

The Rat-Catcher's Apprentice

By Maggie Jankuloska
Publisher: MidnightSun Publishing
ISBN 9781925227949 SCIS: 5387326
\$17.99

Blurb:

It's 1665. Rats have infested homes and alleys in Marie Perrin's provincial French town. Twelve-year-old Marie is set to become a maid, although she hungers for adventure. However, one mistake alters her fate and as punishment she is forced to apprentice for an intimidating rat-catcher. Away from her parents and twin brother, and handling gnarly rat traps under Gustave Renard's unusual mentorship, Marie must overcome a new set of challenges which come after a plague enters her town. Are rats responsible for the spread of the illness? Can Marie find a way out of the bubbling danger around her? *The Rat-Catcher's Apprentice* depicts non-traditional families, belonging and female bravery in an atmospheric historical setting. An intrepid heroine, a perilous time in plague-ridden France, a society cleaved by class division. The Rat-Catcher's Apprentice is full of heart and hope with a young girl who dares to dream of a life unrestrained by her gender.



Lamont Review:

This is a great work of historical fiction, based in France in 1665, at the time of the Plague.

Our story follows the life of twelve-year-old Marie, whose parents both work for the Count. This changes when Marie's cat inadvertently ruins the wedding dress belonging to the Countess.

Marie's family exile her into the hands of Gustave, the local rat-catcher. Dressed as a boy, Marie proves quite adept at her filthy job, but also finds a softer side to Gustave, and establishes a home with him and his wife, Marion.

When the plague comes to town everything changes, as so many people die and everyone else is in lockdown. The whole town are in danger. Are the rats spreading it? Can Marie do something about it?

With themes of class division, families in their different forms, bravery and belonging, and with a historical setting, this is a wonderful lower secondary novel.

Reviewed by Rob

Tyenna: Through My Eyes - Australian Disaster Zones

By Julie Hunt and Terry Whitebeach

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760877019 SCIS: 5387308

\$16.99

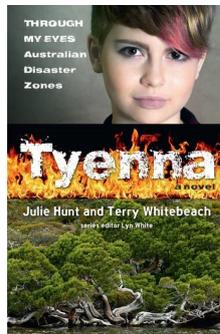
Blurb:

An engaging and suspenseful novel about one girl's experience of the terrifying Tasmanian bushfires.

They huddle low, nostrils burning from the smoke. A wave of despair flows over Tye. Nothing will survive this firestorm. The bush and everything she loves will be lost.

It's the summer holidays, and Tye is staying at her grandparents' lodge at Chancy's Point in Tasmania's beautiful Central Highlands. But her plans for fun with best friend Lily and working on her pencil pine conservation project are thwarted as fire threatens the community and the bush she loves - and when Tye discovers Bailey, a runaway boy hiding out, she is torn between secretly helping him and her loyalty to her grandparents.

As the fire comes closer and evacuation warnings abound, Tye is caught up in the battle of her life. Will she and Bailey survive? What will happen to her beloved pencil pines and the wildlife at risk? Can she and the close-knit Tasmanian community make a difference in a world threatened by climate change?



Lamont Review:

Tye loves spending the holidays with her grandparents, in the beautiful wilderness of Chancy's Point in Tasmania. She has a somewhat strained relationship with her Mum, and loves the lifestyle that bushland Tasmania offers, compared to her hometown of Melbourne.

She feels connected to the land and her surroundings, her Nan and Pop, the community and friends she has there, particularly her best friend Lily, and she takes a strong interest in the conservation projects that are all around them.

All of this is suddenly under threat though, as Tye finds herself in the midst of the worst fire season the area has ever seen. But Tye and Lily have also been keeping a secret from her Nan and Pop, who are now caught up in the battle to contain the fire that threatens them all. They have been helping a runaway boy, and now his life, and theirs, are in danger and they don't know what to do.

It is going to take all their courage, resilience and determination for them all to survive.

This is a wonderful story of friendship, family, and community coming together during a bushfire emergency. It raises discussion topics around bush conservation and climate change, and will be thoroughly enjoyed by all students in Years 5—8.

Reviewed by Sam

Augustin and the Hot Air Balloon

By David Metzenthen

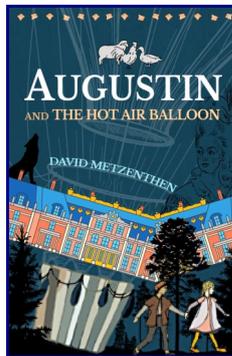
Publisher: Ford Street Publishing

ISBN 9781925804966 SCIS: 5394637

\$17.95

Blurb:

Augustin is a poor boy who lives in a barn. Celine is a rich girl who lives in a mighty palace. Together they escape into the sky... Only to land in a world of terrible trouble and dangerous secrets! During the most turbulent times of the French Revolution, two young heroes risk everything for each other, their Queen, and countries... a richly-imagined novel for younger readers based around twenty-four fascinating facts!



Lamont Review:

David Metzenthen brings us a fabulous, historical story. With facts at the start of each chapter, it gives a true insight to life during this time.

Set just before the French Revolution, when the people of France were in crisis, and had no money to feed or house themselves, we follow the story of two children from very different worlds.

Augustin is a quiet, poor boy who tends to goats to help keep him alive. Celine is a talkative and confident girl from a world of privilege, and lives in The Royal Palace with Queen Marie-Antoinette. But these unlikely pairing find themselves on an adventure of a lifetime when they both stow away on the first hot air balloon that has just taken off.

They were both looking for adventure, but neither of them really factored in what they would do when the hot air balloon landed. And when it does, they find themselves in the lawless and dangerous countryside. They embark on a journey to try and make it to the palace, and Celine promises Augustin that if they make it back she will look after him forever, and will always be his friend. But Augustin is wary. Why would anyone like Celine want to help a poor boy like him?

Augustin and Celine know that the people are restless, and the Queen's life of luxury might soon be under attack. Celine has a plan, but she needs the loyalty and help of Augustin to make it happen. But does Augustin really have it in him to carry out Celine's wishes?

This is a wonderful novel about finding friendship and loyalty in the most unusual places. It is at times humorous and suspenseful, and both characters show ingenuity, intelligence, and empathy. It is a great read for all upper primary and junior secondary students.

Reviewed by Sam

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

Interned

By Pamela Rushby

Publisher: Walker Books

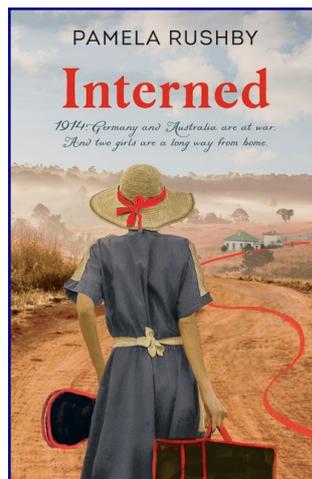
ISBN 9781760653019 SCIS: 5387412

\$17.99

Blurb:

Based on true events, *Interned* is a moving, well-researched and evocative historical fiction novel that highlights an often forgotten moment in Australian history.

It's 1914. Gretta lives a privileged life in Singapore, the daughter of a businessman; Tilly lives a modest life in Brisbane, the daughter of a baker. When war breaks out and both countries turn on their families for being German, the two girls find themselves taken from their homes, interned at a camp in rural New South Wales. Far away from everything they have ever known, Gretta and Tilly are forced to face prejudice, overcome adversity and to make their own community.



Lamont Review:

Set during WWI, when war broke out with Germany, we look at the impact on two very different girls, Gretta and Tilly.

They come from completely different backgrounds - Gretta is from a wealthy merchant family who live with their servants in Singapore, and Tilly is the daughter of a baker and comes from Brisbane. They have one thing in common though, German fathers.

And so they both find themselves in the remote NSW town of Barnabba, where their fathers must spend each night imprisoned. I learnt so much about life at this time through these girl's experiences. Life was very tough, and they faced too many hardships.

With themes of Australian history, war, discrimination, unjust laws, but also family, strength and hope, this is a great middle grade novel for those aged 10 - 14.

Reviewed by Rob