

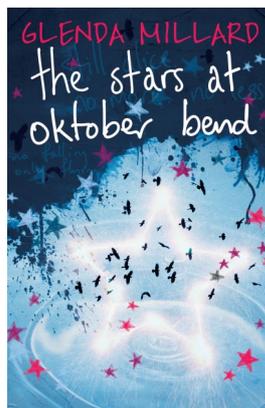
## **The Stars at Oktober Bend**

By Glenda Millard  
Publisher: Allen & Unwin  
ISBN 9781743315897  
\$19.99

**Secondary Book  
of the Month**

*Blurb:*

Alice is fifteen, with hair as red as fire and skin as pale as bone, but something inside her is broken. She has acquired brain injury, the result of an assault, and her words come out slow and slurred. But when she writes, heartwords fly from her pen. She writes poems to express the words she can't say and leaves them in unexpected places around the town. Manny was once a child soldier. He is sixteen and has lost all his family. He appears to be adapting to his new life in this country, where there is comfort and safety, but at night he runs, barefoot, to escape the memory of his past. When he first sees Alice, she is sitting on the rusty roof of her river-house, looking like a carving on an old-fashioned ship sailing through the stars.



*Lamont Review:*

A truly moving story that celebrates life, love, family and friendship.

Alice is fifteen, but due to an awful attack her brain is damaged and, as she says, her electric goes haywire.

Her younger brother Joey and her grandmother hold the family together.

Alice has trouble speaking but she doesn't have trouble writing, drawing or making the most beautiful fishing lures. When she starts leaving anonymous poems around town, the one person who notices them is Manny.

Manny is from Sierra Leone and is learning about life in Australia. When Alice and Manny meet, sparks fly and trouble follows. Will Alice be able to follow her dream?

I love Glenda Millard's writing and this story is no exception. She keeps the reader enthralled as she takes us on a journey of courage and love. She highlights the best and worst of the human spirit and that makes this a book that is hard to put down.

A perfect story for Year 8 and up, and it would make a wonderful addition to any classroom reading list.

*Reviewed by Michelle*

## **The Blackthorn Key**

By Kevin Sands

Publisher: Puffin/Penguin

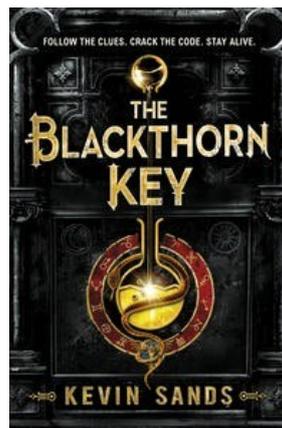
ISBN 9780141360645

\$16.99

### *Blurb:*

Potions, puzzles and the occasional explosion are all in a day's work for young apothecary Christopher Rowe. Murder is another matter. . .

It's a dangerous time to be the apprentice of Benedict Blackthorn. A wave of mysterious murders has sent shockwaves through London, and soon Christopher finds himself on the run. His only allies are his best friend, Tom, the courageous Molly, and a loyal feathered friend, Bridget. His only clues are a coded message about his master's most dangerous project, and a cryptic warning - 'Tell no one!' The race is on for Christopher: crack the code and uncover its secret, or become the next victim . . . A brilliant, fast-paced adventure, perfect for fans of Percy Jackson.



### *Lamont Review:*

Orphan Christopher Rowe is selected to become apothecary apprentice to Master Benedict Blackthorn, creating marvellous medicines and potions. He has many adventures in 1600's London with his friend, Tom, the baker's son.

But as many apothecaries in London are being murdered by a strange cult, Christopher's life suddenly heats up.

Full of many codes to crack and puzzles to solve, this is an exciting fast paced adventure in a similar vein to The Da Vinci Code (and probably just as good) but for a younger audience.

*The Blackthorn Key* gets its hooks into you as you want to discover the ancient secrets of this guild and you are certainly not disappointed with the results.

Brilliantly written with a suspense filled storyline and an historically accurate backdrop, this should walk off the shelves as readers start talking about it.

Best suited to middle year readers aged 10-15, but great for anybody.

*Reviewed by Rob*

## Anna and the Swallow Man

By Gavriel Savit

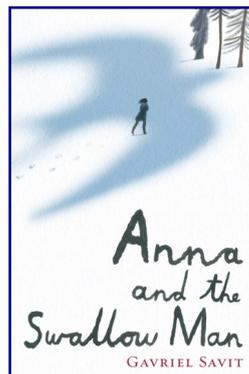
Publisher: Corgi Children/Random House

ISBN 9780552575270

\$19.99

### Blurb:

Anna and the Swallow Man is a stunning, literary, and wholly original debut novel, perfect for readers of *The Book Thief*. Krakow, 1939. A million marching soldiers and a thousand barking dogs. This is no place to grow up. But Anna Lania is just seven years old when the Germans take her father and suddenly, she's alone. Then she meets the Swallow Man. He is a mystery, strange and tall. And like Anna's missing father, he has a gift for languages: Polish, Russian, German, Yiddish, even Bird. When he summons a bright, beautiful swallow down to his hand to stop her from crying, Anna is entranced. Over the course of their travels together, Anna and the Swallow Man will dodge bombs, tame soldiers, and even, despite their better judgment, make a friend. But in a world gone mad, everything can prove dangerous . . . Destined to become a classic, Gavriel Savit's stunning debut reveals life's hardest lessons while celebrating its miraculous possibilities.



### Lamont Review:

Seven-year-old Anna lives in Krakow with her father, a professor of linguistics, in 1939 when one day he does not return home from work.

Confronted by a locked house and not being wanted by their friend Doctor Fuchsmann, she comes across a tall thin man and speaks to him in Yiddish, Russian, German, Polish and French, but not Bird, a language she had heard him speak to a swallow.

This begins an incredible journey trekking across mostly Poland, but also neighbouring Russia, as they try to avoid notice and thus remain alive in a warzone.

Most of their conversations are instructive with the generally quiet Swallow Man teaching Anna the language of the Road, which allows them to appear to fit in wherever they go, even when they pass border crossings.

It is an entrancing read written to a higher audience than books like *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and Morris Gleitzman's *Once* series.

This novel probably tackles war less, focusing instead on human relationships and perceptions in times off great hardship, and is therefore best suited to readers 15+.

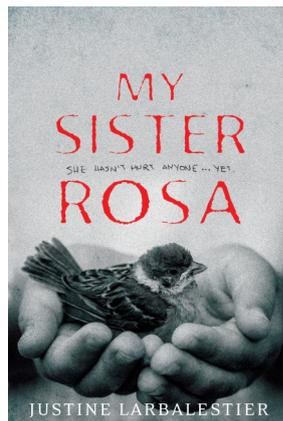
Reviewed by Rob

## **My Sister Rosa**

By Justine Larbalestier  
Publisher: Allen & Unwin  
ISBN 9781760112226  
\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

'I promise,' said Rosa. 'I won't kill and I won't make anyone else kill.' I can't see the loophole. Since the guinea pig there's been nothing. Months now without Rosa killing as much as a mosquito. As far as I know. Che Taylor has four items on his list: 1. He wants to spar, not just train in the boxing gym. 2. He wants a girlfriend. 3. He wants to go home. 4. He wants to keep Rosa under control. Che's little sister Rosa is smart, talented, pretty, and so good at deception that Che's convinced she must be a psychopath. She hasn't hurt anyone yet, but he's certain it's just a matter of time. And when their parents move them to New York City, Che longs to return to Sydney and his three best friends. But his first duty is to his sister Rosa, who is playing increasingly complex and disturbing games. Can he protect Rosa from the world - and the world from Rosa? *My Sister Rosa* will have you on the edge of your seat from the very first page to the last.



### *Lamont Review:*

Acclaimed Australian author Justine Larbalestier has produced another 'read in one sitting' psychological thriller.

Seventeen year old Che's life is anything but normal, constantly moving countries in his parents dream search for wealth and happiness. Now moving to New York, Che knows he and he alone has any chance of preventing his ten-year-old sister Rosa from doing bad things.

Che knows what Rosa is capable of, and although he still loves her, he has seen her cold lack of empathy and calculating evil ways that could be psychopathic.

Che has other things to focus on too, like his love of boxing and falling for the beautiful, athletic Sojourner.

But then things spiral out of control when their eleven-year-old family friend, Maya, dies after being pushed in front of an oncoming cyclist. Rosa and her best friend, Maya's twin Simeone, tell the police that Che did it. Will the truth come out?

This is a thriller through and through that will best suit readers 14 and older.

*Reviewed by Rob*

## **Bro**

By Helen Chebatte  
Publisher: Hardie Grant Egmont  
ISBN 9781760125509  
\$19.95

### *Blurb:*

What happens when you mix teenage boys, a fight club and ethnic rivalries? You get war. Romeo Makhlof knows the rules. Stick with your own kind. Don't dob on your mates or even on your enemies. Respect the family. But even unwritten rules are made for breaking. Fight clubs, first loves and family ties are pushed to the limit in Helen Chebatte's explosive debut novel.



### *Lamont Review:*

Written in a language teens will relate to, *Bro* delves into Australian identity and what this means to many different people.

Attending a generic Christian Boys High School, our main character Romeo finds himself having to fight to defend his Lebanese heritage in a school divided into four groups: the Fobs - mainly Islanders, Lebs like Romeo, Rez - mostly Asians, and Ozzies.

But what makes you a Leb, if you (as in Romeo's case) have an Australian mother, were born in and live in Australia?

This novel is fascinating for its melting pot of cultures, clashing over nothing really and showing what can happen if this goes too far.

All this really hits home when tragedy strikes close to Romeo, who didn't really ever want to be involved in fighting in the first place.

A great opening to a discussion of difficult topics like cultural difference, violence and conflict resolution, mateship, loss and redemption.

A great read and strong debut novel by Australian author Helen Chebatte that will best appeal to teenage boys 14+ and teen reading groups.

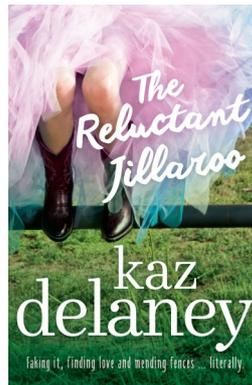
*Reviewed by Rob*

## **The Reluctant Jillaroo**

By Kaz Delaney  
Publisher: Allen & Unwin  
ISBN 9781925266061  
\$16.99

### *Blurb:*

Heidi Gage is all about sun, skating and waves until her twin sister, Harper, dislocates her knee. If Harper doesn't go to jillaroo camp at Winmaroo - and seriously impress the teachers - she can kiss her dream school goodbye. And what's the point of having a twin sister if you can't switch places now and then, right? Blame it on guilt, or on sisterly love, but before the dust has settled Heidi is heading to the country for ten days of horses, snakes, rats and creepy crawlies and trying to look like she knows what she's doing. Heidi's about to learn a lot can happen in ten days. Flying under the radar isn't easy when you're falling in love.



### *Lamont Review:*

Fifteen-year-old surfer girl Heidi leaves her skateboard lying around only for her identical twin, the horse loving Harper, to slip on it when taking a night time toilet trip leaving her hospitalised.

But Harper has places to be, and hospital isn't one of them! So they hatch a plan for Heidi to take Harper's place at Winmaroo's Jillaroo and Jackaroo school where Harper hopes to impress and gain a scholarship to the exclusive Agricol College for Year 11 & 12.

But you know what happens to the best laid plans...

Her first problem is Trent (who is Harper's nemesis from school) is also there and he knows everything about Harper. Added to the fact Heidi has no idea about horses, mending fences, milking cows and doesn't even know what on earth dipping sheep involves, their grand plan is looking shaky from the start.

To make matters worse, someone is setting Heidi up as a thief and manipulator and she can't possibly know why. And then there is Chaz, who knew she would find love in such a foreign environment?

All this makes for a great new novel by Australian Kaz Delaney with a genuinely nice, gutsy female lead character and great storyline in the hugely successful rural romance genre for a teenage audience.

Girls 13+ will find it an easy and captivating read.

*Reviewed by Rob*

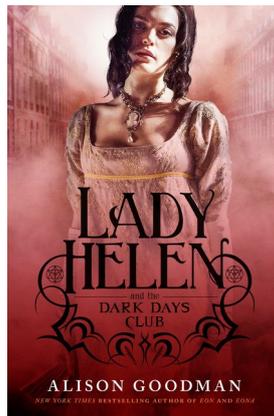
## **Lady Helen and the Dark Days Club**

By Allison Goodman  
Publisher: Harper Collins  
ISBN 9780732296094  
\$19.99

*Blurb:*

A tantalising new trilogy set in Regency London from the award-winning author of EON and EONA.

London, April 1812. Lady Helen Wrexhall is set to make her debut at the court of Queen Charlotte and officially step into polite Regency society and the marriage mart. Little does Helen know that step will take her from the opulent drawing rooms of Mayfair and the bright lights of Vauxhall Gardens into a shadowy world of missing housemaids and demonic conspiracies. Standing between those two worlds is Lord Carlston, a man of ruined reputation and brusque manners. He believes Helen has a destiny beyond the ballroom; a sacred and secret duty. Helen is not so sure, especially when she discovers that nothing around her is quite as it seems, including the enigmatic Lord Carlston. Against a backdrop of whispered secrets in St James's Palace, soirees with Lord Byron and morning calls from Beau Brummell, Lady Helen and the Dark Days Club is a delightfully dangerous adventure of self-discovery and dark choices that must be made... whatever the consequences.



*Lamont Review:*

This is a spell binding book that will keep you enthralled until the end.

Set in Regency London, when ladies were very protected and could not be upset in anyway, Lady Helen faces untold dramas. She must deal with dashing dukes, amazing balls, meeting royalty and chasing demons.

Part romance, part historical fiction, part supernatural thriller, this book will perfectly suit girls who like their heroines as feisty and independent as only Allison Goodman can make them.

I loved this book and can't wait for the next instalment.

Will be most appreciated by girls in Year 9 and up.

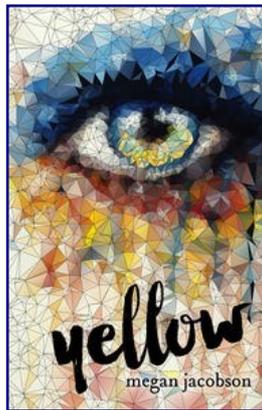
*Reviewed by Michelle*

## Yellow

By Megan Jacobson  
Publisher: Penguin  
ISBN 9780143573333  
\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

If fourteen-year-old Kirra is having a mid-life crisis now then it doesn't bode well for her life expectancy. Her so-called friends bully her, whatever semblance of a mother she had has been drowned at the bottom of a gin bottle ever since her dad left them for another woman, and now a teenage ghost is speaking to her through a broken phone booth. Kirra and the ghost make a pact. She'll prove who murdered him almost twenty years ago if he makes her popular, gets her parents back together, and he promises not to haunt her. Things aren't so simple, however, and Kirra realises that people can be haunted in more ways than one.



### *Lamont Review:*

They call her “Yellow” on account of her startling eyes, but Kirra knows there’s more truth to the name that just her appearance. “Yellow” because she’s not brave enough to stand up to the other girls in the popular group. “Yellow” because she can’t stop her Mum from drinking. “Yellow” because she knows she’ll never be able to act on her feelings for surf demigod Noah. But when Kirra receives a mysterious phone call from a ghost she has to find the courage to avenge his murder so he can find peace.

*Yellow* is a murder mystery with a supernatural bent, but at its core is a story about small towns, prejudices, bullying, and the social hierarchies that can make high-school unbearable for people who aren’t easily categorised. Kirra’s fall from grace from the top clique to the untouchables provides an authentic view of the challenges of the high-school playground, and her dawning understanding that the ghosts that haunt you aren’t always the supernatural kind is realistically handled.

Megan Jacobson is a scriptwriter and blogger who grew up in Darwin. *Yellow* is her debut novel.

*Reviewed by Lian*

## **Ned Kelly: The Man Behind The Mask**

By Hugh Dolan

Publisher: New South Books

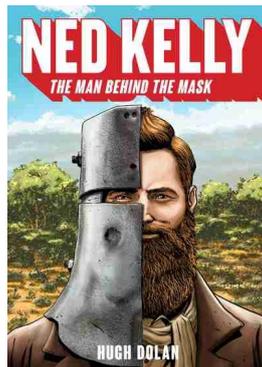
ISBN 9781742234496

\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

We all think we know the story of Ned Kelly, Australia's most famous outlaw, but we've never seen him in full colour like this before ...

Edward 'Ned' Kelly was born in 1855 into a poor Irish immigrant family in rural Victoria. He grew up loyal to his family, angry at the injustice he saw in Australian society and desperate to better his situation by any means. Often in trouble with the police, with the so-called Kelly Gang he was involved in horse and cattle stealing, bank robbing, kidnapping and ultimately murder. But he was the only bushranger to write a famous and compelling letter explaining his behaviour. As every Australian knows, after a legendary shoot-out Ned was captured by police and later hanged at Melbourne Gaol. Folk hero or criminal, this is the story of Ned Kelly as you've never seen it before.



### *Lamont Review:*

It is very unusual for us to select a graphic novel for inclusion in our Standing Order selections, but we thought that *Ned Kelly—The Man Behind the Mask* was certainly worthy of inclusion.

Although this style doesn't appeal to everyone, there is a fast growing and enthusiastic group of graphic novel fans out there who will enjoy this story being brought to life.

*Ned Kelly - The Man Behind the Mask* is very descriptive and the illustrations really bring the story to life. We are given a real insight into the early life of Ned Kelly and his family and it particularly highlights how tough times were during this period and how this contributes to who Ned Kelly was and what he did. As for excitement and action, Ned Kelly's story has that in spades.

There have been very comprehensive teacher notes prepared for this title (45 pages!) and these are available from [www.newsouthbooks.com.au](http://www.newsouthbooks.com.au). We are sure that these will be a great resource for those interested.

*Reviewed by Sam*