

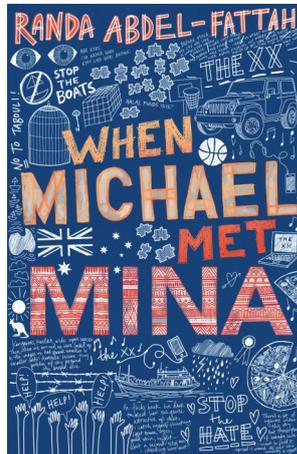
When Michael Met Mina

By Randa Abdel-Fattah
Publisher: Pan Macmillan Australia
ISBN 9781743534977
\$18.99

**SECONDARY
BOOK OF THE
MONTH**

Blurb:

A boy. A girl. Two families. One great divide. When Michael meets Mina, they are at a rally for refugees - standing on opposite sides. Mina fled Afghanistan with her mother via a refugee camp, a leaky boat and a detention centre. Michael's parents have founded a new political party called Aussie Values. They want to stop the boats. Mina wants to stop the hate. When Mina wins a scholarship to Michael's private school, their lives crash together blindingly. A novel for anyone who wants to fight for love, and against injustice.



Lamont Review:

Michael's parents have founded a political party called Aussie Values, which wants to stop boat people.

Mina is a refugee from Afghanistan who arrived via a refugee camp, then a boat and into a detention centre. When Michael meets Mina their two worlds collide and they must both decide what they believe in.

A spectacular novel by Randa Abdel-Fattah, author of '*Does My Head Look Big In This?*'.

Every character feels utterly authentic and will remind you of someone you have crossed paths with. It is a novel about change, acceptance, free speech, racism, injustice, love and most strongly friendship.

It is about growing up, discovering what you believe in and finding the courage to be true to those beliefs.

I read most of this book in one sitting, long into the night, as I could not put it down. This will make a perfect book for a Year 10 or 11 study, as it is dealing with issues which we hear about everyday, but don't often think about deeply enough.

I highly recommend this book for both boys and girls and will not be surprised if it is on next years CBCA shortlist.

Reviewed by Michelle

Another Night In Mullet Town

By Steven Herrick

Publisher: University of Queensland Press

ISBN 9780702253959

\$19.95

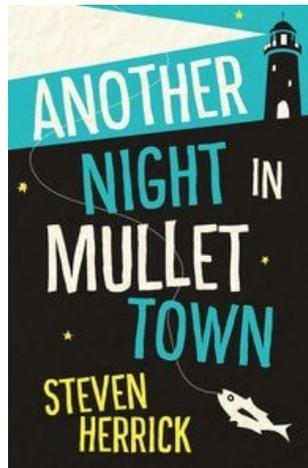
Blurb:

People like you and me, Jonah, we drag down the price of everything we touch.

Life for Jonah and Manx means fishing for mullet at the lake, watching their school mates party on Friday night and wishing they had the courage to talk to Ella and Rachel.

But now their lakeside town is being sold off, life doesn't seem so simple. Manx holds a grudge against the wealthy blow-ins from the city and Jonah just wants his parents to stop arguing.

One memorable night at the lake will change everything.



Lamont Review:

When Jonah was a child everything seemed perfect. His mother was the prettiest girl in town, his father the loveable surf rat who captured her heart. Fed by a creek, the local lake used to feed directly to the ocean and Jonah and his best friend Manx could take a tinny right out over the breakwater to the waves.

Over the years things have changed: Manx's parents have separated and Jonah's seem not far behind; a huge storm dumped a levee of sand across the mouth of the lake, 'damming the lake, and damning the town'; and Jonah's home is dying a slow death, local businesses falling victim to the thriving beachside town of Balarang Bay 10 kilometres away.

At Jonah's school the gulf between the haves and the have-nots is widening. Jonah and Manx have an uneasy truce with Patrick, the son of the local real estate mogul, but tensions are simmering and it won't take much to bring things to a head.

Another Night in Mullet Town explores Jonah's world in sparse, but beautifully rendered prose. Each verse chapter is a self-contained snapshot in time - a memory, a photograph, a moment, a realisation - but bound together they create the story of Jonah's grief at losing the only home he's ever known, and Manx's crusade to even the odds against them.

This verse novel is a great vehicle for initiating discussions about class differences, the way progress can affect communities in positive and negative ways, the importance of holding on to history, and the value of communities. I'd recommend it for readers 14+.

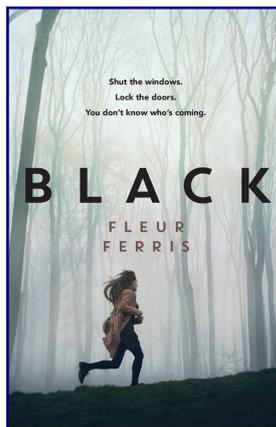
Reviewed by Lian

Black

By Fleur Ferris
Publisher: Random House
ISBN 9781925324976
\$19.99

Blurb:

Ebony Marshall is in her final year of high school. Five months, two weeks and four days... She can't wait to leave the town where she's known only as 'Black'. Because of her name, of course. But for another reason, too. Everyone says Black Marshall is cursed. Three of her best friends have died in tragic accidents. After Oscar, the whispers started. Now she's used to being on her own. It's easier that way. But when her date for the formal ends up in intensive care, something in quiet little Dainsfield starts to stir. Old secrets are revealed and terrifying new dangers emerge. If only Black could put all the pieces together, she could work out who her real enemies are. Should she run for her life, or stay and fight?



Lamont Review:

Fleur Ferris has produced her second young adult novel and it's another fantastic psychological thriller.

Ebony Marshall lives in a small Australian country town where everyone calls her Black. This is an obvious play on her name, but has more recently been whispered around town after people who get close to her keep dying. Three so far. Now the new hot guy Aiden has asked her to be his date at the formal, so he obviously doesn't know about her curse. But then he has a freak accident and ends up in intensive care...

Finally the freaky priest Father Ratchet has had enough and he and his trusty followers, the Pure Apostles, decide to exorcise Ebony's demon.

Can she fight to survive against these crazies and return to a normal life or will her curse remain?

This story makes you wonder how small things can grow so much, and shows how fear can overcome rational thought.

A scary, but great, read for middle teens.

Reviewed by Rob

The Bone Sparrow

By Zana Fraillon

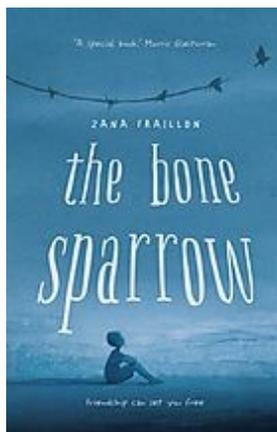
Publisher: Lothian/Hachette

ISBN 9780734417138

\$19.99

Blurb:

Sometimes, at night, the dirt outside turns into a beautiful ocean. As red as the sun and as deep as the sky. I lie in my bed, Queeny's feet pushing up against my cheek, and listen to the waves lapping at the tent. Subhi is a refugee. Born in an Australian permanent detention centre after his mother fled the violence of a distant homeland, life behind the fences is all he has ever known. But as he grows, his imagination gets bigger too, until it is bursting at the limits of his world. The Night Sea brings him gifts, the faraway whales sing to him, and the birds tell their stories. The most vivid story of all, however, is the one that arrives one night in the form of Jimmie, a scruffy, impatient girl who appears from the other side of the wires, and brings a notebook written by the mother she lost. Unable to read it, she relies on Subhi to unravel her own family's love songs and tragedies. Subhi and Jimmie might both find a way to freedom, as their tales unfold. But not until each of them has been braver than ever before.



Lamont Review:

Zana Fraillon is fast becoming a real voice in Australian children's literature and *The Bone Sparrow* is sure to strengthen her readership.

It follows the plight of a young Burmese-Australian boy, Subhi, in an Australian detention centre. A place he calls home as he was born there and had never been outside the fences.

He gains his life experience through stories his mother tells him, and maintains hope for his lost father through stories also told by her.

Life is bleak. Food is terrible. Guards are mostly cruel. Will he ever have a life on the outside or chance to visit the beach?

But then Jimmie arrives. She lives just outside the detention centre, with her 'fly in fly out' Dad and her older brother. Since her mother passed they cannot leave this desolate place where you feel almost nobody remains, as that would mean leaving her mother and her memories.

Jimmie breaks into the centre at night and brings with her a book of her mother's stories that Subhi reads to her, and their bond grows. But reminiscent of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, can any good come from breaking into a place that you are not supposed to escape from?

When tragedy strikes and tensions flare, we only hope that this gentle boy and his friend will one day experience a better life.

This is a great, topical, political discussion starter for 10–14 year olds. I loved it as it is easy to read, with subtle but powerful characters, that can't help but make you think.

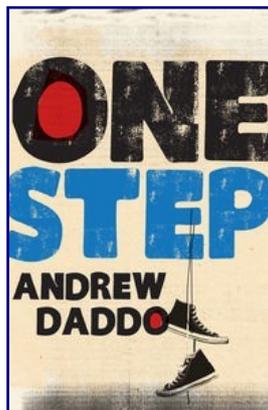
Reviewed by Rob

One Step

By Andrew Daddo
Publisher: Penguin
ISBN 9780143573616
\$19.99

Blurb:

At 15, Dylan is struggling. He's struggling with his explosive acne that has declared war on his face, struggling with his pushy younger sister, struggling with his nagging mum and her lame and misguided attempts to 'connect' with him, struggling with his dad who never seems to have time for him anymore, struggling with his retarded old phone-me-down courtesy of Hamish Banning pushing him and his iPhone off Jump Rock into the harbour, and he's struggling with his constant preoccupation with sex combined with his complete inability to attract any girl. Struggling, but surviving. But when his English teacher reads out Dylan's creative writing piece to the class, revealing him to be a sensitive and perhaps promising writer (though in some classmates' opinion, pretty gay), it sets off a chain of events, including unlikely interest from a few hot girls and a vicious physical and verbal bullying attack, which sends Dylan on a frantic roller coaster of emotions culminating in a revelation that could make or break his survival.



Lamont Review:

Being a teenage boy can be tough. And life for 15 year old Dylan is just that.

It doesn't seem to matter what he does, things always go wrong. If it isn't saying the wrong thing, it's doing a stupid thing that makes him the centre of attention for all the wrong reasons.

He is dealing with the typical teenage feelings of insecurity, along with the issues, confusion and frustration that his changing hormones bring, coupled with the relentless bullying that he receives, especially from Hamish Banning. Throw in the fact that his family life is not what it used to be, and you have all the makings of a teenager struggling to cope and not knowing where to turn or how to change things.

Dylan tries to ask for help, but it just doesn't come out. The issues with his Mum and Dad take precedence, and he is left to deal with things on his own. And just when he thinks things are looking up, it all just gets worse and he finds himself betrayed again, by the one person he thought was his closest mate, Ryan, and by the girls that he thought were starting to accept him.

As a mum of two teenage boys, in Year 8 and Year 10, it certainly struck a real chord with me, and I just wanted to reach out to Dylan and help him. It highlights the struggles teenagers today face, and how fragile they really can be.

It is a very powerful read with an ending that will leave your heart in your mouth. It does contain swearing and sexual references, and will best suit those 15+.

Reviewed by Sam

The Road to Winter

By Mark Smith

Publisher: Text Publishing

ISBN 9781925355123

\$19.99

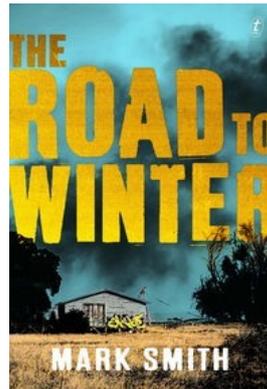
Blurb:

Since a deadly virus and the violence that followed killed his parents and wiped out most of his community, Finn has lived alone on the rugged coast with only his loyal dog Rowdy for company.

He has stayed alive for two winters—hunting and fishing and trading food, and keeping out of sight of the Wilders, an armed and dangerous gang that controls the north, led by a ruthless man named Ramage.

But Finn's isolation is shattered when a girl runs onto the beach. Rose is a Siley—an asylum seeker—and she has escaped from Ramage, who had enslaved her and her younger sister, Kas. Rose is desperate, sick, and needs Finn's help. Kas is still missing somewhere out in the bush. And Ramage wants the girls back—at any cost.

The Road to Winter is an unforgettable novel about survival, honour, friendship and love. It announces an extraordinary new talent.



Lamont Review:

It's always great to introduce Australian debut authors and this is a fantastic first book by Mark Smith, a Victorian based teacher.

He clearly understands what makes young people want to read and this book certainly has many of these important attributes - action, a good versus evil storyline, strong emotions of loss and love, and above all, hope in the face of a dystopian world.

Set in a place where a virus began killing people and nearly all the girls were eliminated, sixteen year old Finn is left to fend for himself. Fortunately, his Dad, who owned a hardware store, saw this possible outcome and stashed away supplies, reminiscent of a doomsday prepper.

But after two years of virtually no contact with other humans, nineteen year old Rose stumbles into Finn's life as he helps save her from the Wilders (a group of wild men on the hunt for females and happy to kill anyone who might try to stop them.)

Finn's lonely but comfortable world is rocked, but how far is he prepared to go to first help Rose, and then maybe try to find and rescue her younger sister Kas?

This book often reminded me of John Marsden's *Tomorrow When The War Began*, which I loved when it was released in 1993 (was it really that long ago?).

This is a wonderful read that ticks many boxes to make it a great classroom text for Year 8 and 9 students, but it's more than that - it is a book they will gladly consume, discuss and remember.

I highly recommend it for all high school students (and older readers as well). I hope we read a lot more of Mark Smith's work as this is a tremendous debut!

Reviewed by Rob

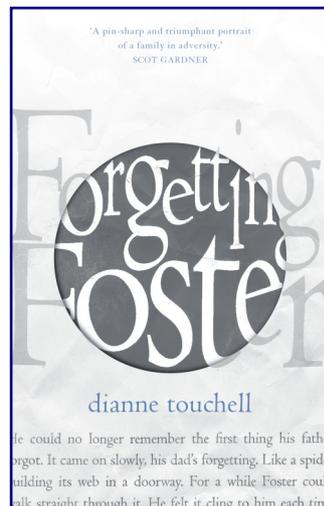
Teacher notes are available for this title at www.textpublishing.com.au

Forgetting Foster

By Dianne Touchell
Publisher: Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781760110796
\$19.99

Blurb:

Foster suddenly recognised the feeling that rolled over him and made him feel sick. It was this: Dad was going away somewhere all on his own. And Foster was already missing him... Foster Sumner is seven years old. He likes toy soldiers, tadpole hunting, going to school and the beach. Best of all, he likes listening to his dad's stories... But then Foster's dad starts forgetting things. No one is too worried at first. Foster and Dad giggle about it. But the forgetting gets worse. And suddenly no one is laughing anymore... A heartbreaking story about what it means to forget and to be forgotten.



Lamont Review:

It seems to lighten the load when we delve into tough topics to look at them through the eyes of the innocent. This has worked well in recent years, particularly with books like *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*.

Forgetting Foster is equally readable, taking us on a journey through the eyes of Foster, a seven year old boy that is a bit different, who is dealing with a father that is falling victim to Alzheimer's disease.

Foster's father told him stories and was his rock, his general. But all of this is changing, and Foster's mother is not coping at all as this dreadful disease slowly chips away at his father's health.

It is a powerful and well delivered message, that I believe is Dianne Touchell's best work by far (and she has written CBCA shortlisted books before).

It is very real, in Dianne's usual unflinching style, but contains much more compassion and empathy for her characters than usual, with strong themes of family, health and identity.

A great read for all teenagers.

Reviewed by Rob

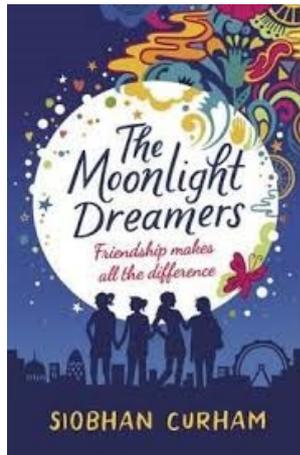
The Moonlight Dreamers

By Siobhan Curham
Publisher: Walker Books
ISBN 9781406365825
\$16.99

Blurb:

An unforgettable story of friendship, self-belief and love. Amber, Maali, Sky and Rose are not like everyone else and they don't want to be. Becoming friends gives them the courage to be themselves.

A inspirational, heart-warming book about four girls trying to find their place in the world. Siobhan Curham celebrates very different but like-minded friends in this captivating novel. Amber craves excitement and adventure. Instead, she's being bullied at school for having two dads, and life at home isn't much better. Inspired by Oscar Wilde, Amber realises that among the millions of people in London, there must be others who feel the same as she does; other dreamers - moonlight dreamers. After chance encounters with Maali, Sky and Rose, Amber soon recruits the three girls to the Moonlight Dreamers. It's high time they started pursuing their dreams, and how better than with the support of friends?



Lamont Review:

Four very different girls, but all with one thing in common - they are all fed up with having to fit in and be like everyone else.

Amber, Maali, Sky and Rose do not know each other until Amber decides one day to find other people who share her dreams and so the Moonlight Dreamers are born!

This is a book for every girl who has faced pressure to fit in, to blend in to the crowd at school and to stay invisible. I think this is everyone at some stage! It is a beautiful book about friendship, standing up for what you believe in and finding the courage to be yourself and find your own unique place in the world.

I loved this book from the very first page and I'm sure your students will thoroughly enjoy it. A perfect book for girls Year 9 and up who believe in following their dreams.

Reviewed by Michelle