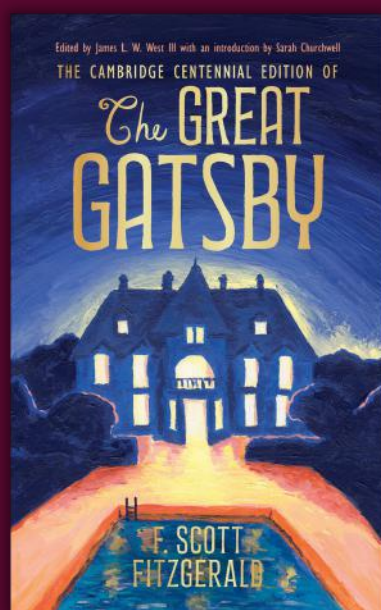
Coming this Spring

# THE COMPLETE CAMBRIDGE JANE AUSTEN

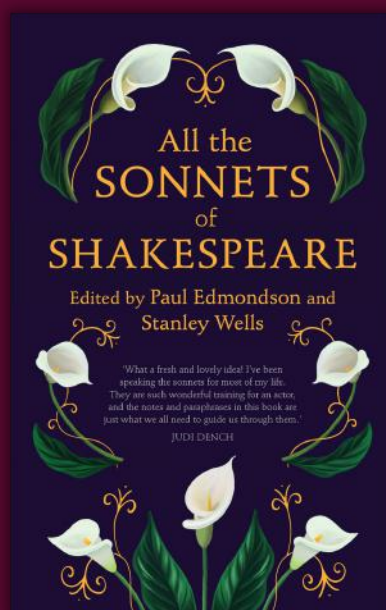
LIMITED EDITION BOXED SET | JANE AUSTEN & JANET TODD



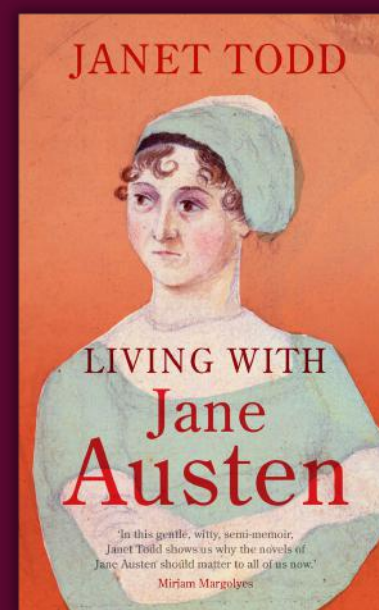
## Timeless literary classics



This centennial edition presents the established version of the text in a collector's volume replete with social, cultural, and historical context, and numerous illustrations.



"This new arrangement of Shakespeare's sonnets is a revelation. Paul Edmondson, and Stanley Wells have truly illuminated the author's themes, preoccupations and obsessions."  
Kenneth Branagh



"In this gentle, witty, semi-memoir, Janet Todd reveals her eccentric encounters with books and shows us why the novels of Jane Austen should matter to all of us now."  
Miriam Margolyes



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