

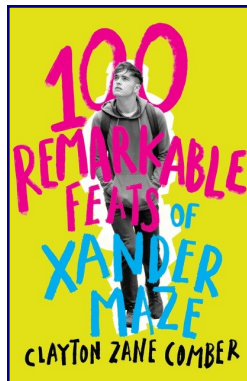
100 Remarkable Feats of Xander Maze

By Clayton Zane Comber
Publisher: Harper Collins
ISBN 9781460759455 SCIS: 5358973
\$19.99

SECONDARY BOOK
OF THE MONTH

Blurb:

Xander Maze is a list-maker. But can his list of 100 Remarkable Feats really save his nanna? Xander Maze loves lists, and his grandmother is #1 in his list of People I Love Most in the World. But now that Nanna has stage 4 cancer, can a new list of 100 Remarkable Feats really save her life? Particularly when his list contains difficult things like #2 Make a Friend and #3 Make a Best Friend. Funny, moving and with a protagonist you can't help but fall in love with, *100 Remarkable Feats of Xander Maze* is #1 Heartbreaking #2 Heartwarming and a book about defying the odds, not accepting the unacceptable, and one boy's unconditional love for his nanna.



Lamont Review:

There is so much to love about this book, but let's start with the remarkable Xander Maze, our main character, a fifteen-year-old writer of lists.

Xander's Dad died when he was only three, leaving him with an incredibly overprotective mother. But Xander's true hero is his Nanna, who has stage 4 cancer. She is absolutely the #1 on his list of people he loves most in the world.

Nanna encourages Xander to write a list of 100 Remarkable Feats. If he achieves all the things on his list, it will make her better. And so Xander's quest begins!

With the help of people that he mostly meets through performing his remarkable feats, some very small, Xander's life slowly transforms.

His quest goes viral and he achieves some truly remarkable things along the way, and shows that for an amazing journey sometimes you just need to take the first step.

Xander Maze is a truly amazing character. His love for his Nanna is beautiful, as is his view of the world. The friendships he forms with a diverse range of people are wonderful, and the whole premise of the book is to try to live a better, fuller life. Both for others, but also for yourself.

With themes of family, love, bullying and acceptance, Xander's hope shines through this story and makes this a real feel-good novel that will suit all teenager readers.

Reviewed by Rob

One Hundred Days

By Alice Pung

Publisher: Black Inc

ISBN 9781760641832 SCIS: 5358967

\$32.99

Blurb:

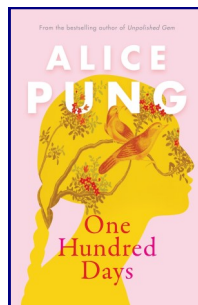
From one of Australia's most celebrated authors comes a mother-daughter drama exploring the faultlines between love and control.

One hundred days. It's no time at all, she tells me. But she's not the one waiting.

In a heady whirlwind of independence, lust and defiance, sixteen-year-old Karuna falls pregnant. Not on purpose, but not entirely by accident, either. Incensed, Karuna's mother, already over-protective, confines her to their fourteenth-storey housing-commission flat, to keep her safe from the outside world - and make sure she can't get into any more trouble.

Stuck inside for endless hours, Karuna battles her mother and herself for a sense of power in her own life, as a new life forms and grows within her. As the due date draws ever closer, the question of who will get to raise the baby - who it will call Mum - festers between them.

One Hundred Days is a fractured fairytale exploring the fault lines between love and control. At times tense and claustrophobic, it is nevertheless brimming with humour, warmth and character. It is a magnificent new work from one of Australia's most celebrated writers.



Lamont Review:

Given the lockdowns experienced over the last year, I certainly empathised with the claustrophobic feelings experienced by sixteen-year-old Karuna when she is locked inside for one hundred days.

After Karuna falls pregnant her mother is enraged. Good girls do not get pregnant, and she certainly cannot look after a child. So her Mum decides to lock her in their tiny commission flat for one hundred days, until after the baby is born. But with this lockdown imposed on Karuna, a struggle over who will raise the child once it is born brims between them. Will Karuna be relegated to 'older sister' status?

This is an incredible story of strength and resilience, exploring the dynamics of power and control in a parent-child relationship. Karuna struggles under the intense scrutiny of an obsessive, controlling and overbearing mother, as well as the fact that her father recently left.

Written as a story to her unborn, and then newborn child, this is an unflinching and complex story of generational dysfunction, but it is also a story full of character, love, tenderness and heart.

With themes of teen pregnancy, control, isolation, and love, this is mostly importantly a young girl's coming of age story. A wonderful Australian novel that is best suited to readers aged 15+.

Reviewed by Rob

Echo In The Memory

By Cameron Nunn

Publisher: Walker Books

ISBN 9781760653088 SCIS: 5358981

\$19.99

Blurb:

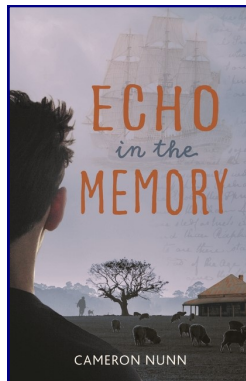
What if memories never die? An evocative Australian YA novel about family, place, and how history has a way of weaving itself into our present.

What if memories never die?

When fifteen-year-old Will is sent away to stay with his grandparents in rural New South Wales, he finds the isolated farm strangely familiar; except the memories he's channelling are not his own. But whose are they? And why does his grandfather share the same haunting link?

As two stories unfold, nearly 200 years apart, two boys exiled to what feels like the end of the earth struggle to find their identities and voices in the face of abandonment and tragedy.

A page-turning YA novel that explores the darker moments of our convict past and how they resonate today.



Lamont Review:

Told in two intersecting stories - the first being a teenage convict sent to Australia, circa 1830, to serve seven years for theft. We live through his struggles and dreams for the future, and the hardships and horror that surround him far from home.

The second story is set now, when fifteen-year-old Will, along with his younger sister Rosie, are sent to remote Australia after his Mum died and his Dad couldn't cope. Here Will finds a loving Gran and an ailing Grandfather, who is hard on Will and has trouble with images of the past.

His grandfather is considered mad by many, including Will. But then Will starts to experience the same strange connection to a troubled boy who lived here many years ago...

The story really draws you in, with the desolate setting and hopeless situation they each find themselves in, albeit 200 years apart, but they never stop trying to find their own identities and place in the world.

With themes of convict transportation and the darker aspects of Australia's past, including the persecution of First Nations people, the remoteness of outback Australia, as well as family troubles. growing up, hope and courage, this is a wonderful, truly Australian story.

Perfectly suited to a 12 - 15 year old reader, it will undoubtedly be used as a class novel in Year 9 and 10 as well.

Reviewed by Rob

Teacher Notes prepared by the publisher are available for this title on our website.

Instructions For Dancing

By Nicola Yoon

Publisher: Penguin

ISBN 9780241516911 SCIS: 5360991

\$19.99

Blurb:

A stand-out new YA romance from the number 1 bestselling author of *Everything, Everything* - this is Dirty Dancing with a supernatural twist.

Evie is disillusioned about love ever since her dad left her mum for another woman - she's even throwing out her beloved romance novel collection.

When she's given a copy of a book called Instructions for Dancing, and follows a note inside to a dilapidated dance studio, she discovers she has a strange and unwelcome gift. When a couple kisses in front of her, she can see their whole relationship play out - from the moment they first catch each other's eye to the last bitter moments of their break-up.

For Evie, it confirms everything she thinks she knows about love - that it doesn't last.

But at the dance studio she meets X - tall, dreadlocked, fascinating - and they start to learn to dance, together. Can X help break the spell that Evie is under? Can he change Evie's mind about love?



Lamont Review:

Everything you want in a YA romance, plus so much more!

Evie used to believe in love, but after the sudden break up of her Mum and Dad's seemingly perfect marriage, she just can't believe in it anymore.

Out go all of her old favourite romance novels, but with that comes a book swap and Evie ends up with a book called 'Instructions for Dancing'. This leads Evie to a struggling dance school, where she is paired with the owner's grandson X, to enter a competition that could lift the club's reputation, and ultimately save it.

The trouble here for Evie is two-fold - first, Evie suddenly sees a couples Beginning, Middle and mostly End, whenever she witnesses them kiss. This keeps happening and makes Evie believe that all beautiful beginnings will inevitably have a devastating ending. Second, X is really the perfect guy, and how can Evie not fall for him, even if she already knows how it will end?

With a beautiful group of characters, this story shows that love and life are worth taking a risk on.

Themes of love, relationships, changing family dynamics and hope, make this a wonderful, warm YA novel, that also has a few twists along the way! A great story for teenage readers.

Reviewed by Rob

The Lucky List

By Rachael Lippincott
Publisher: Simon & Schuster
ISBN 9781398502604 SCIS: 5361155
\$17.99

Blurb:

From the #1 New York Times bestselling co-author of *Five Feet Apart* comes a gripping new romance, perfect for fans of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. Two girls, one list and twelve chances to fall in love this summer... Emily's always been lucky. Well, technically her mum was the lucky one, and since she died, Emily's started to feel like her luck's run out. So when Emily finds her mum's senior-year bucket list, she finds twelve ways to feel close to her again. But if she wants to check everything off, she'll need help - help in the form of Blake. As Blake and Emily work through the list, the girls' bond deepens. Emily is starting to feel lucky again, but she's faced with the question: can she accept this new part of herself, the part her mum never even knew existed? A captivating, heartfelt love story about learning who you are, and who you love, when the person you've always shared yourself with is gone.



Lamont Review:

It's been three years since Emily's mum passed away from a brain tumour. But that's the only thing that has changed in the small rural town of Huckabee.

Emily certainly does not think she has changed, even though her friends see her as becoming risk averse and slowly shutting herself off. This is particularly true when it comes to her Mum-approved, on-again off-again boyfriend Matt, who Emily can't seem to totally commit to.

But all that changes when her Dad's best friend returns to Huckabee after a ten year absence, and with him comes his incredible and beautiful daughter Blake.

Blake and Emily find a 'to do list' that Emily's mum made the summer when she was their age, and together, they start to complete the list as well. Overcoming a fear of heights, swimming naked in the Huckabee pool etc..

Slowly Emily's true identity emerges, one that at first she tries to deny, but ultimately embraces.

This is a powerful and heartfelt novel, with themes of grief, discovering yourself and your sexuality, family, and small town prejudices, that will be loved by many, but mostly girls aged 14 and older.

Reviewed by Rob