Between Us
By Clare Atkins
Publisher: Black Inc
ISBN 9781760640217  SCIS: 1845010
$19.99

Lamont Review:
I love reading second novels by young Australian authors, as they are so often better than their first book. The CBCA shortlisted Nona and Me was a delight to read, but I think Between Us is much more accomplished.

Set in Darwin around the plight of asylum seekers, it is a story demanding to be heard. The voices of our two main characters are genuine and urgent. Jono, the son of a Vietnamese single father who works as a guard at the detention centre, is a bit lost and recovering from depression. Ana, an Iranian refugee who has just arrived from Nauru as her mother is expecting her third child very soon. Jono and Ana meet at school and form a relationship, but where can this lead? Jono’s Dad is sure Ana is just using his son for whatever she can get. But is this the case?

A powerful story of the hardships faced by asylum seekers in Australia, that was eye opening and thought provoking, and will be a wonderful educational tool and introduction to a real Australian issue for our secondary students. A must read for all in Year 9 and older.

Reviewed by Rob
Grace On The Court
By Maddy Proud
Publisher: Piccolo Nero/Black Inc
ISBN 9781760640330  SCIS:  1850690
$14.99

Blurb:

Things were simple for netball nerd Grace Parker at primary school. She was captain of her school team - and with her best friends, Stella and Mia, by her side, they won the grand final. Back then, her biggest problem was persuading her parents to buy her tickets to see Friday at Five, the world’s hottest boy band.

But high school's a whole new story... Grace's greatest rival on the court, Amber Burns, just made the same netball team as her. Her twin brother, Gus, is devastated he didn't make the A-grade AFL side. Her older brother, Tyler, is ignoring her. And as if that wasn't enough for a 13-year-old girl to handle, gorgeous aspiring rockstar Sebastian King is suddenly paying her a lot of attention.

Lamont Review:

Grace Parker lives and breathes netball. She’s the captain of her school team and an avid Adelaide Thunderbirds fan. Grace and her best friends Mia and Stella are about to start high school, and they are all nervous about what this will bring.

Will they still be able to play netball together? How will they handle Amber and her friends who seem determined to hate them? Most of all, what do they know about dealing with boys?

This is a wonderful novel for young girls who love sport, with some real-life situations to deal with. It is full of laughter, friendship, family and growing up. The novel is perfect for all Year 7 students, just starting their own journey through high school.

Reviewed by Michelle.
The Cruel Prince
By Holly Black
Publisher: Hot Key/Bonnier
ISBN 9781471407031  SCIS: 1850693
$19.99

Blurb:

Of course I want to be like them. They’re beautiful as blades forged in some divine fire. They will live forever. And Cardan is even more beautiful than the rest. I hate him more than all the others. I hate him so much that sometimes when I look at him, I can hardly breathe. One terrible morning, Jude and her sisters see their parents murdered in front of them. The terrifying assassin abducts all three girls to the world of Faerie, where Jude is installed in the royal court but mocked and tormented by the Faerie royalty for being mortal. As Jude grows older, she realises that she will need to take part in the dangerous deceptions of the fey to ever truly belong. But the stairway to power is fraught with shadows and betrayal. And looming over all is the infuriating, arrogant and charismatic Prince Cardan... Dramatic and thrilling fantasy blends seamlessly with enthralling storytelling to create a fully realised and seductive world, brimful of magic and romance.

Lamont Review:

This is an amazing read, but I would expect no less from Holly Black.

Set in the world of Faerie, our star - a mortal girl named Jude, finds herself entrenched in the making of the new king. A bit of a teenage appropriate Game of Thrones, full of murder, intrigue, plots and sub-plots, the story keeps you enthralled page after page. With a bloodthirsty stepfather, an evil prince, and his younger brother who seems hellbent on making Jude’s life miserable, will she stay or return with her older sister, Vivi, to the mortal world?

The plot is awesome and the characters are dark and full of other dimensions with a twist at the end that I didn’t see coming! The Cruel Prince sets itself up beautifully for the next book in the series that will be eagerly awaited.

This is an ideal read for teenagers who love fantasy.

Reviewed by Rob
The Centre Of My Everything
By Allayne L. Webster
Publisher: Random House
ISBN 9780143783336   SCIS: 1850702
$19.99

Blurb:

Justin's back, and wants to put the past behind him.
Corey's a footy hero and high-school dropout who can't even find work picking fruit.
Tara wants to be loved. But if her mother doesn't care, why would anyone else?
Margo wants out, and she has a plan to get there.

Plans change. Life happens. Some secrets won't stay buried. Peace isn't as simple as laying bones to rest.

Lamont Review:

Set in a rural community around a group of YA's who are about 18 years old, The Centre of My Everything shows us the sometimes explosive world of drinking, driving and sexual behaviour. These guys are at various stages of growing up, but when 20-something Justin shows up he has a big impact on the lives of rivals Tara and Margo.

Justin is returning to town after running off following his mother’s suicide some years ago, retreating from his father who has always been the town drunk.

Powerful secrets are revealed as a few of our characters overdo things and lives are careering off track.

Allayne Webster certainty has a feel for the troubles teens face, and it makes this a powerful and topical novel. The South Australian Government should also be recognized for providing a grant that assisted in the writing of the book.

Ultimately, this is a coming of age novel that provides hope for kids who might be making bad decisions, that they don’t have to keep going that way.

The content means this book is best suited to readers 16 and older.

Reviewed by Rob
**Indigo Blue**  
By Jessica Watson  
Publisher: Lothian/Hachette  
ISBN 9780734418135  SCIS: 1844551  
$15.99

**Lamont Review:**

This is an exciting new book by multi-talented, around the world solo yachtswoman and Young Australian of the Year, Jessica Watson. Having previously written of her amazing journey, she is now writing middle-grade fiction whilst staying close to the things she knows best - water and yachting.

The story is based around Alex, who is sent to a small coastal town to stay with her ‘different’ Aunt. She quickly buys a small yacht in need of repairs so that she can get back out on the water. Through the repairs she meets Sam, the sailmaker’s apprentice, and their romance begins.

I wonder if Jessica imagined such people on her epic voyage, but I won’t say more as this would give too much of the story away. This is a great read for students in Year 5 - Year 8. It is part mystery, part adventure, and part romance and, as Jessica’s debut novel, it’s one that I would highly recommend.

*Reviewed by Rob.*

*Teacher notes provided by the publisher are available from our website.*
The Harper Effect
By Taryn Bashford
Publisher: Pan Macmillan Australia
ISBN 9781760552091  SCIS: 1848172
$18.99

Blurb:
Harper Hunter doesn't know how it came to this. Her tennis dreams are collapsing: her coach says she doesn't have what it takes to make it in the world of professional tennis. Her new doubles partner is moody, mysterious and angry at the world. What is he hiding? She is in love with Jacob, but he is her sister's boyfriend. Or, he was. Harper could never betray Aria with Jacob... could she? As Harper's heart and dreams pull her in different directions, she has to figure out exactly what she wants. And just how hard she's willing to fight to get it.

Lamont Review:
This is an engrossing debut novel by Australian author Taryn Bashford that provides an in-depth look at the heady world of the professional tennis circuit.

Beginning with 17 year old Harper Hunter being dumped by her coach, Harper has doubts as to whether she is indeed good enough. The story journeys through her friendships - both with her sister Aria and her next door neighbour Jacob, the three of whom have been inseparable since childhood. That all changed when Harper was away on tour so much, and Jacob and Aria became an item, but now that they have split up Jacob and Harper's feelings for each other have resurfaced. Complex enough?

Now throw into the mix Harper's explosive and troubled new doubles partner, Colt Jagger, and we really start to see a change in Harper's attitude, both on and off the court.

How hard is it to break into the senior tennis circuit, and how much is Harper willing to give up to achieve her dream?

This is mostly a sports success story that also tackles friendships, growing up and relationship issues.

Reviewed by Rob
Australia’s Great War 1918
By Libby Gleeson
Publisher: Omnibus/Scholastic
ISBN 9781743622513   SCIS: 1844537
$16.99

Blurb:

The planes kept flying low above them. They were dropping bombs and the noise drowned out all other sounds. After an hour, the signal rang out and they surged forward through the smoke. Thousands of men screaming and yelling, their line was kilometres wide. Behind them came Monash’s tanks, those huge, new mobile machines. They smothered the land they ran over; flattening the crops and then any wire left standing. With Russia out of the war, the Germans have sent all the troops to the Western Front. Almost defeated, a small group of Australians fight to hold the enemy back at Villers Bretonneux. Weary after years of fighting and deadlock, Ned and his mates know that the war will be lost if they can’t turn the tide. More and more, Ned’s thoughts turn to home, not knowing if he will ever see his family, or his brother, again.

Lamont Review:

This is the final instalment of the World War I centennial anniversary series called Australia’s Great War, and what a marvellous group of books they are. In 1918, we follow the steps of Ned, who is 17 turning 18, and his friends who joined the Coo-ees march from Gilgandra in NSW to the French battlefields around Villers Bretonneux and Amiens. Letters going back and forth to Ned’s Mum and sister give us an insight into his feelings as the war was drawing to a close.

Acts of bravery above and beyond the call of duty abound, as we are confronted by the squalid conditions and horrors of war. I was really taken with this story, as my wife Michelle and I spent a day touring the area in our April visit to Europe. We were particularly taken by the Victoria school in Villers Bretonneux and the nearby Australian National cemetery and memorial.

This is a wonderful book, in a equally good series, that is easy to read and will give readers a better understanding of this important part of Australia’s history.

It is ideally suited to younger readers aged 11-15.

Reviewed by Rob
Zenith
By Sasha Alsberg with Lindsay Cummings
Publisher: Harlequin
ISBN 978000828330 SCIS: 1849412
$19.99

Blurb:
YA Sci-Fi featuring an all-girl spaceship crew taking control and showing the boy's how it's done, with romance, tragedy and ray-guns.

Most know Androma Racella as the Bloody Baroness: a powerful mercenary whose reign of terror stretches across the Mirabel Galaxy. To those aboard her fearsome glass starship the Maurader, she's just Andi, their captain and protector.

When a routine mission goes awry, the all-girl crew's resilience is tested as they find themselves in a most unfamiliar place: at the mercy of a powerful bounty hunter connected to Andi's past and a harrowing betrayal.

Lamont Review:
Androma Racella, or Andi to her all-girl crew of the Maurader, is a fearsome fighter and pirate – afraid of no one in the Mirabel Galaxy. Here she is known as the Bloody Baroness, willing to take on most missions. When one of these goes spectacularly wrong Andi must come face to face with the past she is running from.

This is a thrilling sci-fi tale with wonderful strong female characters. It is also complex, mysterious and at times quite violent. You will love the depth of character that is explored as well as the intriguing plot that is very interwoven.

Highly recommended for all sci-fi fans 15 and up.

Reviewed by Michelle
Everless
By Sara Holland
Publisher: Orchard Books/Hachette
ISBN 9781408353622  SCIS: 1847844
$19.99

Blurb:
Time is a prison. She is the key. Packed with danger, temptation and desire - a perfect read for fans of The Red Queen. In the land of Sempera, the rich control everything - even time. Ever since the age of alchemy and sorcery, hours, days and years have been extracted from blood and bound to iron coins. The rich live for centuries; the poor bleed themselves dry. Jules and her father are behind on their rent and low on hours. To stop him from draining himself to clear their debts, Jules takes a job at Everless, the grand estate of the cruel Gerling family. There, Jules encounters danger and temptation in the guise of the Gerling heir, Roan, who is soon to be married. But the web of secrets at Everless stretches beyond her desire, and the truths Jules must uncover will change her life for ever... and possibly the future of time itself.

Lamont Review:
In Sempara, time is literally a commodity to be bought and sold – and the rich Gerling family have plenty of it. Not so for Jules and her Dad who are desperately poor.

In Sempara, you can buy, hire and therefore pay your bills by having your blood drained and bound to iron coins. Ever since the time of the Alchemist and the Sorcerer, this is how Sempara works. To avoid this, Jules decides to get a job at Everless to help pay their rent so her Dad does not have to draw blood. What she finds is intrigue, danger and one tangled web of secrets. Can she help unravel it before time runs out?

This is a wonderful fantasy story where intrigue and mythology wander into every page. This is not a book for the faint hearted, as some of the characters have a very cruel streak. But you will fall in love with Jules and her amazing strength of character in trying circumstances.

Best suited to Year 9 and above students that love fantasy. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Reviewed by Michelle