Neverland
By Margot McGovern
Publisher: Random House
ISBN 9780143787846  SCIS: 1851739
$19.99

Blurb:

After doing herself near-fatal harm, Kit has returned to her island home. But it’s a place she hardly recognises - the witch and the mermaids are hiding and the pirates have sailed to more bountiful shores. In their place is Neverland and its inhabitants - damaged teens too sick to be in regular school, watched over by her psychiatrist uncle. And now Kit is one of them.

Kit has a choice. She can use illicit night-time adventures with friends and mysterious new boy Rohan to avoid the truth. Or she can separate harsh reality from childhood fantasy and remember the night of her parents' deaths.

What really prompted her family's departure from the island? Did a monster drive them away? Is the monster still there?

Lamont Review:

Kit has always believed Neverland Island to be a safe and magical place. Being sent away to boarding schools only makes her believe in the stories from her childhood even more. When her life spirals out of control and she almost kills herself with razor blades, she is sent home to Neverland with her uncle, who now runs a school for troubled teenagers on the island. Only she is now one of those troubled teens.

Will she have the courage to face the past or will it keep hiding in fairy tales?

This book is confronting in that is does not shy away from Kit’s self harm or the other troubles faced by the main characters in the book. However, the underlying themes are friendship, love, understanding, support and, most of all, courage.

The four main teenage characters, Kit, Gypsy, Alistair and Rohan all have many difficulties and faults, but they do believe in each other. The problem is that they each need to learn to believe in themselves, and find the courage and hope to face the demons in their past, so they can move forward with their lives.

This book does not belittle or minimise the difficulties faced by people with mental illness. They all make progress and then have relapses, but the story is compelling and scary and warm and strong.

It will suit both boys and girls, but definitely those in Year 10 and up, who love intriguing characters faced with difficult lives.

Reviewed by Michelle
“We don’t pick and choose what to be afraid of. Our fears pick us.”

Tash Carmody has been traumatised since childhood, when she witnessed her gruesome imaginary friend Sparrow lure young Mallory Fisher away from a carnival. At the time nobody believed Tash, and she has since come to accept that Sparrow wasn’t real. Now fifteen and mute, Mallory’s never spoken about the week she went missing. As disturbing memories resurface, Tash starts to see Sparrow again. And she realises Mallory is the key to unlocking the truth about a dark secret connecting them. Does Sparrow exist after all? Or is Tash more dangerous to others than she thinks?

Lamont Review:

This is an incredible psychological thriller by an Australian debut YA author.

Tash has many phobias dating back to a day when she was eight years old and she witnessed the abduction of a little girl called Mallory Fisher from a carnival.

Tash knew the Fisher family, particularly Morgan who was her age, but the family quickly left town after a filthy and mistreated little Mallory was found a week later, wandering in the National Park.

But mute Mallory was not telling anyone what happened, and Tash’s abduction story was soon discounted as a young child’s make believe attention seeking.

This was the beginning of Tash’s problems and now, as a seventeen year old, with the Fisher family suddenly relocating back to town, her world and brain start spiralling out of control.

I can’t give away anymore of the story, but I will say that it is especially enthralling the further into the story you get. I just couldn’t put it down, and I read the last half of the story well into the night.

Small Spaces is an excellent debut novel that really hits the mark, as it unravels the events that are the source of Tash’s problems. I did not see the ending coming at all and it is a real shock as you discover who the monsters really are!

A gripping thriller, that will be best appreciated by those 14 years and up.

Reviewed by Rob
**I Am Sasha**
By Anita Selzer
Publisher: Penguin
ISBN 9780143785743 SCIS: 1851741
$17.99

**Blurb:**

It is German-occupied Poland in 1942 and Jewish lives are at risk. Nazi soldiers order young boys to pull down their trousers to see if they are circumcised. Many are summarily shot or sent to the camps.

A remarkable mother takes an ingenious step. To avoid suspicion, she trains her teenage son to be a girl—his clothing, voice, hair, manners and more. Together, mother and son face incredible odds as their story sweeps backwards and forwards across occupied Europe.

**Lamont Review:**

Reminiscent of the Anne Frank story, *I am Sasha* depicts the extraordinary real life story of a Jewish family’s survival in German-occupied Poland.

The family hid in a roof, and in a barn, until finally Sasha’s mother gets them fake non-Jewish identities. These identities turned Sasha into Sala (a girl) so that his circumcision, which if discovered would result in certain death, could be concealed.

Set in WWII Poland, that it was invaded by the Germans and eventually liberated by the Russians. It shows the fight undertaken by both Jewish and non-Jewish people to resist, and the work of so many people to save others and undermine the German war machine.

Retold by Sasha’s daughter, from notes penned by her Sasha’s mother, this family experienced much hardship and death, but they ultimately survived to be able to share their remarkable journey.

*I am Sasha* is easy to read, and a fascinating story which makes for a wonderful novel. Although dealing with a traumatic and tumultuous period of history, it is not too graphic about the horrors of war, which makes it a great read for all junior secondary students.

*Reviewed by Rob*
Paris Syndrome

By Lisa Walker
Publisher: Harper Collins
ISBN 9781460755242  SCIS: 1860675
$19.99

Blurb:

Can romance only be found in Paris, the city of love? Happiness (Happy) Glass has been a loner since moving to Brisbane and yet still dreams about living in Paris with her best friend Rosie after they finish Year Twelve. But Rosie hasn’t been terribly reliable lately. When Happy wins a French essay competition, her social life starts looking up. She meets the eccentric Professor Tanaka and her girl-gardener Alex who recruit Happy in their fight against Paris Syndrome - an ailment that afflicts some visitors to Paris. Their quest for a cure gives Happy an excellent excuse to pursue a good-looking French tourism intern, also called Alex. To save confusion she names the boy Alex One and the girl Alex Two. As Happy pursues her love of all things French, Alex Two introduces Happy to her xylophone-playing chickens whose languishing Facebook page Happy sponsors. But then sex messes things up when, confusingly, Happy ends up kissing both of the Alex’s. Soon neither of them is speaking to her and she has gone from two Alex’s to none... For fans of John Green, this funny and poignant coming-of-age story is about that crazy thing called love. And how it can be found anywhere.

Lamont Review:

Paris Syndrome is the first YA novel by Australian author Lisa Walker. Veronica Happiness Glass (Happy) has recently moved with her Mum to Brisbane after an amicable divorce in Sydney. Happy has always loved everything Parisian and together with her best friend Rosie, dreamed of visiting the ‘City of Love’.

When Happy wins a French tourism board competition, she is introduced to gorgeous young French intern Alex One and meets Professor Tanaka, who, herself suffered from Paris Syndrome and wants to save others from this fate. She then meets Professor Tanaka’s female gardener, Alex Two.

As her relationship with both the Alex’s develops, Happy starts to question her own sexuality. Which raises questions of her past relationship with Rosie...

Being somewhat of a sufferer of Paris Syndrome myself, I was intrigued by the concept, but this book is much deeper than that, dealing with relationships and discovering your own sexuality brilliantly in a time when this subject is so topical in Australia.

It is a tremendous read that will most appeal to 14+ female readers, particularly those who may suffer from Paris Syndrome!

Reviewed by Rob
**Waterhole**

By Fiona Bell  
Publisher: University of Queensland Press  
ISBN 9780702259999 SCIS: 1851726  
$19.95

**Blurb:**

Sixteen-year-old Sunny Maguire is dreading the school holidays. She used to love visiting her grandmother’s farm but ever since her mother died in a tragic car accident, Sunny doesn’t feel at home anywhere anymore and the farm is a constant reminder of what she has lost. She knows it’s going to be a long summer. Worse, she has to spend it with her distant stepfather, Kevin, the only ‘family’ she has left.

On her return to the small town of Kelly’s Crossing, Sunny is distracted by a new resident - Matthew Bright - and the disappearance of local teenager Dylan Koslovski. She gets involved in the search for Dylan along the mysterious Constant Creek Gorge, a beautiful location tainted by tragic drownings. Complications arise when Kevin becomes a suspect in the case and rumours begin to circulate. Sunny doesn’t trust him and she’s beginning to lose faith in herself, too, especially when she starts to see her mother’s ghost.

**Lamont Review:**

Sunny is a sixteen-year-old who goes to boarding school during term and returns to Kelly’s Crossing for the holidays, a small country town where everyone knows each other.

These holidays will be difficult, as it is the first time she has been back since her Mum died in a car accident. The only family she has left is her stepdad, Kevin, and she blames him for the accident.

Life becomes more complicated when local boy Dylan goes missing and Kevin becomes a suspect. And where does gorgeous Matthew Bright, a newcomer to town fit in, and why does her Mum keep appearing to her?

This is a brilliant debut novel by Australian author Fiona Bell. An intriguing storyline that deals with grief, loss, family and friendship.

You will love Sunny, Matthew and Kevin, and will relate to Sunny’s struggles. The story and language is very accessible, and deals with emotional topic of the death of a parent with sensitivity. Sunny goes through so many emotions, and this is handled really well.

Highly recommended for girls in Year 9 and up.

Reviewed by Michelle
Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia
By Anita Heiss
Publisher: Black Inc.
ISBN 9781863959810  SCIS: 1851715
$29.99

Blurb:

Childhood stories of family, country and belonging.

What is it like to grow up Aboriginal in Australia? This anthology, compiled by award-winning author Anita Heiss, showcases many diverse voices, experiences and stories in order to answer that question. Accounts from well-known authors and high-profile identities sit alongside those from newly discovered writers of all ages. All of the contributors speak from the heart - sometimes calling for empathy, oftentimes challenging stereotypes, always demanding respect.

This groundbreaking collection will enlighten, inspire and educate about the lives of Aboriginal people in Australia today.

Contributors include- Tony Birch, Deborah Cheetham, Adam Goodes, Terri Janke, Patrick Johnson, Ambelin Kwaymullina, Jack Latimore, Celeste Liddle, Amy McQuire, Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Miranda Tapsell, Jared Thomas, Aileen Walsh, Alexis West, Tara June Winch, and many, many more.

Lamont Review:

From the publishers that brought us Growing Up Asian in Australia, comes Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia, an anthology of stories written by Aboriginal people about growing up in Australia.

Featuring an array of stories from Aboriginal writers of all ages about growing up, it provides a wide ranging insight into their varying experiences of everyday life in Australia, with prominent themes of culture, family, country and belonging appearing across their heartfelt stories.

This will make a great addition to any school library, but would also be a great class novel for Year 9 or Year 10, as it links with many areas of the curriculum.

A fantastic compilation of stories, and I highly recommend it.

Reviewed by Michelle
In an alternate reality a lot like our world, every person's physical size is directly proportional to their wealth. The poorest of the poor are the size of rats, and billionaires are the size of skyscrapers. Warner and his sister Prayer are destitute - and tiny. Their size is not just demeaning, but dangerous: day and night they face mortal dangers that bigger richer people don't ever have to think about, from being mauled by cats to their house getting stepped on. There are no cars or phones built small enough for them, or schools or hospitals, for that matter - there's no point, when no one that little has any purchasing power, and when salaried doctors and teachers would never fit in buildings so small. Warner and Prayer know their only hope is to scale up, but how can two littlepoors survive in a world built against them? From the bestselling author of Me and Earl and the Dying Girl comes a brilliant, warm, skewering social novel for our times in the tradition of Great Expectations, 1984 and Invisible Man.

Lamont Review:

Set in the fictional country of Yewess, everyone's size is directly in proportion to their wealth. Therefore if you have plenty of munmun you are huge, and if you have none then you are tiny, the size of a rat.

This is the story of Warner, his sister Prayer and his best friend Usher. They are all littlepoors and life is not just difficult - it is down right dangerous as the larger humans don't even notice them. The only way to become bigger or “scale up” as they call it is to make lots of munmuns.

Warner’s life is crazy, tragic and full of unexpected twists and turns.

You will find this book hard to put down, and it is brilliantly written as a metaphor for all the injustice of every sort you can imagine that is wrong with our world. Jesse Andrews has created two worlds within this story that will keep you thoroughly entertained. Any one who enjoys satire, fast-paced storytelling and a highly original idea will love this book.

It will suit readers in Year 9 and up, and it would make a wonderful English novel as there are so many ideas that could be broken down and discussed further.

Reviewed by Michelle
Stratification: Book 1
By Ilsa Evans
Publisher: Harbour Publishing/New Holland Publishing
ISBN 9781922134356  SCIS: 1861030
$19.99

Lamont Review:

Set in a futuristic world, around 2500 AD, around 500 years after a billionaire scientist developed a
shield to protect his chosen inhabitants.

The shield, at its source, has given off strange rays that made those nearby develop certain ‘God
like’ skills, like telepathy and telekinetics.

Over time, these people became the chosen Gods and Demi-Gods, and all others were in their
servitude. This dire class system is the crux of the novel, and raises many questions for today’s
civilization.

Our main character Grady is a daughter of a seer in a small community on the outskirts of the
shield. When she suddenly mind pushes a senior delegate from Haven to change his mind, she sets
in chain a series of events that will ultimately prove her real identity and true talents.

This novel, the first in a series, will have the readers looking towards earth’s future and considering
things that could make this outlook better. It will have them thinking about the ruling classes and
the downtrodden, and the often simple acceptance of societies norms. This is an excellent read for
those 13+.

Reviewed by Rob
Living Voice
By Karen West
Publisher: Hybrid Publishers
ISBN 9781925272871  SCIS: 1861039
$19.95

Blurb:
Stephanie Conner is sixteen when she learns that her mother is in urgent need of a heart transplant. The waiting triggers a chain of events that threatens her sanity, the love of her boyfriend and her friendship with her best friend. Richard, a computer geek, sets out to help her by developing an interactive social media website for teens, to create organ donation awareness that might lead to Steph's mother receiving a heart transplant before her heart fails altogether.

Lamont Review:
Steph and her Mum and Dad are a close family. On a trip to the beach to visit her Mum’s sister, Steph’s Mum has a suspected heart attack. When this turns out to be heart disease, her only hope is a heart transplant, and Steph’s world is turned upside down in an instant.

Steph is an artist, so sometimes painting helps, other times it doesn’t. She has lots of friends, but can't always cope with seeing them. And waiting for that one phone call to say they have a heart for her Mum is driving her crazy!

This is a beautifully written and sensitive look at the difficulties families of both the donor and the those waiting for an organ transplant face. This book had me smiling and then crying, all the while hoping that there was a happy ending for Steph and her family.

Highly recommended for all teenagers in Year 9 and up, especially if you want to raise awareness of organ donation.

This book will stay with me for a long time.

Reviewed by Michelle