

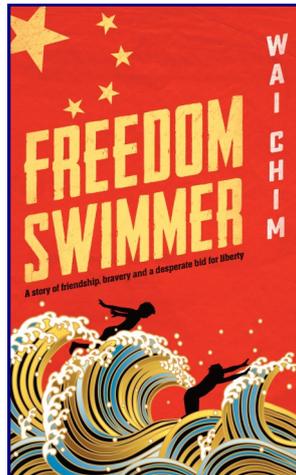
Freedom Swimmer

By Wai Chim
Publisher: Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781760113414
\$16.99

**SECONDARY
BOOK OF THE
MONTH**

Blurb:

Ming survived the famine that killed his parents during China's 'Great Leap Forward', and lives a hard but adequate life, working in the fields. When a group of city boys comes to the village as part of a Communist Party re-education program, Ming and his friends aren't sure what to make of the new arrivals. They're not used to hard labour and village life. But despite his reservations, Ming befriends a charming city boy called Li. The two couldn't be more different, but slowly they form a bond over evening swims and shared dreams... But as the bitterness of life under the Party begins to take its toll on both boys, they begin to imagine the impossible: freedom.



Lamont Review:

Freedom Swimmer takes us back to the incredibly hard times of Communist China in the 1960's and 1970's.

It is a story that will really open your eyes to a way of life that many of us who have never experienced living life outside of Australia can only imagine. Things were harsh and brutal, with very little food available.

The story is told through the eyes of both Ming, a boy from the village, and Li, who has come from his city life to further spread the word of their leader, Mao. Both boys begin to question all that they have been taught. But this way of thinking in Communist China is dangerous.

Ming dreams of a life with Fei, the young girl that crossed his path when he first found himself as an orphan. But there is little room for love and compassion in such a tough world.

When the boys decide to take the ultimate risk, they know that their lives will be forever changed, regardless of the outcome.

This is a wonderful historical story of courage in the face of adversity, following your dreams, perseverance and friendship.

It is a great read for all secondary students.

Reviewed by Sam

Frayed

By Kara Terzis

Publisher: Sourcebooks Inc.

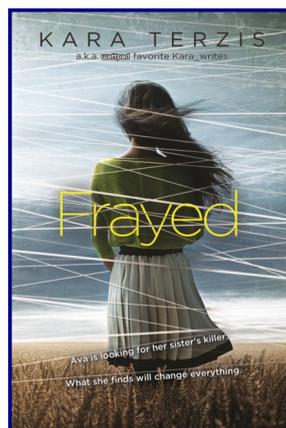
ISBN 9781492631736

\$15.99

Blurb:

Dear Kesley, My therapist tells me I should write you a letter. Like flushing all my thoughts and feelings out of my system and onto paper. I tell her it's a stupid idea. But here I am, writing a letter to a dead girl. Where do I start? Where did our story begin? From the moment you were born... or died? I'll start with the moment I found out the truth about you. Your lies and my pain. Because it always begins and ends with you. And that end began when Rafe Lawrence came back to town.

Ava Hale will do anything to find her sister's killer... although she'll wish she hadn't. Because the harder Ava looks, the more secrets she uncovers about Kesley, and the more she begins to think that the girl she called sister was a liar. A sneak. A stranger. And Kesley's murderer could be much closer than she thought...



Lamont Review:

The tale of a recently deceased sibling and the aftermath of those left behind seems to be a very popular basis for stories this year and there have been a number of books published in this genre. However *Frayed* is something a bit different as Ava is writing to her adored dead sister Kesley, while trying to uncover how and why she was murdered and who did it?

But the more Ava digs the more she uncovers things about Kesley's past that she had kept hidden. When Ava discovers Kesley was the leader of a group of nasty friends known as "KARMA" - as in Kesley, Amanda, Riley, May and Abbey - the group enlist Ava to help them find out more. But will Ava discover the truth? Does she even want to?

This is a really good psychological thriller with Ava having a tough childhood. Briefly, her Dad died in an accident, her Mum committed and suicide and now her sister has been murdered. However some of the characters should have been developed more to be really believable.

Overall, I liked the concept and those who like this genre will love this book. I won't spoil the ending, but I will say that I didn't see it coming and it was a great twist.

Best suited to readers 13 and up. There is nothing unsuitable (ie: sex, drugs or swearing) but the premise would be best suited to teenagers, particularly teenage girls.

Reviewed by Rob

Words in Deep Blue

By Cath Crowley

Publisher: Pan Macmillan

ISBN 9781742612386

\$18.99

Blurb:

This is a love story. It's the story of Howling Books, where readers write letters to strangers, to lovers, to poets, to words. It's the story of Henry Jones and Rachel Sweetie. They were best friends once, before Rachel moved to the sea. Now, she's back, working at the bookstore, grieving for her brother Cal. She's looking for the future in the books people love, and the words that they leave behind. Sometimes you need the poets... The new novel from the award-winning author of *Graffiti Moon*.



Lamont Review:

This beautifully written novel, and a classic story of unrequited love, set around a second-hand bookshop that maintains a Letter Library for people to underline, highlight or leave notes or letters in the pages for strangers or loved ones.

It is the story of Henry, our poet, whose parents own Howling Books. Henry works in the bookshop and nothing much happens in his life. Well, except for two girls. Rachel, his long term best friend, left town three years ago without saying goodbye and hasn't really communicated with Henry since. And then there's Amy, who stole Henry's heart in Year 9 and has been playing with it, like a kitten plays with a ball of wool, ever since.

Henry's parents are divorced and the shop is the centre of Henry and his Dad's life. But it's not making money and developers have moved into the area, and there is huge money is floating around. To make Henry's life even more complicated, something huge has happened to Rachel and now she's back. Not only is she back, but she's working in the bookshop cataloguing the Letter Library before the bookshop is sold. In the end, to sell or not to sell is Henry's decision. What will he choose?

This is a great 'finding yourself' novel with a bunch of superb characters. It's touching and poignant and I didn't put it down until it was finished. I loved it.

Written with alternating chapters from both Henry and Rachel, it will be loved by many teens 15+, but particularly those that love books.

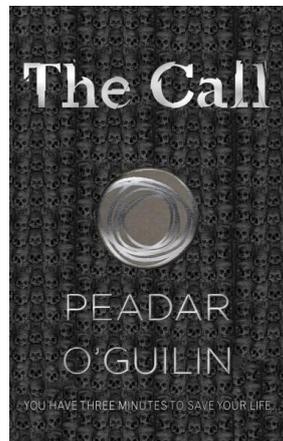
Reviewed by Rob

The Call

By Peadar O'Guilin
Publisher: David Fickling Books
ISBN 9781910989203
\$19.99

Blurb:

What if you only had three minutes to save your life and the clock is already counting down. Three minutes: you wake up alone in a horrible land. A horn sounds. You realize you've been Called. Two minutes: they're getting closer and despite all your training you're exhausted, you can't see anywhere to hide. One minute: you're glad you can run. Nessa can't, her polio twisted legs mean she'll never survive her Call, will she? Suddenly, a hand grabs your wrist and it's more painful than anything you have ever experienced before in your life... Times up. Could you survive The Call?



Lamont Review:

A fast-paced, edge of your seat, story for readers who like to be scared.

The Call. It will come for you, and you have three minutes to survive (or not). Imagine living everyday with that dread. Knowing that you will be taken, most likely be horrifically tortured and then killed, and that it could happen at any time.

One by one this is happening to everyone in Nessa's training school, and soon it will happen to her. Only it's even worse for her, because she had polio as a child and cannot run unaided. This will make survival impossible in a world where she must run, fight and evade the most evil faeries around... Even worse, although you're only missing from Earth for three minutes when you get The Call, your time in the other dimension lasts 24 hours. 24 hours on the run. What hope has Nessa got?

With a great mix of mythology, fantasy, and evil creatures determined to get vengeance this book was hard to put down, although I did need a few breaks to regain my thoughts!

It is a fantastic read that will appeal to fans of *The Hunger Games*, with a bit more horror, and is probably best suited to those 14 and older.

Reviewed by Rob

Becoming Aurora

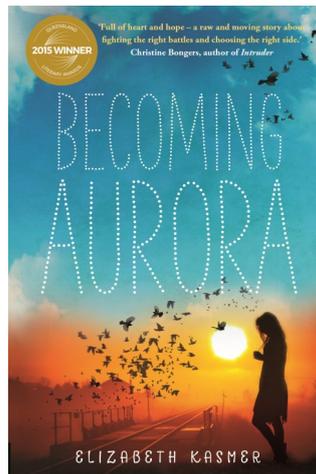
By Elizabeth Kasmer
Publisher: Text Publishing
ISBN 9780702254208
\$19.95

Blurb:

Tonight we are wolves. Our pack moves as one, past empty shop fronts and faded billboards.

Sixteen-year-old Rory is at a crossroads in her life. While her gang plans its next move in a racially motivated turf war, Rory is sentenced to spend her summer at an aged care facility. She's proud of taking the rap for a crime her gang committed and reading to a feisty old boxing champion isn't going to change that.

But what happens when Rory's path intersects with migrant boxer Essam, and she becomes the victim, not the perpetrator? Can she find the courage to face her past and become the girl her dad called Aurora?



Lamont Review:

Rory is a young girl who finds herself in trouble. It could be any teenager today, trying to find their way and fit in with the crowd, but ending up doing something stupid with serious consequences. For Rory, she finds herself having to do community service and is assigned to St Mary's, an aged care facility. Her job is to read to one of the patients in the high care ward, an old boxer named Jack.

What starts out as a chore builds to a beautiful relationship, and Rory and Jack both form an incredible bond and friendship, and end up helping each other.

The more you read, the more you come to understand Rory. Her character and the underlying reasons for her behaviour, and her sense of loss and guilt builds as the story goes on. She starts to question all that she has believed in, and also the friendships that she has always had, and through her new relationship with Essam, the young Iranian boxer who Jack coached, she really starts to change and grow.

This really is a fabulous read. There are strong themes of racism, family ties, loss and guilt, second chances, understanding and compassion, and above all, hope.

This book is suitable for all teenagers, particularly those trying to find their place and their true self.

Reviewed by Sam