

Seven Days

By Fleur Ferris
Publisher: Puffin / Penguin
ISBN 9781761043352 SCIS: 5399635
\$16.99

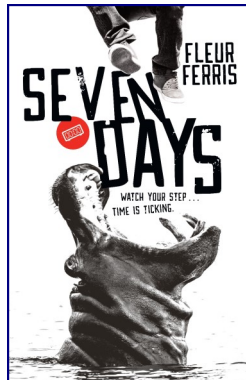
**Secondary Book
of the Month**

Blurb:

A fast-paced, action-packed story of how the past catches up to us, from bestselling and award-winning author Fleur Ferris.

Seven days to solve a century-old crime. Seven days to unearth the treasure. Seven days to survive...

The countdown is on.



Lamont Review:

Fleur Ferris certainly does not disappoint with this one! Set over just seven days, the lives of all involved will be changed forever...

With his Mum off on her honeymoon, and his Dad on another work trip, Ben finds himself having to spend the holidays in the country with his Uncle Ian, Auntie Christine and cousin Josh. The lives that Ben and Josh lead could not be more different. Ben is a wealthy city kid, with separated parents that seem disinterested in him. He plays computer games and spends a lot of time on his own. Josh's life on the farm is the complete opposite. He is sporty and strong, and his family ooze the love and nurture that Ben desires.

Then with the discovery of their great-great-Grandfather's journal, something stirs in Ben, and he is determined to find out the truth about what happened all those years ago. But this is a mystery that has been at the root of a never ending family feud between the Parker family and the Rhinestone family. Being a visitor in the town, Ben does not really understand the deep seated bad blood that the events of a century ago have created, and he finds himself in all sorts of trouble and danger trying to find out!

This is a wonderful story about drawing on the past to try and piece together who you really are. With themes of truth, deception, family and self-perception, this is a gripping, fast-paced story, with a big twist at the end, that middle grade readers will thoroughly enjoy.

Reviewed by Sam

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

The Cult of Romance

By Sarah Ayoub

Publisher: Harper Collins

ISBN 9781460758946 SCIS: 5398352

\$19.99

Blurb:

When your bestie is marrying a guy she barely knows, can you save her from the cult before it's too late?

Natalie is living proof that love is a scam.

She's traumatised by her parents' failed marriage and overwhelmed by her grandmother's expectations of good Lebanese girls — marriage, motherhood and exceptional tabouli-making skills.

When her best friend decides to get hitched to a guy in the motherland, Nat's not exactly thrilled by the mammoth task before her: juggling cultural traditions, extra bridesmaid dresses and super-judgemental relatives.

And to top it off there's the annoyingly good-looking best man and his constant need to mansplain all of the things.

Natalie is in for the trip of her life. But can she save her friend from the cult of romance, without falling in love herself?



Lamont Review:

Natalie and Janet are two Lebanese-Australian girls who have been friends for years. They share the same dreams and ambitions, and are planning on running their own business together.

They have strong thoughts about how they see their lives playing out, and have no interest in romance and marriage. At least that's what Natalie thinks!

Natalie lives with her Dad and her grandmother, who acts as a quasi-mother to Natalie after her parent's marriage failed. She is expected to be a good Lebanese girl and act in a way that will not bring shame to their family and culture. But Natalie also has to try and balance living her life as a teenager in Australia with the expectations of her family traditions, and it's quite the juggling act.

She is fierce and is determined to live life as she wants, and getting married - with all the demands and expectations the comes with it - is not on her radar.

When Janet returns from a recent trip to Lebanon, and seems distant, Natalie knows something is up. What has changed with her? When the truth comes out and Janet says she is getting married, Natalie feels betrayed. How can Janet do this to them and the dreams that they had? Natalie is convinced that Janet doesn't know what she is doing, and is determined to save her from her fate.

With the wedding set to take place in Lebanon, Natalie reluctantly travels there with Janet to prepare. As bridesmaid, there are thing to plan and organise, and this includes having to do things with the good looking, but annoying, best man George. Can Natalie accept Janet's decision, and resist falling into the romance cult herself?

This is a wonderful story of family, family expectation, friendship, cultural traditions and letting go, and will be enjoyed by all those 14 and older.

Reviewed by Sam

Skandar and the Unicorn Thief

By A.F. Steadman

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

ISBN 9781398512429 SCIS: 5400375

\$19.99

Blurb:

The first book in the hotly anticipated new fantasy adventure series from A. F. Steadman. If you like *Harry Potter*, *Percy Jackson*, *Eragon* or *His Dark Materials*, you'll love this . . .

Unicorns don't belong in fairy tales; they belong in nightmares.

So begins *Skandar and the Unicorn Thief*. Soar into a world where unicorns are real – and they're deadly. They can only be tamed by the rider who hatches them.

Thirteen-year-old Skandar Smith has only ever wanted to be a unicorn rider, and the time has finally come for him to take his Hatchery Exam, which will determine whether he is destined to hatch a unicorn egg. But when Skandar is stopped from taking the exam, and the mysterious and frightening Weaver steals the most powerful unicorn in the world, becoming a rider proves a lot more dangerous than he could ever have imagined. And what if Skandar was always destined to be the villain rather than the hero?

Get ready for unlikely heroes, elemental magic, fierce sky battles, ancient secrets, nail-biting races and, of course, bloodthirsty unicorns.



Lamont Review:

Skandar Smith is thirteen, and eagerly awaiting his chance to take his hatchery exam to see if he can be a unicorn rider. He has been dreaming of this day forever.

When his teacher stops him from taking the exam, Skandar thinks his dream is over. But then the mysterious Agatha turns up and takes him directly to the hatchery, and he sneaks in with the other students. Hatching his own unicorn, Skandar enters the amazing world of the unicorn riders.

This is a wonderful fantasy story that is full of adventure, mystery, amazing exploits and unicorns as you've never seen them before! It's also a story of belief, friendship and learning to trust what you feel in your heart, so that you can truly be one with your unicorn.

I found this book really hard to put down, and loved the four main characters, as well as their individual unicorns. This is sure to become a favourite with all readers who love fantasy, aged 12 and above.

Reviewed by Michelle

Grace Back on Court

By Maddy Proud

Publisher: Wakefield Press

ISBN 9781743059098 SCIS: 5400658

\$19.95

Blurb:

Netball nerd Grace Parker leads a busy life. Not only are there the usual challenges of high school, but Grace and her once enemy, Amber Burns, are trialling for the state under 15 netball team, dreamy aspiring rockstar Sebastian King is paying her a lot of attention, and Grace must decide between doing the right thing by her new netball friend Daisy, or going to the Kings of Linwood concert on Saturday night with her besties, Mia and Stella. She thinks she has the solution, but will they understand?

It's going to be a big year.



Lamont Review:

Grace, now 14, is trying out for the South Australian 15 and Under State Netball team. Her life at home and school is pretty good, and her relationship with the gorgeous aspiring musician, Seb, is coming along nicely.

But tryouts aren't easy as the girls that were in last year's team try to spoil Grace's chance of breaking into the team. With typical Grace determination, she makes the team and is off to Nationals.

Can South Australia, who have never won a championship in 15 years, finally break the drought - or will New South Wales just be too good?

This is a fabulous story of the workings of a team sport at representative level. We have the initial competition against each other, as everyone is vying for their own spot, and then the team coming together to work as a cohesive unit to give them a shot at success.

Grace is highly driven, but is always positive. With themes of team building, friendship, romance and the importance of families, this is a terrific novel that is best suited to ages 11 - 15.

Reviewed by Rob

The Bravest Word

By Kate Foster

Publisher: Walker Books

ISBN 9781760654719 SCIS: 5400379

\$17.99

Blurb:

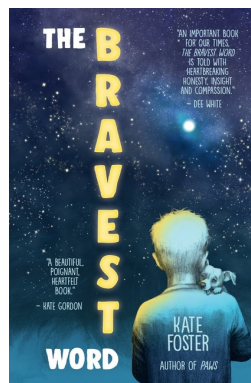
A rescue story of love and trust between a boy and a dog from the talented author of *Paws*.

Do you hear that? You're Cliff now, and your life is going to get better, I promise.

When eleven-year-old Matt finds Cliff, a hurt, neglected dog abandoned in the bush, he knows the brave little pup needs saving. He wants to help. But can he?

Lately, Matt has had way more bad days than good days. The pieces of his life just don't seem to fit together any more and he doesn't understand why. He's finding it impossible to concentrate at school and has lost interest in the activities he used to love. Plus, he's tired all the time.

Matt's too afraid to share what's really going on in his own head with anyone. His friends and family will never understand... maybe it's not only Cliff who needs saving.



Lamont Review:

Matt has every reason to be happy. He has a loving family, great friends and is successful at sport, with three soccer premierships, and Best and Fairest player awards.

But now in Year 7, he doesn't feel right. He is finding it hard to concentrate on school work, he doesn't want to be around his friends, and he definitely does not want to play soccer this year. He is having anxiety attacks, and getting angry easily.

Then, during a walk with his Dad, he comes across an abused dog that he names Cliff, after his recently deceased Grandad. After being mistreated his whole life, Cliff doesn't trust people and often shakes with fear.

After his Mum agrees to let Matt keep Cliff, they both begin the healing process.

But it is not until Matt opens up - first to his Dad, and then others, that he discovers a pathway that can help him deal with his problems.

Depression is a big societal issue for those of all ages, and this book gently and effectively shows how to take that first step to ask for help. With themes of family, friends, depression and hope, this is an important and enlightening story that would best suit readers in lower secondary.

Reviewed by Rob

Ghosted

By Emily Barr

Publisher: Penguin UK

ISBN 9780241481875 SCIS: 5400382

\$16.99

Blurb:

You'll never meet that perfect stranger again, right? But what if you do? Again and again... A love story with a thrilling twist from the bestselling author of *The One Memory of Flora Banks*.

Meeting Joe changed everything. It gave me hope... I never wanted to stop talking to him. I wanted him to tell me everything about what it was like to be him.

Ariel's accidental meeting with a handsome stranger called Joe is completely perfect; they have a connection like she's never known before. They exchange numbers and agree to meet when he is back from a trip to France. But when Ariel messages him, the number Joe gave her is disconnected. He's ghosted her. She assumes she will never see him again.

Except she does. Again and again.

Ariel returns to the place she and Joe met, and is stunned to find him there, not in France as he said he'd be, and behaving as if he has no idea who she is.

It turns out that their first meeting has been life-changing for them both, actually it's even more than that for Joe. But what do you do when - with every day that passes - you're literally growing apart from the best person you've ever known...?



Lamont Review:

Sixteen-year-old Ariel is dealing with the death of her Mum nearly a year ago.

When she meets Joe they have an instant connection, but when she tries to contact him she discovers his number is disconnected. Has Ariel been ghosted?

It's even weirder when she sees him again in same place the next day, he has no idea who she is, and it seems like Ariel is the only one that can communicate with him.

Without giving away too much of the story, there are so many great characters involved, and family and friendship issues that really give the story impetus, that you really want to find out what happened. And when you do, WOW! It's a twist I did not see coming.

An absolutely unputdownable story, with themes of death, families, friendship, violence and a ghostly romance, with occasional strong language, this will be best suited to readers 15 and older.

Reviewed by Rob

Mars Awakens

By H.M. Waugh

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760526979 SCIS: 5400389

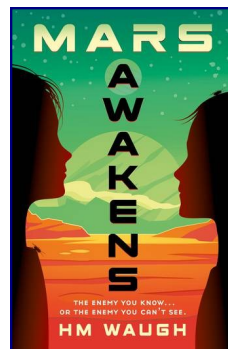
\$16.99

Blurb:

Kids from rival Martian colonies must come together to fight for survival in this thrilling middle-grade space adventure from an exciting Australian talent.

Raised in rival colonies on Mars, each long ago abandoned by Earth, Dee and Holt have been brought up to hate even the idea of each other. But when a mysterious object crash-lands on a far-flung plain, they are both sent to investigate and their fates intertwine. Together they must battle epic storms and deadly bioclouds while unpicking the web of lies they have been told about their planet. Will their bond be strong enough to withstand the arrival of a mysterious invader that threatens to end life on Mars forever?

Timely and compelling, *Mars Awakens* is the unputdownable first book in a duology offering a window into our future.



Lamont Review:

Dee and Holt live on Mars, but in totally separate colonies. Both the colonies were abandoned by Earth long ago.

They have both been told their whole lives that the other colony was evil, and never to be trusted. When a mysterious object crash lands, Dee and Holt are each sent to check it out.

Their chance meeting causes them to re-think everything they have ever been told about each other.

When their colonies send a friend out to look for each of them the group becomes four. And they are forced to battle an epic storm and a silent invader, who threatens all their lives.

Will they be able to trust each other enough to work together and save themselves?

This is an amazing, fast paced sci-fi adventure that readers will love. With wonderful characters and strong themes of friendship and working together to save and strengthen the environment they live in, this is the perfect book for all secondary readers, especially those who enjoy sci-fi.

Reviewed by Michelle

Family of Liars

By E. Lockhart

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781761067310 SCIS: 5399674

\$24.99

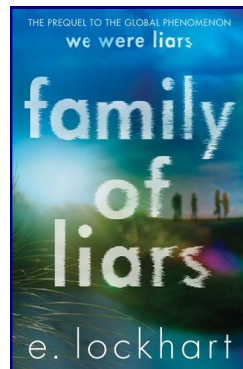
Blurb:

Prequel to WE WERE LIARS, the #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER and award-winning YA novel that TikTok can't stop talking about!

A windswept private island off the coast of Massachusetts.
A hungry ocean, churning with secrets and sorrow.
A fiery, addicted heiress. An irresistible, unpredictable boy.
A summer of unforgivable betrayal and terrible mistakes.

Welcome back to the Sinclair family.

They were always liars.



Lamont Review:

Set on a private island, just off Martha's vineyard, we experience a summer holiday with the wealthy Sinclair family, told through the eyes of eldest daughter, 18-year-old Carrie.

It's summer holidays on the private island, and this year Carrie's cousin Yardley has invited her boyfriend and two of his friends along.

It doesn't take long for Carrie to become infatuated with the carefree Pfeff, and things progress wonderfully at first. But within a family of liars, this cannot last!

In this family, they must always pretend everything is fine, and keep a stiff upper lip - which they do, even in the face of murder and betrayal.

Although it is a prequel to *We Were Liars*, it is a fantastic stand alone story. A terrific escapist novel about the behaviour of the wealthy elite, family duty and protecting the good name of your family. It will be loved by those 15 and older.

Reviewed by Rob

Gus and the Starlight

By Victoria Carless

Publisher: Harper Collins

ISBN 9781460760642 SCIS: 5399597

\$16.99

Blurb:

A spine-tingling and heart-warming story about friendship and finding your special place in the world.

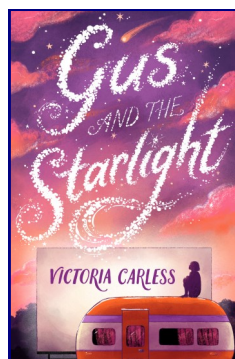
Gus doesn't want to make friends. She also doesn't want to be intrigued by the cat-lady teacher at her new school, or the Riley's Comet project that she and her seaweed-eating science partner are working on together.

And she definitely doesn't want to fall in love with her job as the projectionist at the Starlight, a drive-in movie theatre that her family is reviving.

Because, knowing Gus's luck, she and her family could be moving on in a day, or a week, or a month. When the ghosts that haunt Mum catch up with them. Or if the Starlight doesn't succeed.

Then she'll have to say goodbye. Again.

And saying goodbye is too hard.



Lamont Review:

Gus's Mum is a psychic. But this ability doesn't help her life choices and they are now fleeing her Mum's latest partner, Troy, in his car - destination unknown!

Together with her Mum, her older sister Alice and younger brother Artie, they find themselves in a little town in far north Queensland. They are quickly given the job of reopening and revitalising the drive-in theatre, and living in the small on site caravan.

Finally things seem better for everyone, and Gus even makes a friend - something she has always steered clear of, because the next move is just around the corner. The drive-in customers are increasing, but sinister motives are at play to ensure that they are never successful.

Can they overcome the odds and finally stay in one place?

This is a heart-warming story of family, belonging and finding your place in the world, and readers in lower secondary will love Gus's story.

Reviewed by Rob