

Promising Azra

By Helen Thurloe

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760113278

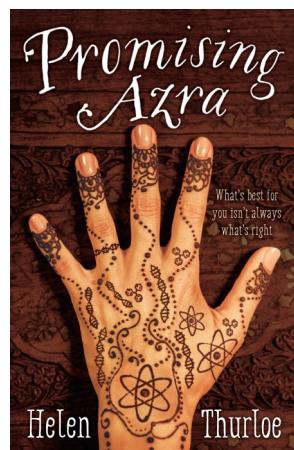
\$19.99

**SECONDARY
BOOK OF THE
MONTH**

Blurb:

Azra is sixteen, smart and knows how to get what she wants. She thinks. When she wins a place in a national science competition, she thinks her biggest problem is getting her parents' permission to go. But she doesn't know they're busy arranging her marriage to an older cousin she's never met. In Pakistan. In just three months' time.

Azra always thought she'd finish high school with her friends and then go on to study science, but now her dreams of university are suddenly overshadowed. Can she find a way to do what she wants, while keeping her parents happy? Or does being a good daughter mean sacrificing her freedom?



Lamont Review:

When I read the back of my advance sample copy of this book I was shocked to learn that over 100 under 18's are forced into an arranged marriage nationally each year. Young girls taken by their families overseas, mostly against their will to marry someone who they may never have met, for reasons like family ties, opportunity and often migration prospects.

I read this book all at once as the storyline was compelling and the characters appealing. You can't help but like science fan Azra and wonder where her Pakistani background of strong family bonds and female obedience will lead.

Her older brother Rashid is in trouble with the police and her dominant Uncle who catches and punishes Azra for whispering to a boy at school decides it's time for fast action. This leads to Azra discovering plans of her impending marriage to her much older cousin in Pakistan. Can she really go through with this? What will happen to her family if she refuses?

With a frightening and fast paced ending, this was an exciting and thought provoking novel, ideal for any teenagers. It shows cultural diversity in the extreme and should be widely read in school groups as an excellent resource on this topic. I strongly recommend this title!

Reviewed by Rob

The Boundless Sublime

By Lili Wilkinson

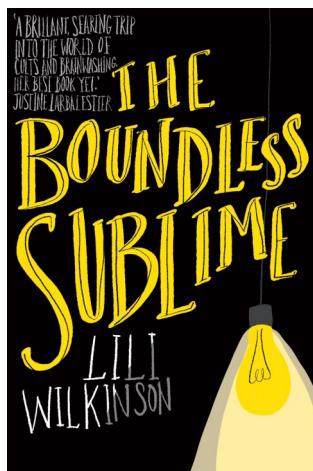
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

ISBN 9781760113360

\$19.99

Blurb:

Ruby Jane Galbraith is empty. Her family has been torn apart and it's all her fault...The only thing that makes sense to her is Fox - a gentle new friend who is wise, soulful and clever, yet oddly naive about the ways of the world. He understands what she's going through and he offers her a chance to find peace. Fox belongs to a group called the Institute of the Boundless Sublime - and Ruby can't stay away from him. So she is also drawn into what she discovers is a terrifying, secretive community that is far from the ideal world she expected...Can Ruby find the courage to escape? Is there any way she can save Fox too? And is there ever an escape from the far-reaching influence of the Institute of the Boundless Sublime?



Lamont Review:

This is a real change of genre for Lili Wilkinson, as she presents a compelling and sometimes terrifying look into the strange world of modern day alternative communities.

Driven, as many recent books have been, by the death of a family member, a disintegrating family unit and a need to find something better, our main character Ruby sees the angelic Fox handing out water bottles to thirsty people.

This seems harmless enough, but she is soon drawn into his idyllic life style and realises that this Institute of the Sublime run by Daddy may not be all it seems. However, through withdrawal, privilege denial and cruel punishments, we soon see her succumbing to his control.

Then Fox and Ruby are found in bed together and Fox is banished or possibly murdered. Will this break Ruby's trust or place her more under Daddy's control?

This is a gripping read, based in a cult that is not at all religious, but certainly controlling. It is hard to put down, very real and probably Lili's best novel yet. Its dark content make it best suited to a 14+ reader, both male or female.

Reviewed by Rob

Serafina and the Twisted Staff

By Robert Beatty

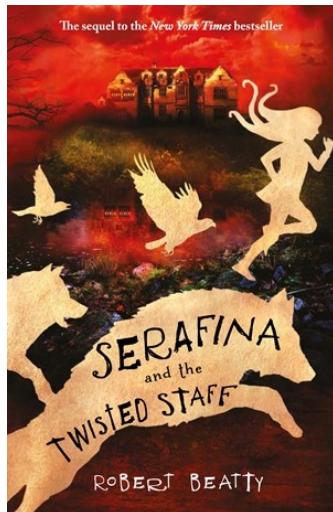
Publisher: Egmont

ISBN 9781405284158

\$16.99

Blurb:

The much-anticipated and thrilling sequel to the New York Times bestselling middle grade debut *Serafina and the Black Cloak*. As Serafina struggles to adjust to her new place in the daylight at Biltmore Estate, she and her best friend, Braeden, continue their battle against a great evil that seeks to engulf the Vanderbilt mansion . . .



Lamont Review:

This picks up where *Serafina and the Black Cloak* finishes. Serafina is struggling to work out where she fits in Biltmore House - upstairs with Braeden, downstairs with her Pa or in the forest with her mother.

We don't often have a sequel in our Standing Order but Serafina is a wonderful series for your fantasy readers and this book is enthralling. I must admit I read it over one weekend and found it difficult to put down.

All the favourite characters are again brought to life and it also continues Serafina's search for her true identity as she learns to grow up and accept her own individuality.

It is perfect for Year 7 and up, both boys and girls.

Reviewed by Michelle

The Shark Caller

By Dianne Wolfer

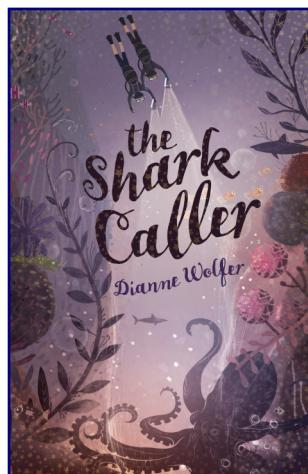
Publisher: Random House

ISBN 9780143780557

\$17.99

Blurb:

Isabel is on a plane heading back to her island birthplace in Papua New Guinea. Izzy is looking forward to seeing her family again, but there's another tragic reason for the trip. Izzy's twin brother, Ray, died in a freak diving accident, and Izzy and her mum are taking his ashes home for traditional death ceremonies. After they arrive, Izzy realises things have changed since their last visit. Logging threatens the community's way of life and sharks no longer answer the song of the shark callers. Izzy's cousin Noah explains that the clan needs someone to undertake a traditional diving ritual. The person must be a twin from the shark calling lineage. The dive will be perilous. And Izzy is the last twin. Will she have the courage to attempt the dive? And what deep, dark secrets will the ocean reveal if she does?



Lamont Review:

Izzy's twin brother Ray has just died in a diving accident in Australia and her Mum decides that they need to take his ashes back to his birthplace and his family in Papua New Guinea.

Her family, and particularly male twins, are known to be the shark callers. They communicate with sharks and other callers telepathically underwater and form a bond that brings harmony and balance to their tribe.

But this balance has been skewed recently with local tribes selling off their land for logging and their reef is dying.

Izzy isn't male so how is it her uncle and cousin believe she is the one who can save them? And will she survive the deep dive into a treacherous cave system to restore this balance? Is it even worth the risk for this half Australian girl?

This is a terrific discussion starter for lower secondary students with themes of tradition, community, family responsibility and eco-tourism highlighted.

Reviewed by Rob

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

Saving Jazz

By Kate McCaffrey

Publisher: Fremantle Press

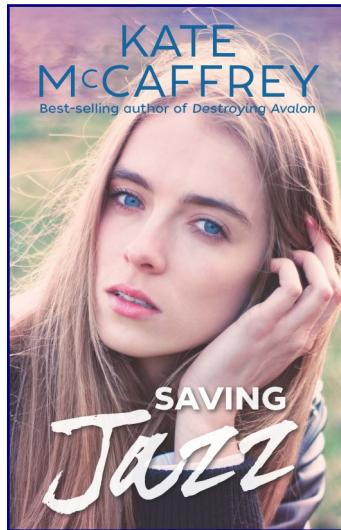
ISBN 9781925163582

\$19.99

Blurb:

Jasmine Lovely has it all – the looks, the grades, the friends. But when a house party spins out of control, Jazz discovers what can happen when your mistakes go viral ...

We know our kids are at risk of becoming victims of cyberbullying. But do we know how at risk they are of becoming perpetrators? This controversial new novel tackles cyberbullying from a whole new perspective.



Lamont Review:

Kate McCaffrey writes hard hitting, contemporary issue based novels and *Saving Jazz* is precisely that.

Jazz lives in a small, reasonably well off community north of Perth, where you make your own fun. This all gets out of control, when at an alcohol fuelled party, things are done to Jazz's best friend Annie that Jazz had a part in at the start.

When one of the boys boastfully posts photo's and eventually a video that lead to scorn for Annie and Jazz and rape charges for three people, including Jazz, their worlds are forever changed.

We see the result of this bad decision and its far reaching, devastating effects on all their lives.

The subject matter of this book probably makes it best suited for older secondary students, but in some ways, younger mature students would certainly understand the precautionary tale that is being presented.

Well written, insightful and wholly believable, *Saving Jazz* can change attitudes and actions that could indeed save some.

Reviewed by Rob

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

The Memory Book

By Lara Avery

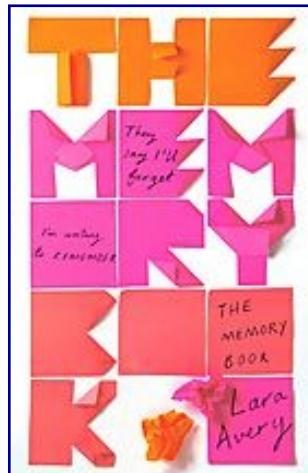
Publisher: Querus/Hachette

ISBN 9781784299248

\$17.99

Blurb:

Fans of *All the Bright Places* and *The Fault in Our Stars* will fall head-over-heels for this wonderfully original portrait of love and loss. Samantha McCoy has it all mapped out. First she's going to win the national debating championship, then she's going to move to New York and become a human rights lawyer. But when Sam discovers that a rare disease is going to take away her memory, the future she'd planned so perfectly is derailed before its started. Realising that her life won't wait to be lived, Sam sets out on a summer of firsts. The first party. The first rebellion. The first friendship. The last love.



Lamont Review:

The Memory Book is a wonderful new novel in the hugely popular 'sicklit' genre.

Samantha McCoy decides to write her own 'Memory Book' after she is diagnosed with an insidious, debilitating disease Niemann-Pick Type C. She hopes that this will help her remember things after her memory goes.

Sam is a not-very popular debating team member and valedictorian with high ambitions. This disease is bound to stop her dreams, but she wants to achieve everything possible and refuses to give in.

Through interactions with her family, an inspirational teacher and eventually two boyfriends, we discover her life dreams and unfortunately her dire health outlook.

There is an amount of swearing, but given the context of Sam's situation, I found it mostly appropriate.

This book will certainly resonate with fans of John Green. Sam is a feisty character who many readers will love. Her ambitions and will to go on are inspirational. I assure you it will hit you in the heart. HARD!

It will be best suited to a girls aged 15+.

Reviewed by Rob

Girl Out of Water

By Nat Luurtsema

Publisher: Walker Books

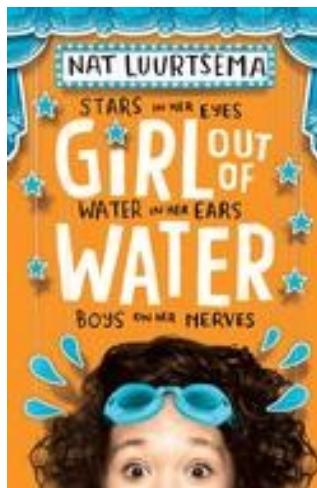
ISBN 9781406366525

\$16.99

Blurb:

Stars in her eyes, water in her ears, boys on her nerves... Lou Brown is out of her depth.

Lou Brown's life is going down the pan. Best friend Hannah sailed through the Olympic time trials and is off to her fancy-pants new swim training school, while Lou's own failure to qualify leaves her without a hobby or a friend. As Lou tries to navigate her post-swim world, a chance encounter with three boys with stars in their eyes takes her life in a surprising new direction. One that leads to a crazy world of underwater somersaults, talent show auditions, bitchy girls and one great big load of awkward boy chat.



Lamont Review:

Lou Brown is a swimmer. Or at least she used to be!

When she misses out on the Olympic trials and her best friend Hannah gets through, she finds herself completely lost and alone.

Hannah and Lou were inseparable and really only spent time with each other. But now with Hannah off at the training camp, where Lou should be too, she finds herself isolated and lost. What will she do without swimming? It was her life!

When she suddenly and unexpectedly finds herself training and helping three boys who have a crazy idea to go on Britain's Got Talent, Lou's world changes. She has a purpose - teach these dancing boys to swim so they can perform a synchronised swimming routine on TV.

But not all goes according to plan and Lou, normally the good girl of the family, finds herself in trouble, in more ways than one.

It is a fun read, but it is more than that. It has topics in it that many will relate to - overcoming disappointment, dealing with nasty girls, re-thinking your future, an unconventional family, accepting and being yourself and making friends.

Although I am sure boys would enjoy this one too, it is probably more suited to girls 14 +.

Reviewed by Sam

Songs That Sound Like Blood

By Jared Thomas

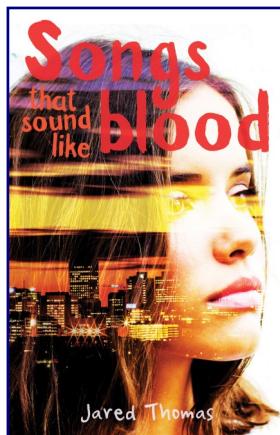
Publisher: Magabala Books

ISBN 9781922142658

\$14.99

Blurb:

Roxy May Reddings got music in her soul and songs in her blood. She lives in a hot dusty town and is dreaming big. She survives run-ins with the mean girls at high school, sings in her dad's band and babysits for her wayward aunt. But Roxy wants a new start. When she gets the chance to study music in the big city, she takes it. Roxy's new life, her new friends and her music collide in a way she could never have imagined. Being a poor student sucks... navigating her way through the pressure of a national music competition has knobs on it... singing for her dinner is soul destroying... but nothing prepares Roxy for her biggest challenge. Her crush on Ana, the local music journo, forces her to steer her way through a complex maze of emotions alien to this small town girl. Family and friends watch closely as Roxy takes a confronting journey to find out who the hell she is.



Lamont Review:

Roxy is one of those characters that you find yourself just wanting the best for.

She lives in Port Augusta with her Dad, who has raised her on his own since her Mum left when Roxy was small. He has given her a good life, even though things have not always been easy. They share a love of music and often play in a band together.

Roxy knows that her future lies in music and when she gets the chance to enrol at CASM, the Centre of Aboriginal Music at Adelaide University, she knows that this is what she needs to do. She just isn't sure how she is going to make it happen.

With the support of her Dad and with her talented friend Justin in tow, they head to Adelaide. General day to day living and adjusting to life in the big city is hard on them both. But this is just the start of Roxy's challenges and she is totally unprepared for what happens after she meets the beautiful and mysterious Ana. Could she really be falling in love with her?

Roxy has faced racism through her life and now she must face the consequences of admitting that she is gay. Will she be accepted by her family and friends and is she really ready to make this call?

This book does include problem drinking, sex and swearing, however, it all seems to fit within the story. It will be best suited for a mature female audience.

Reviewed by Sam