



TEEN TITLES

OUR COVER BOOK

The Girls I've Been

by Tess Sharpe is reviewed on page 22 by Eva Hush from Liberton High School

TEEN TITLES 79

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Teen Titles aims to promote reading and literacy in a fun way that appeals to all young people. *Teen Titles* is committed to improving reading within Edinburgh and beyond.

Welcome to *Teen Titles 79*, our third issue of 2020/21. In this issue Elizabeth Wein answers questions about her novel *The Last Hawk*. We find out about butterflies on bicycles from Lauren James' novel *The Deep Sea Duke* and a Q&A with Kody Keplinger.

Cover: from *The Girls I've Been* by Tess Sharpe, reproduced by kind permission of Hodder Children's.

Escape, Connect, Relate



Reading is something you can do for empathy and to support your own mental health and wellbeing. It is a way to explore issues that might be affecting you or someone you know, issues like depression, anxiety, body image, bullying or bereavement. So, we have decided to flag up some of the books we have reviewed that we think do just that. If you look on the inside back page you'll see a list of them.

SCI-FI & FANTASY

Show Us Who You Are

Elle McNicoll
Knights Of £6.99 ISBN 9781913311131

The Pomegranate Institute promises to reunite families with their lost ones through holo-gram technology, but as Cora and Adrien get involved in its research they discover that some of its staff have very sinister intentions.

The topic of this book was interesting, with the Institute trying to make people 'perfect' by wiping out their flaws. Nobody is perfect, yet the doctors were so concerned with change that they failed to see the talents and abilities that people had within them. Cora and Adrien were great role-models – they enjoyed life and didn't let their diagnoses of autism/ADHD hold them back. The theme of grief was also well-handled and one which many teenagers can relate to. This book dealt with a lot of issues; it was

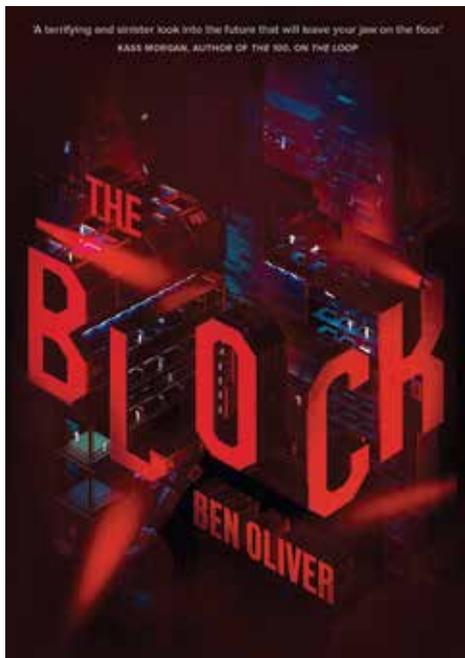


original, exciting to read – quite thrilling in parts – and really made me think about discrimination. I'd recommend it if you're looking for a story that is fun, mysterious and unpredictable.

ZUZANNA ZAHOROWICZ
St Thomas of Aquin's High

I really liked the slightly-futuristic vibe of this book and how it had people fighting to be accepted. The institute should have recreated people as they were, not tried to change them, and Cora and Adrien were right to challenge this. Cora was also dealing with her Mum's death – a situation experienced by many teenagers. I'd recommend this as an interesting and original read.

LUCIA MACFIE
St Thomas of Aquin's High



'vibrant'

The Block

Series: The Loop, no 2
Ben Oliver
Chicken House £7.99 ISBN 9781912626564

After an audacious breakout from prison, Luka realises that keeping himself hidden while attempting to find and defeat all-powerful Happy, is not an easy feat. He quickly realises that he may have to rely on help from old friends, if he's to stand any chance of succeeding at this mission.

This book certainly lives up to its predecessor, *The Loop*, as a sometimes sad yet personal take on the future. It follows Luka and some of his remaining friends trying to stay hidden from the powerful Artificial Intelligence, Happy. At the same time, he tries to keep many people alive, or at least, keep them from Happy's ideas

of what to do with survivors. The author uses effective language to create a vivid picture. The characters and story remain vibrant and the advancements in the plot are satisfying. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes developed adventure or science fiction. I am looking forward to a third instalment!

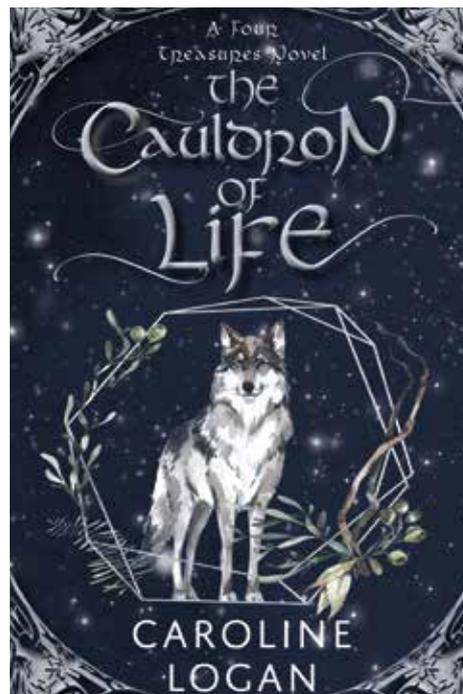
WILLIAM CURRIE
James Gillespie's High

The Cauldron of Life

Series: A Four Treasures Novel, no 2
Caroline Logan
Cranachan £8.99 ISBN 9781911279525

Faerie Queen has captured Harris. Ailsa is still trying to cope with revelations about her new identity, coupled with magical powers. She is questioning her whole identity and her judgement about good and evil. Yet she must go into the heart of Eilanmòr to rescue Harris. Self-discovery, loyalty, and love are some of the themes explored in this sequel to The Stone of Destiny.

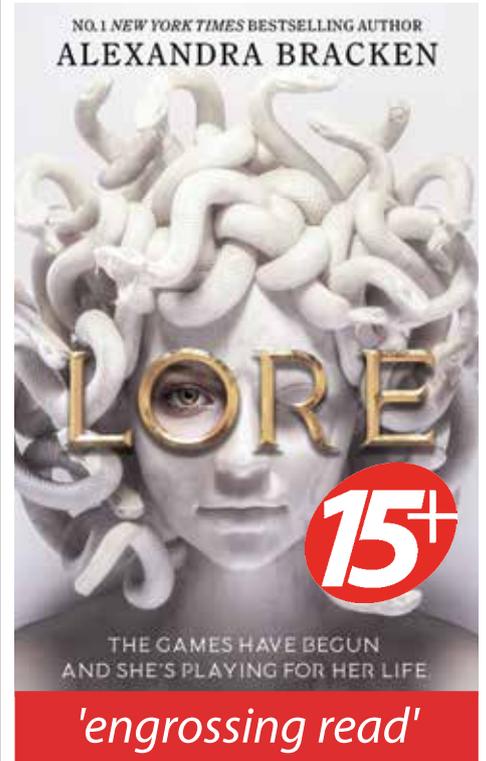
I love this book because it has a great plot and story to it, and the author put a lot of time and effort into it. I love how the characters each have their story explained in some way, and the novel does not just focus on one character. This makes you want to read on to find out what happened to a certain character in the book. I particularly love how more characters appear, and not just say one or two lines in the story. I really like Ailsa and Maalik. What I like about Ailsa is that she has a caring heart and really wants to help people even if she is at the risk of dying because of this.



'I love this book'

I also like how she has a mysterious past and an uncertain future. What I like about Maalik is that he has had a difficult past as he was betrayed by someone he trusted. If you are looking for a fantasy book with an amazing adventure, this is the book to read!

NAIA LEITH-TAYLOR
James Gillespie's High



Lore

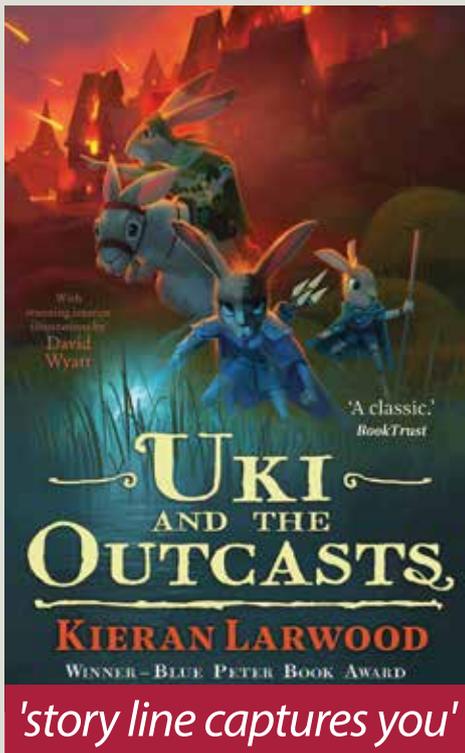
Alexandra Bracken
Quercus £8.99 ISBN 9781786541529

Every seven years Zeus plays a game of Agon. This week-long competition strips Greek gods of their powers and immortality and can be pursued by descendants of ancient bloodlines. If successful in capturing and killing them, the hunter will receive their powers. Meet Lore, living in modern day New York! Will her alliance with Athena allow her to take down the god who killed her family?

Well developed, entertaining, and diverse cast of characters in modern-day New York trying to escape a Hunger Games like plot make for an engrossing read. This standalone book doesn't fall prey to common 'chosen one' tropes often found in novels similar to this, and instead Lore and her friends have to work for their successes. The world building is unique, and enjoyable once you get past the info-dumps, and it is not afraid to show the brutality of the Greek myths. The book deals with some mature themes that are a major part of the book.

EMILY KELT
Craigmount High

SCI-FI & FANTASY



Uki and the Outcasts

Series: The Five Realms, no 4
Kieran Larwood
Faber & Faber £7.99 ISBN 9780571342808

In the fourth book of the series, Uki, our rabbit hero, is tormented by the other rabbits due to his piebald appearance. Joined by an assassin who won't kill, an extremely short rabbit who rides an extremely fast jerboa, can they save the twin cities of Syn and Nys from the spirit of war?

I thought that this book was an excellent way of portraying how heroes don't have to come from heroic backgrounds and they can be from really sad beginnings too; they can have faced a lot of awful things before discovering that they are in fact braver than many others because of the amount of trauma they have had to work through. The story line captures you from the beginning and doesn't even let you go once you have finished reading the book because you are waiting for more. I would recommend this as a dark book disguised as something for children. I would love to read more of this series!

CHIARA MARINO
Holy Rood High

The Icebear Miracle

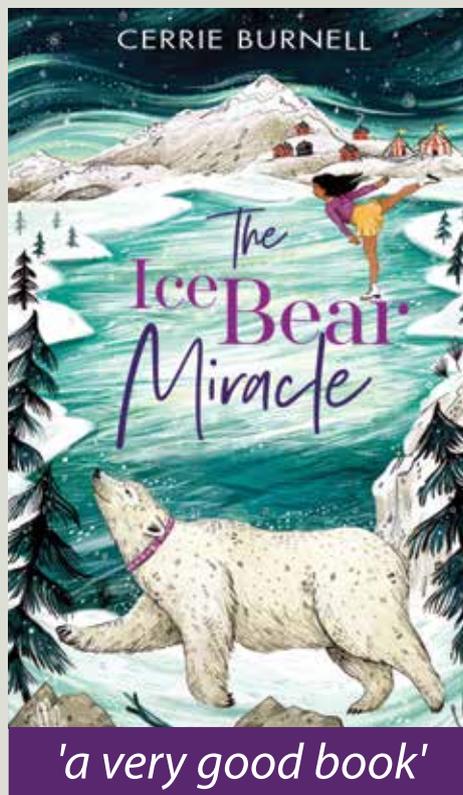
Cerrie Burnell
OUP £6.99 ISBN 9780192767561

Marv lives on the Isle of Bears in the snowy north and loves his ice hockey. Attacked by a bear when little only he remembers a baby crying. Years later on an ice hockey

tour he visits a travelling carnival whose star attraction is an amazing skater with her polar bear partner. Marv can't believe what and who he sees.

So, this book is actually a very good book even though it doesn't look interesting. Even though you may not be hooked straight at the beginning, you become engaged eventually, plus the fictional people in the book's story are interesting. Anyways, I'll rate it six out of ten because it's 1% higher than decent (good) and it lost a mark because I wish there was more near the end and that the grey-haired lady had a backstory in the book. I was the first person to read the book and although it looks like it is for kids – it is good.

COMFORT PHIRRI
Liberton High



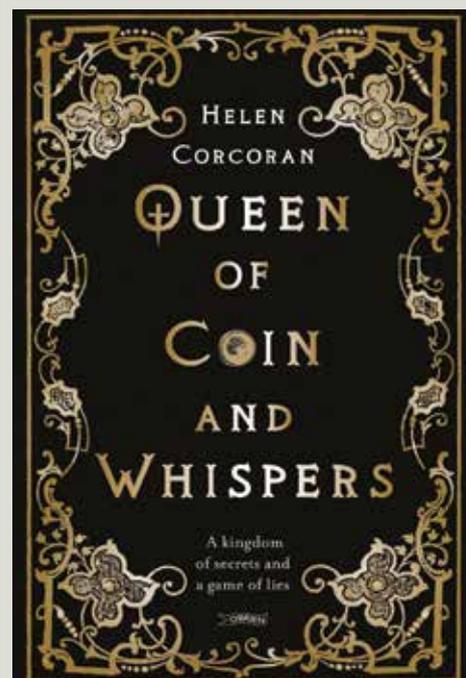
The Queen of Coin and Whispers

Helen Corcoran
O'Brien Press £11.99 ISBN 9781788491181

When Lia becomes Queen on the death of her uncle she is thrown into a world of secrets, politics and mistrust. What must she do to keep herself in favour with the court? Who can she trust? She appoints Xania as her spymaster, who ultimately wants retribution for the murder of her father and together they embark on a dangerous liaison. As the plot thickens with murder, political upheaval and treason will their relationship survive?

I loved *The Queen of Coin and Whispers*. It is a great book that mixes romance and adventure perfectly. There are so many amazing plot twists that literally made me gasp. It has great characters, some of which you love and others that you absolutely hate! I also really enjoyed the way the book switches points of views every chapter as it allows you to get to know both characters better and understand why they do what they do. I'd recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a good romance but also loves more action-packed books.

JENNA BRABAN
Liberton High



'amazing plot twists'

Shipwreck Island

Series: Orphans of the Tide, no 2
Struan Murray
Penguin £7.99 ISBN 9780241384435

Fleeing from the city having defeated The Enemy, Ellie and Seth arrive by raft to an island which feels like paradise, or is it? Ruled by a Queen, a massive power struggle on the island puts their lives in danger once more. Gods, Vessels and amazing inventions all play their part in this fantastical world with an edge of menace.

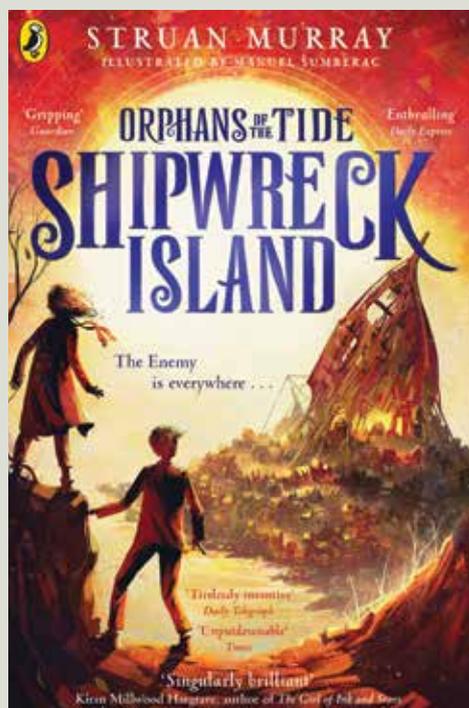
I really enjoyed this book – every chapter was exciting and made me want to read more.

AMY MUIR
Liberton High

Shipwreck Island has a range of characters each with their own traits that can relate to the actual world. For example, the queen feels she has to show herself to the Island as an elegant and divine figure, not really being her

true self. Which in a way reminds us that in the real world you shouldn't hide who you really are as you need to be yourself to be happy. I think that the atmosphere of the Island stays exciting and picturable in your head throughout the book giving the effect of being on holiday somewhere abroad and new to you. I like how even being a fantasy story, you still get a sense of a real and structured world, laying out a unique and peculiar plot with unexpected twists and turns that hook you in to keep you reading. In my opinion the first dozen chapters were a bit dry and didn't really give me the urge to keep reading, but sticking with it, I was glad I continued because the not so great start turned into a really enjoyable and memorable story. This was a bizarre, unique and unexpected read.

LUCA MOURAD
Drummond Community High

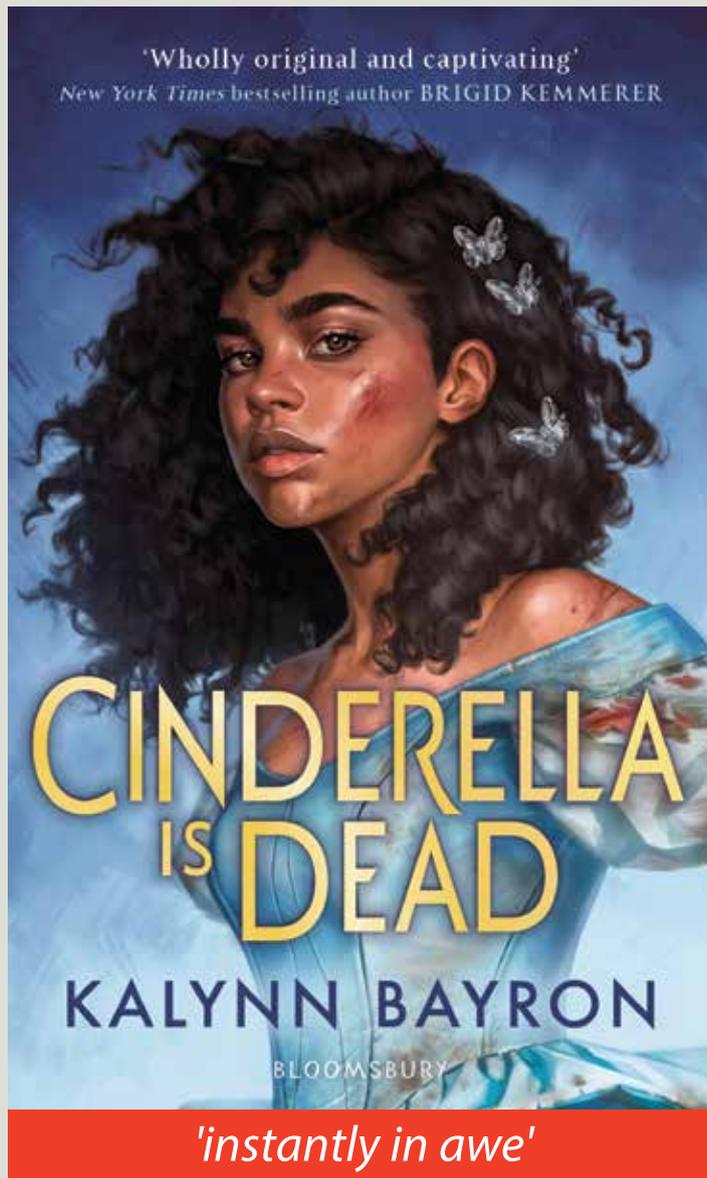


'unexpected read'

Cinderella is Dead

Kalynn Bayron
Bloomsbury £7.99 ISBN 9781526621979

200 years after Cinderella lived happily ever after, Lille is under the tyranny of King Manford, where The Lille Decrees have stripped women of their human rights in this patriarchal society. Sophia rebels against the expectation that she will be chosen by her husband at the annual ball, for if she fails to catch a husband 3 times, her life will become forfeit. Sophia, however, doesn't want a husband. She wants Erin, her best friend and love, she desires freedom, to love whom she chooses and to break down their corrupt society.



'instantly in awe'

I have really enjoyed reading and re-reading *Cinderella is Dead*. It is a great book about equality and freedom. One of my favourite characters was Amina because she was quite rude and mysterious. I was very sad about what happened to Erin and how she never felt safe enough to accept who she was. On the whole, it is a great book and I would recommend it to anyone who likes fantasy, equality or plot-twists.

MARA O'KANE
Forrester High

When I started reading, I was instantly in awe. The writing was piercing, the words sharp like a needle and I loved how the first chapters built this cruel, patriarchal world in which it was impossible for a young, queer woman to strive or live without fear. It kept me turning the pages, and I loved the main characters, and found the romance to be really sweet as well. I also think this is just such an interesting use of the Cinderella story. I loved this re-imagining of the classic tale.

SAMPOORNA BISWAS
Forrester High

After a terrific argument at school with Maeve, her ex-friend Lily has vanished. Classmates declare Maeve a witch and insist her tarot readings are more sinister than an innocent card game. Maeve, Fiona and Roe attempt to find Lily whilst growing homophobia encouraged by a creepy organisation influence the town.

I never finished this book, because of exams, but from what I read it was really enjoyable. My favourite character was Maeve because of her new-found passion for tarot cards. I liked how she was able to make a friend through doing readings at her school and she finally felt noticed for doing something she likes.

KAITLIN GRIEVE
Forrester High

I found this book moving and very emotional as the girls had to be forced to marry a man, which shows how sometimes people cannot be able to do what they want. But I really enjoyed reading the book and would recommend it to other people to read as it is interesting.

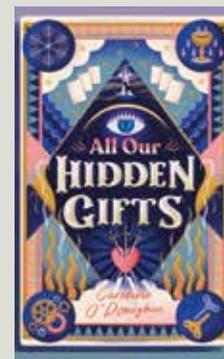
GRACE CHUKWU
Forrester High

I liked the story of *Cinderella is Dead*, the characters were very interesting and there were some great plot twists. It is also very easy to read. There is a good mystery that was fun to figure out.

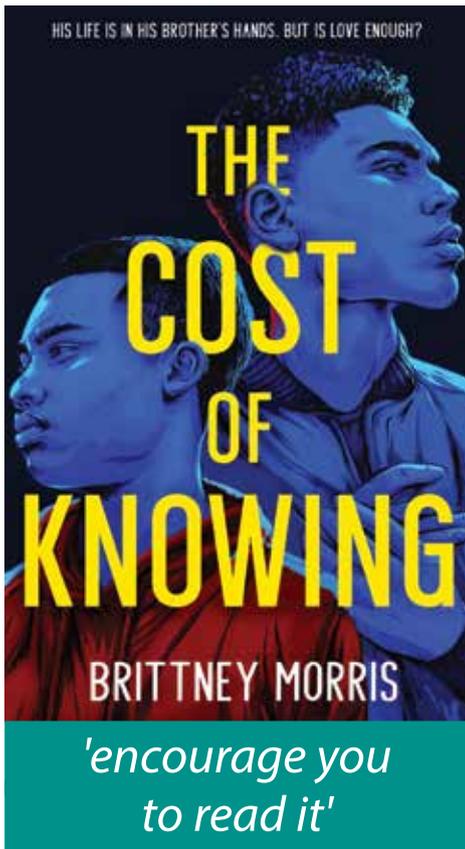
RICHA SINGH
Boroughmuir High

All Our Hidden Gifts

Caroline O'Donoghue
Walker £7.99
ISBN 9781406393095



SCI-FI & FANTASY



The Cost of Knowing

Brittney Morris
Hodder Children's £7.99 ISBN 9781444951745

When Alex and his brother Isaiah are orphaned, Alex begins to see visions of the near future whenever he touches an object. Keeping his curse secret amid growing racist tension in the community, he pushes away first his brother and then his girlfriend, unable to control his distracting power. Tensions mount to a crescendo when people are targeted at a concert and the ensuing tragedy enables Alex to discover why his powers exist and to come to terms with them.

This is a book that you can sink into – it gave me a place to rest for a while and get truly invested in something that I could relax into and not worry. Alex, the protagonist, helped me do this by telling you it's OK to get worried sometimes. In the beginning, Alex comes across as a normal teenager. Yes, a teenager with visions that tell him the future, but a normal teenager. I must admit that at the start of the book I was beginning to lose interest; a normal boy who is just trying to find himself in society, sounds boring right? But I liked the way that Alex found a way past that as he begins to see that he will lose what matters most to him, in a way he is too scared to reveal. Even to himself. This book also covers toxic masculinity, giving light to this and other pressing matters like racism, anxiety, and loss. Although I got off to a rocky start with this book, I encourage you to read it as I know

that I have found a different way to look at life, to see hope in the darkest scenarios and not to worry about the future; it is better to wait and see.

BELLA BROADHURST
Boroughmuir High

The Infinity Files

S M Wilson
Usborne £7.99 ISBN 9781474972208

When ace pilot Ash Young fails her final exam, her dreams of revenging her family, casualties of an interplanetary war, is over. She is, however, selected for a strange and secret post – Guardian of the Infinity Files. Her role is to take and return objects of immense power from civilizations across the galaxy. An encounter leads her to question this role and she enlists the help of her friends at the Star Corporation Academy to discover the truth.



'really gripping'

I love, love, loved *The Infinity Files* It was really gripping and kept me reading from start to finish. I think my favourite character was Orius because he wasn't perfect. Towards the end, when the academy was being attacked, it was a bit confusing, but the rest was really good. I would definitely recommend this book and can't wait for the next one to come out!

MARA O'KANE
Forrester High

Amari and the Night Brothers

B B Alston
Egmont £12.99 ISBN 9781405298179

Amari's loving, caring, genius brother Quinton went missing six months ago. Everyone thinks he's dead, but Amari knows that's not true. When things go wrong and some bullies get her kicked out of school, she finds a suitcase Quinton left for her. Inside, is a magical clue on his whereabouts. This opens a whole new world for Amari and she's determined to save her brother.

This book was a great fantasy adventure with a fresh and relatable protagonist. The theme of discrimination was dealt with really well, by using parallels in Amari's life. Where she faced racism in her everyday life, she experienced

prejudice for her abilities in the supernatural world. I particularly loved the very end, it conveyed the message of the book brilliantly and tied everything up really well. Altogether a fun and enjoyable read with really good characters. I can't wait for the next one!

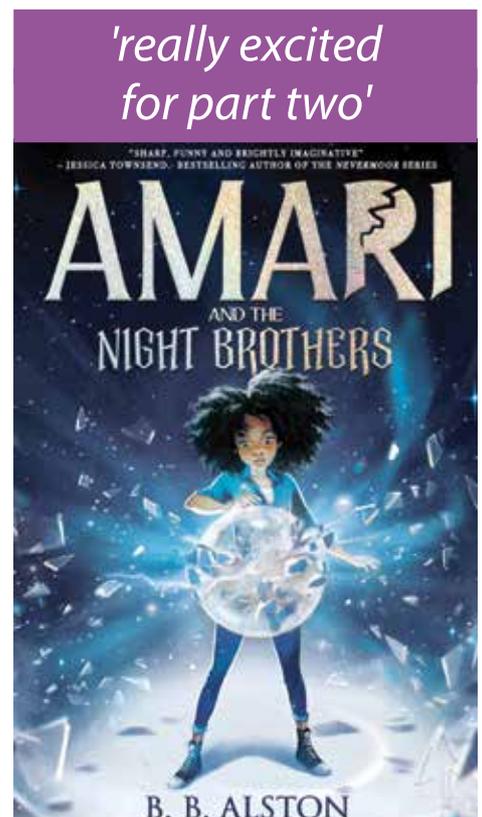
ROSIE BRETT
Broughton High

It was a really exciting adventure. I really enjoyed Amari's story; the twist in the climax was completely unexpected. Some of the changes in the characters were a huge surprise. How the author connected discrimination towards Amari (in the real world for being from a financially poor background, and in the supernatural world for being a magician) was interesting. The way the story developed I felt was quite believable. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in adventure mixed with magic, while portraying the strength of friendship, and bonds of the blood. Really excited for part two.

CAROLINE KANNAMPUZHA
Broughton High

Amari is a strong wielded girl who won't give up on finding her brother no matter what her classmates think of her. She often has to face racist behaviour and so can stand up for herself when being challenged for her powers in the supernatural world. This book is great for people who like adventure and magic, gives some Harry Potter vibes with the scenery but with its own beautiful way. Great book!

ORLA MUNIZ
Broughton High





We Go On Forever

Sarah Govett
Marotte £7.99

ISBN 978191615287

Arthur has a brain tumour – he is dying in his current body but it is no big deal. The year is 2089, he has high status due to his dad's important job and science developments mean that people are now immortal: all he has to do is transition into a new body. Alba,

on the other hand, lives in a very strictly controlled community and she is desperate to be chosen to be an Apprentice and to travel to the Research City to continue important work cleansing the Wilderness of radioactive waste. When they finally meet, two worlds collide.

I loved this book. My favourite character was Alba as I liked her personality and her goals in the book. The book is very addictive, I couldn't

put it down. I wanted to know what was going to happen next. It is a very exciting dystopian thriller. It is a book with a very amazing storyline. I would recommend this book for 13+ as it has a very heartfelt storyline that younger people might not understand.

ABIGAIL STRACHAN
Broughton High

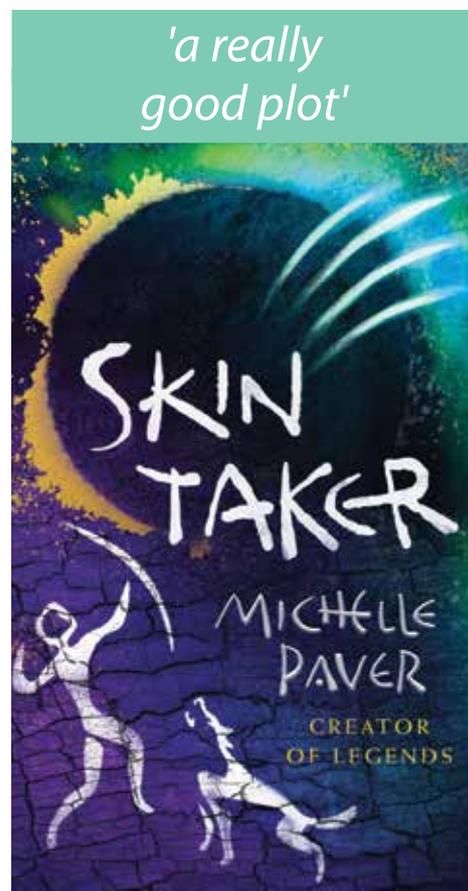
Skin Taker

Series: Chronicles of Ancient Darkness, no 8
Michelle Paver
Zephyr £12.99 ISBN 9781789542417

In this latest instalment, disaster has struck the forest. With their home destroyed and rumours of demons rife, the clans don't know who or what to trust. Into this chaos come Torak, Renn and Wolf – can they see beyond the rumours to figure out the riddles, persist when all is against them, and reunite the clans?

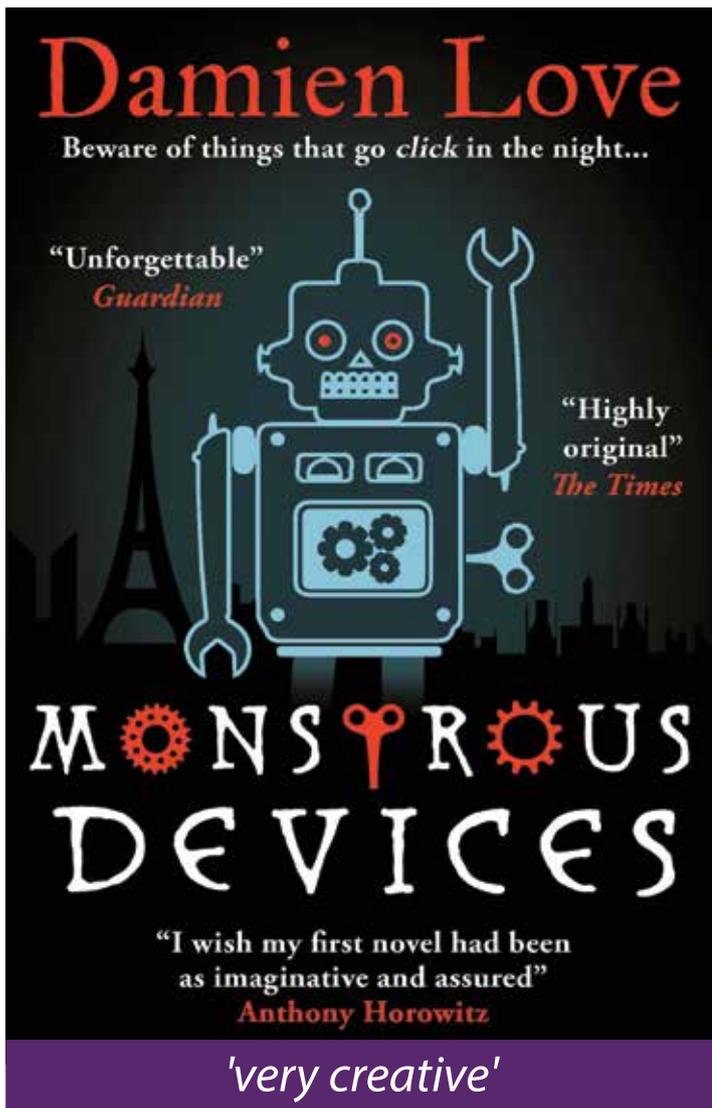
I really liked this book! It was really encapsulating because it had a really good plot. I wasn't able to read book seven in the series, but it didn't matter because you can see what's going on because Michelle Paver is really good at writing in an interesting way. People who either like fantasy or who are animal lovers will really enjoy this. I really liked this book!

SEVIN AL
Castlebrae Community High



'a really good plot'

SCI-FI & FANTASY



Monstrous Devices

Damien Love
Rock the Boat £12.99 ISBN 9781786077523

Strange things start happening when Alex receives an unexpected parcel containing a robot. His grandfather arrives whisking him off to Paris and Prague where they enter a dark, magical world hunted by assassins; how long will his grandfather's powers protect them, and can Alex keep the robot from falling into the wrong hands?

I found this book very creative. It's a dark science-fiction fantasy. The plot is good because it isn't like another book about robots although it seems like it is in the beginning. The story is almost like a comic in the way events happen and how the characters react to things because the plot suddenly gathers pace. I think it's a very good book and is rather funny when I think of the grandfather in battle with the assassins. I especially like the grandfather character because he's a calming, funny, father figure to Alex.

JAI HOUGHTON-HOLMAN
Drummond Community High

Maggie Blue and the Dark World

Anna Goodall
Guppy £12.99
ISBN 9781913101312

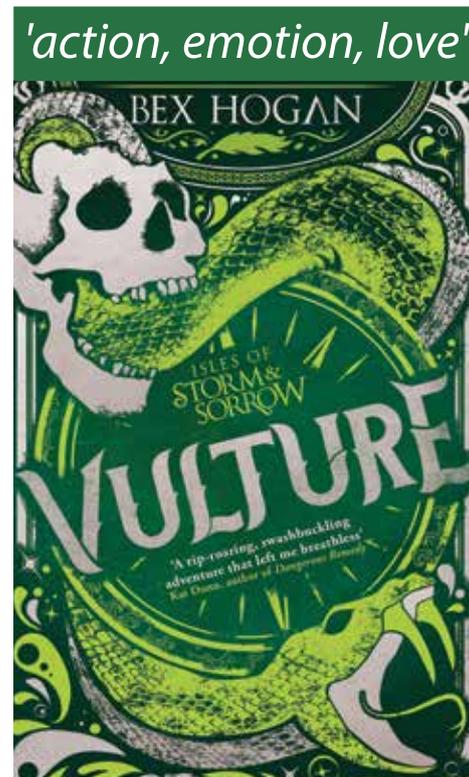
Maggie lives with her eccentric aunt as her mum can't cope and her dad has left. A strong-minded, lonely character, Maggie watches her school enemy vanish through a portal into another world. She enters this menacing world where happiness is bought at the expense of others and finally escapes with the help of her friend, Hoagy, the cat – with whom she can converse!

I don't normally read fantasy books, but I thought it would be good as I liked the blurb. I read a third of the book and then



lost interest. I did enjoy reading the parts of the book when Hoagy was in the story as he was my favourite character.

RENEE HO
Drummond Community High



Vulture

Series: Isles of Storm and Sorrow, no 3
Bex Hogan
Hachette £7.99 ISBN 9781510105874

Marianne has done the unthinkable: she's passed the test and is now a Mage. She finally has the power to save the Islands. But her powers are difficult to tame, and it is even harder to quench her thirst for revenge against all those who have hurt her in the past. In this last book of the trilogy, Marianne will have to navigate her trauma and be true to her words: reunite the Twelve Isles.

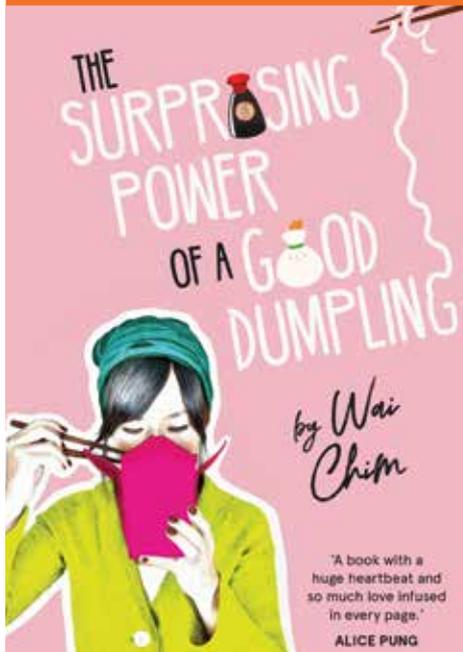
I really enjoyed *Vulture*. I loved reading about the world of the Twelve Isles and the main character, Marianne. I absolutely loved how Bex Hogan has combined both pirates and magic together in one great story. I personally have never read a book that combines these themes in such a great way, Bex Hogan has done a great job! I would highly recommend you read this series if you love YA fantasy stories filled with action, emotion, love, magic and pirates! (Who doesn't love the sound of that!?)

KATIE MCWILLIAMS
Firhill High



FOCUS ON FAMILY

'I never got bored'



The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling

Wai Chim
Allen & Unwin £6.99 ISBN 9781911631538

Anna has a lot on her plate – looking after her younger siblings and juggling schoolwork with care of her unstable mother.

Anna has a lot of responsibilities for her age, cooking and caring for the rest of her family when she should be the one being supported. The demands on her, and the expectations of her father, seem overwhelming yet she manages to stay strong. The book covers many hard topics such as mental health, exam pressure and holding down a job whilst still at school. I thought it was a great book. It made me feel many different emotions and I never got bored.

MONTANA FITZNER
St Thomas of Aquin's High

This book shows how an immigrant girl struggles to fit in at her new school where people are slow to accept and like her. She also has problems at home, but realises if she doesn't help out, things could be even worse. Despite all this, there are lots of 'ups' in Anna's life, food being one of them; I liked the descriptions of what she was cooking and the scene where she showed Rory (her boyfriend) how to eat a dumpling properly. I also thought it was clever to include food in the book's cover. I don't usually read books about relationships, but there was a lot that teenagers could identify with in this one.

SARA BEST-SOLORZANO
St Thomas of Aquin's High

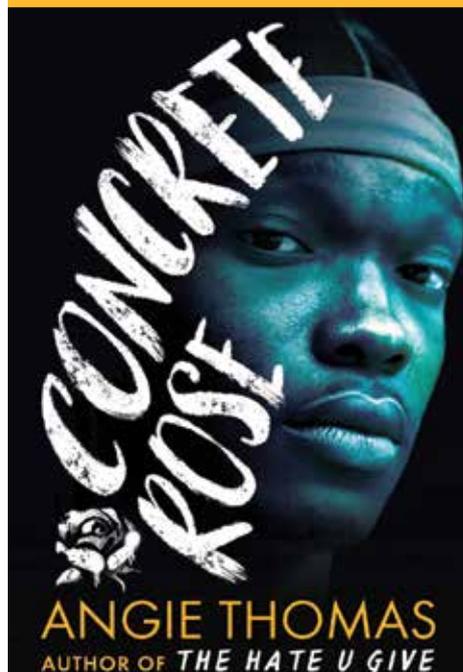
Concrete Rose

Angie Thomas
Walker £7.99 ISBN 9781406384444

Maverick Carter's life growing up is not easy. His father is in prison and his mum works two jobs trying to make ends meet. Maverick feels he must help his mum and if dealing drugs is the only way open to him, so be it! Until something he hadn't planned happens. When Maverick finds out he's about to become a father, suddenly his choices don't seem so clear-cut.

Concrete Rose, centred around Maverick Carter, is a prequel *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas. Maverick copes with being a teen father whilst attempting to abandon his drug dealing lifestyle. The characters and community you're introduced to in this book are full of life in a way I hadn't experienced before. I honestly felt like I was interacting with the characters on a real

'it is truly brilliant'



and personal level, each of them with their own motives, and I really enjoyed it. Even if you aren't reading this for the extra *The Hate You Give* love, I truly think you'll enjoy it as a story on its own, as it is truly brilliant! This novel is about fatherhood and manhood. Even if those topics don't intrigue you, I think you would enjoy the author's brutal yet empathic way of telling stories.

CALEB JEAVONS
James Gillespie's High

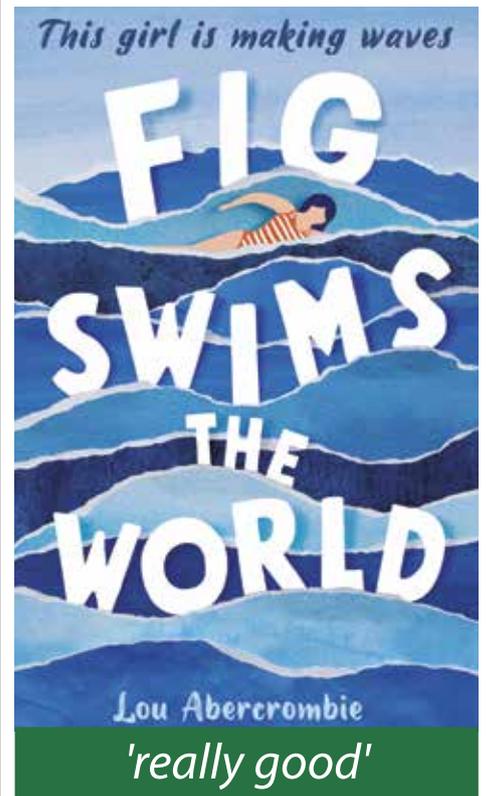


Fig Swims the World

Lou Abercrombie
Stripes £7.99 ISBN 9781788951531

Fig runs away from her overbearing mother, Mubla, to swim her way around the world. There are just a few things she needs to sort out first; like learning how to swim, getting a fake passport and borrowing Mubla's credit card. Fig begins to overcome her fears and anxiety as she meets each obstacle head on to complete her list.

I thought that this was really good, and I liked that Fig was doing her own thing. I liked the way the book showed you her text messages and email and the pictures all made it more interesting to read. But I wanted to read more about her swimming and learn about her training and stuff. Those bits were too short and over too quickly. I thought Fig was a realistic character. She wasn't unusual in any way, and I really didn't like Mubla at all as she was so pushy.

ZOE GREENSHIELDS
Forrester High



'Take responsibility for your own actions' – Elizabeth Wein

Elizabeth Wein was interviewed by Emily Telford from Balerno High about her latest book *The Last Hawk*.

Q You have written several other books about Nazi Germany. Why do you enjoy writing so much about this subject?

A What my books have in common is that they're almost all about young women involved in aviation, usually as pilots. I've written about British, American, Russian, and Polish women flying planes in World War II, and I wrote *The Last Hawk* because I thought that it would be interesting to see what German women aviators were doing at the same time. As to why I like writing about women pilots, it's because I am one! I got a private pilot's license at the Scottish Aero Club, near Perth, in 2003. I became fascinated with the history of women and flight while I was learning to fly myself. There are so many obstacles to overcome, and I love the amazing stories of the heroic things that women did during World War II. It's true that I've written a book about the women's concentration camp run by the Nazis at Ravensbrueck (*Rose Under Fire*) and I've written a book about Resistance spies in

Nazi-occupied France, but *The Last Hawk* is really my first book about Nazi Germany.

Q Why did you feel it was important for Ingrid to have a stammer?

A About the time that I began writing this story, I'd read a few historical novels in which I felt that the author was confusing 'job' with 'character' and I realised that I was about to do the same thing – write a book about a German girl who was a pilot, as if being a pilot was all she needed to define her as a person. I realised that she needed to have other things going on in her life to make her a compelling character – her love of reading and her love of birds, for example. I thought that it would be an interesting contrast to have a girl who found it difficult to communicate with other people who was also very talented as a pilot. I didn't realise, when I gave her this characteristic, that in Nazi Germany, the stammer might also put her in danger. (I always do say that 'Plot is character, character is plot!')

ELIZABETH WEIN

Q Does the title of the book have a significant meaning?

A Well, I'd written two other books for Barrington Stoke about young Russian and Polish women flying in World War II, and they are called *Firebird* and *White Eagles*. So I wanted something that would go along with the bird theme. *Firebird* is a Russian fairy tale, and *White Eagles* is the Polish Air Force, so *Hawk* seemed appropriate for my story of a German pilot – hawks are considered warlike, and it is also the name of the glider that Ingrid flies.

Q Is there any message you want the reader to take away from the book, or do you just want to educate young people about the history of Nazi Germany?

A The message that I would love for readers to take away from all my books is always the same: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN ACTIONS. That's what Ingrid has to learn: that the authority she trusts in is corrupt and evil, and that she has to take action to oppose that evil. In Ingrid's case, it's a huge decision, but we all have to make small decisions every day that require us to accept responsibility. I don't want to tell any of my readers how to live their lives: I just want them to take control of themselves and fight for what they believe in. And not to be afraid to recognize when you are wrong! That is the hardest thing to do. But change is always possible!

The Last Hawk

Elizabeth Wein
Barrington Stoke £7.99 ISBN 9781781129555

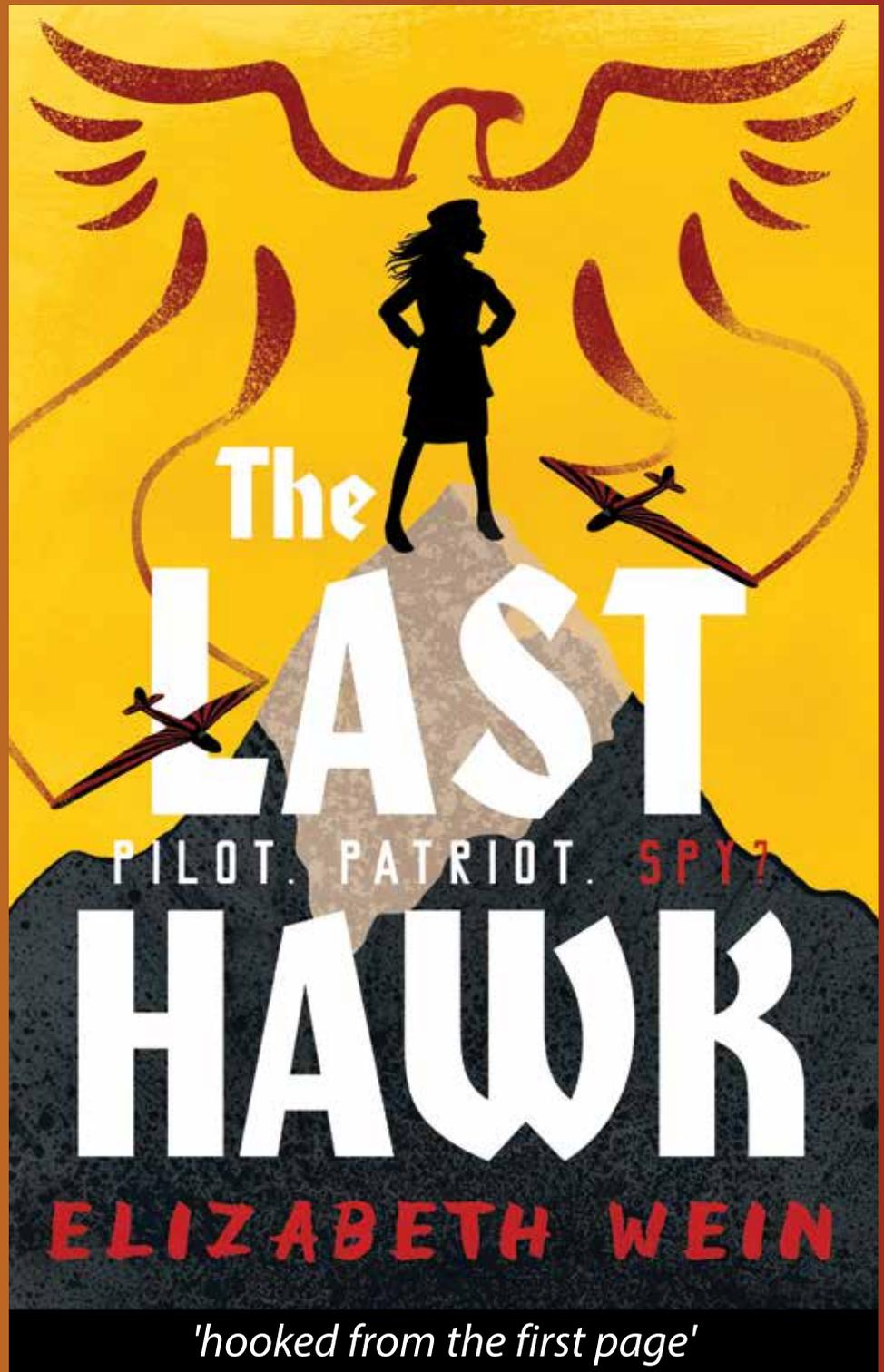
Ingrid lives in fear in Nazi Germany – she has a stammer and she and her parents know that if the authorities decide that she is disabled, she could be sent away and persecuted. But Ingrid is also a talented pilot and when she is given the chance to work with the famous test pilot Hanna Reitsch and travel with her on a propaganda tour, it seems like all of Ingrid's problems are solved.

The book doesn't have that much detail because Ingrid doesn't say much and it is summarizing how she got somewhere, despite this I really enjoyed reading it, I found it really exciting and I could barely put it down.

IDA WHITE
Broughton High

This book had potential, but I felt it was cut short by a cliff-hanger ending. Personally I prefer longer books, but compared to other short stories I have read it wasn't the best. It did deal well with important themes and Ingrid was a good main character, but overall I was a little disappointed by this book.

ROSIE BRETT
Broughton High



I was hooked from the first page, as the novel instantly made me care about the characters. After realising how much danger Ingrid was in, I became so invested in her and was desperate to find out what happened next. The author uses the level of danger to drive the plot forward, as well as showing us how Ingrid's character grows throughout. Whilst the book is short, it feels longer (in a good way) as you become so immersed in the plot.

EMILY TELFORD
Balerno High

I enjoyed the book as it is reader inclusive and easy to keep up with. The writer, however, explores themes in the book more fitting for older teenagers. Throughout the book there is a clear and consistent theme of fear, I thought that the theme was very fitting for the book as it helps the reader to understand what it must have been like living in Nazi Germany through the eyes of a teenage girl with a stammer.

NADIA KONOWALCZYK
Drummond Community High

PAST TIMES

Deep Secret

Berlie Doherty
Andersen Press £7.99 ISBN 9781783449026

This book focuses on the residents of a village whose homes and livelihoods are threatened by plans to build a new reservoir and on the secrets kept by some of those concerned.

This book had positives – it was based on real events and gave some insight into stately homes and how staff there were treated; it was also good to learn about the relationship between Madeleine and Grace, as some of my friends are twins. The cover of the book added to the mystery and atmosphere. I did find it strange that the twins' Mum couldn't tell them apart and it was too far-fetched that she didn't realise which one had died. I also felt that the story started well, but became a bit dull. I'm glad I tried this book, but it wasn't really my type of thing.

MARY MACAULEY
St Thomas of Aquin's High



'intriguing'

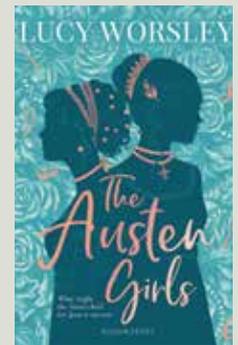
I usually read books with more action, but I liked that this story was based on real events and showed how life was in the past. I found it quite intriguing. I liked the 'otherworlds' element and also the spiritual parts where Maddy heard her sister's voice in the water. I also thought it was a really cool idea to have the twins mixed up.

SERAFINA RAMOS
St Thomas of Aquin's High

The Austen Girls

Lucy Worsley
Bloomsbury £7.99 ISBN 9781526605450

Lucy Worsley, the television historian, has written this book about two nieces of Jane Austen, the famous nineteenth century author of *Pride and Prejudice*. In it she creates a fictional tale about the real-life



'a good read'

events that took place over the year when the two of them were first presented in society.

The Austen Girls is a good read for people interested in old-fashioned and Jane Austen-related stories. Although it has some things which in a modern world are found to be weird and unsatisfactory, one must remember the time and period in which it was set and its social norms. At certain parts of the book, I found the idea that she had to get married to whoever the guy was really disgusting, but again that's how it was back then. I felt sorry for Jane Austen

because she's a wonderful woman writer but in those times, she had to keep it a secret because otherwise the independence she gained from her writing because of the money would have been taken away from her.

EVELYN MARINO
Holy Rood High

Scientists and Their Stories

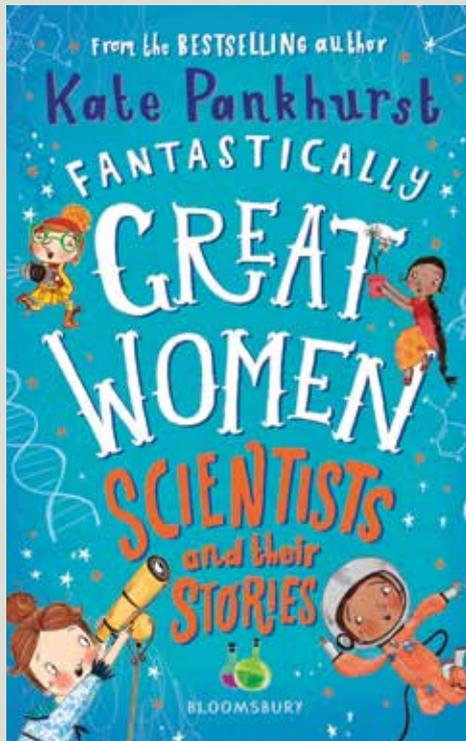
Series: Fantastically Great Women
Kate Pankhurst
Bloomsbury £6.99 ISBN 9781526615336

True stories covering a mix of well-known and more obscure female scientists with intriguing lives. Illustrations on every page

and a variety of fonts to keep you reading the pages of these inspiring stories.

This book is incredibly informative and is jam-packed with facts about less known female scientists. It is very easy to read because the text's size and font varies throughout the book. There are lots of beautiful illustrations and there is a glossary at the back if you don't know what something means. The art style and layout are visually appealing. This book is especially good for people who like science and girl power themed books. In three words this book is informative, fascinating and eye-catching.

MIRIAM QAYUM
Drummond Community High



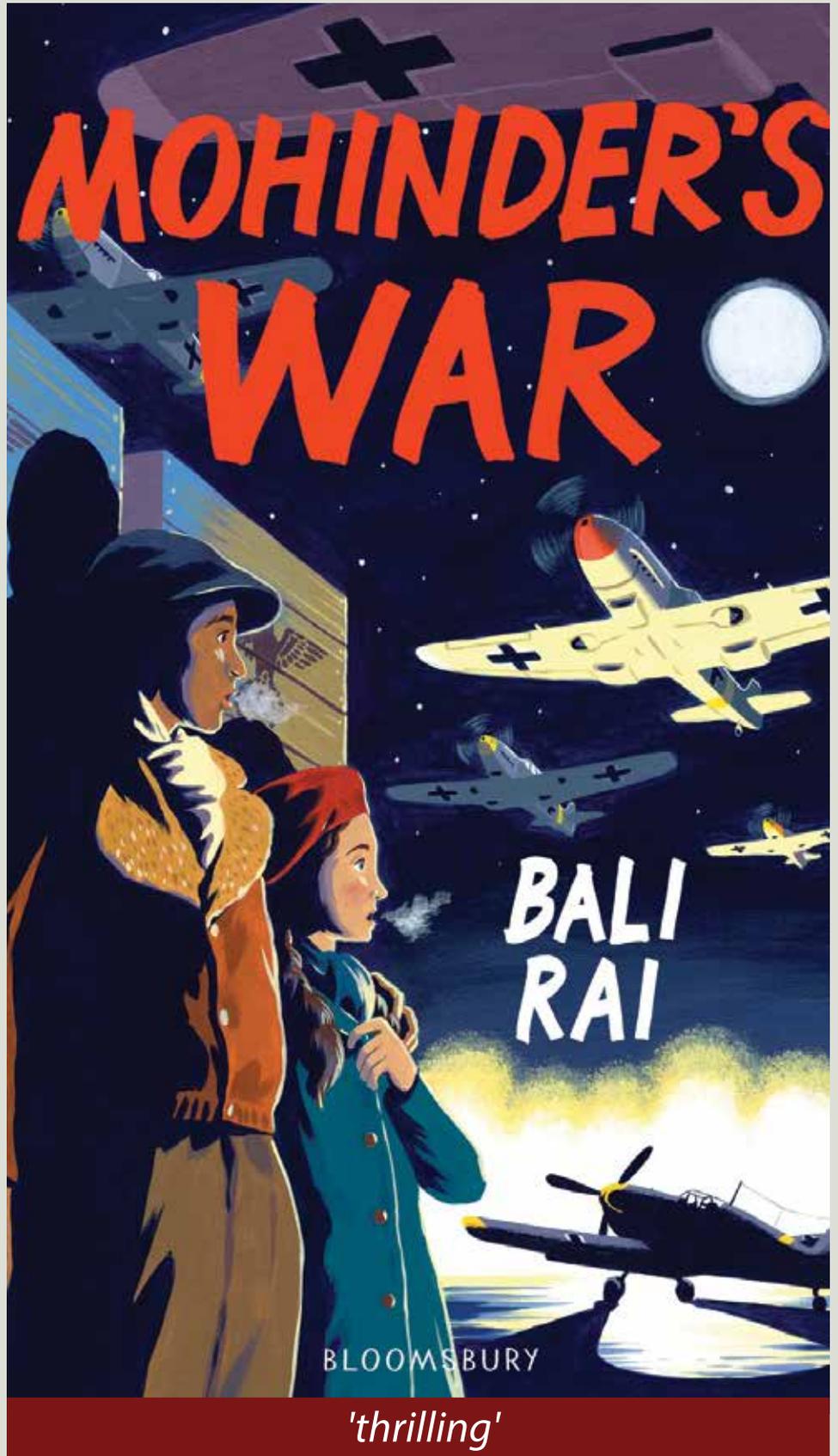
'jam-packed with facts'

Mohinder's War

Bali Rai
Bloomsbury £5.99 ISBN 9781472958372

Simpreet is attending his great grandfather Mohinder's funeral when he sees an elderly woman cry. He approaches her and finds out that she knew his great grandfather during World War Two. The woman's name is Joelle, and she tells Simpreet of her adventure with Mohinder, an RAF pilot whose plane crashed by her house during the Nazi occupation of France.

This book is really thrilling, and you want to keep on reading particularly as you get to know the characters. Although it's a short book with



'thrilling'

short chapters you get a good insight into the setting and the people who live there. I really liked how diverse the characters were, as I enjoyed learning about the Sikh faith. Some of the passages I enjoyed most were the epilogue and the prologue where you find out about

Mohinder's life after the war and his relationship with his grandson. In general, this book is thrilling but there are a few bits that are a little boring and predictable.

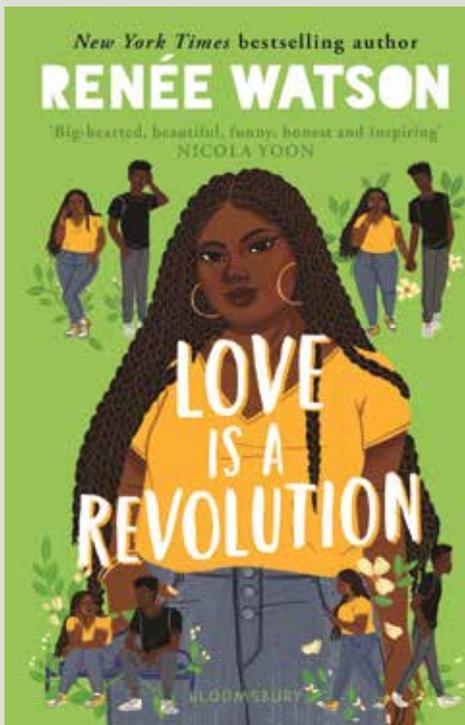
CATRIONA HAY
Drummond Community High

TEEN ISSUES

Love is a Revolution

Renée Watson
Bloomsbury £7.99 ISBN 9781526616821

Meet Nala, she's reluctantly attending a talent show run by Inspire Harlem, a young person's activist group for her cousin-sister-friend's birthday. It is hosted by Tye who Nala falls for immediately, and who she tells a few white lies to impress him. As they spend more time together on projects over the summer it proves hard to keep these fabrications going.



'relatable'

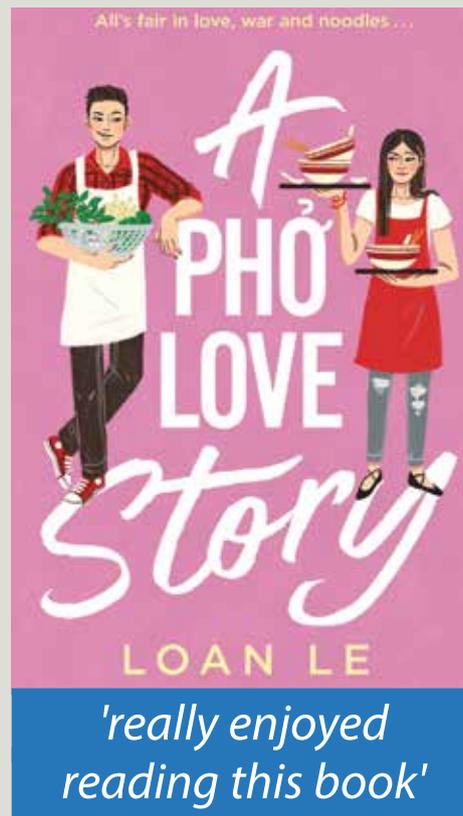
This story also shows how Nala finds herself and falls in love with who she really is.

I really enjoyed reading this book because I found it quite relatable as a girl in this society. It showed the journey of Nala finding herself and learning about the world. I would say that it inspired me not to be so caught up about everything and take some time for myself. It is a good read to motivate yourself too.

HRIDYA JUTTADA
Craigmount High

I thought this was a really good read, that educates you in Black history and activism as well. There were certainly some people in history I hadn't heard of before. It was great to have a Black female protagonist, who although I didn't relate totally to her situation, I did relate to her attempting to be someone she wasn't. I also loved how the author described the Black characters, which seemed more realistic than in any other book I had read before.

KIIKI ADEDEJI
Gracemount High



A Pho Love Story

Loan Le
Simon & Schuster £7.99 ISBN 9781398502673

Two warring Vietnamese-American restaurant owning families. Add their teenage kids, sprinkle some romance and



what do you get? A flavoursome story of two high school kids trying to forge their way through life. Juggling working at the restaurant, the school newspaper and being an aspiring artist, will love win? It is written in chapters that alternate between the two main characters allowing you to get their perspective of events.

I really enjoyed reading this book. I loved the way that the author allowed you to read the story from both characters' point of view, really getting to know them. It was also fun to find out about Vietnamese culture and families, and I loved the sound of all the different types of Vietnamese foods.

DARIA BERES
Gracemount High



All This Time

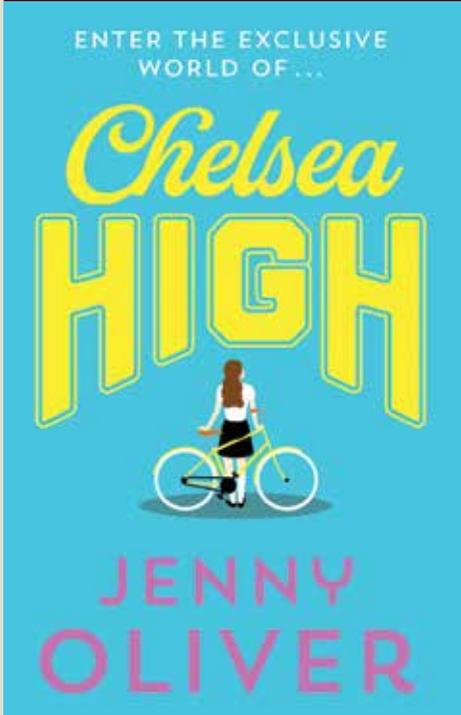
Mikki Daughtry and Rachael Lippincott
Simon & Schuster £7.99 ISBN 9781471192197

Kyle and Kimberly break up on their graduation night, but just seconds later she is killed and he is hospitalised with a brain injury when their car crashes. As Kyle recuperates, he meets Marley and their feelings for each other grow stronger, but Kyle can't shake off the feeling that he is heading with her for another tragedy.

All This Time got off to a slow start. I need books to grip me from the beginning but this didn't do so. I struggled with it for fifty pages before giving up. I don't mind sad books but I found this book totally uninspiring.

EMMA STEEDMAN
Trinity Academy

'book is amazing'



Chelsea High

Series: Chelsea High
Jenny Oliver
Electric Monkey £7.99 ISBN 9781403295048

Norah lives a perfect life with her parents on a houseboat, but when her father is arrested after a money-making scheme goes wrong she meets the rich grandparents she thought were dead and is forced to go to the exclusive Chelsea High. There she fights against social media influencer and school bully Coco for a role in the school play.

Chelsea High is a very intriguing book, with quite a few different scenarios that make you feel every emotion. The book is amazing. I would consider reading other books in the same series.

MAGGIE BROWNE
Balerno High

Heartstopper Volume 4

Series: Heartstopper, no 4
Alice Oseman
Hodder £10.99 ISBN 978144495279

In the fourth book in the *Heartstopper* series, Charlie and Nick are officially going out. Both want to say 'I love you' to each other, but they also both have other issues on their mind. Nick still has to come out to his dad and Charlie is battling an eating disorder.

Heartstopper is a comforting and easy read for teenagers and young adults. Over the course of four books, Alice Oseman has been able to tell a

beautiful young love story with representation of many different races, sexualities, mental health issues and gender identities. My only criticism of this book and the other books in the series is that I wish they were longer and a little more complex to read, but apart from that it's a fantastic series of books.

OLLIE PERREN
Trinity Academy

'fantastic series of books'



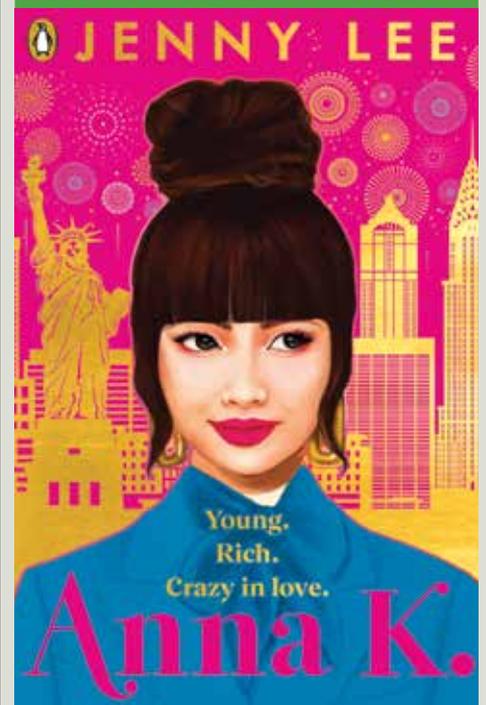
Anna K, A Love Story

Series: Anna K, no 1
Jenny Lee
Penguin £7.99 ISBN 9780241420218

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is probably one of the most famous love stories of all time and Jenny Lee's take on it, transferring the rich nineteenth century Russian aristocracy to the most elite and moneyed streets of Manhattan, ends up a kind of *Gossip Girl* meets *Romeo and Juliet*. *Anna K*, just like the other *Anna Karenina*, finds that when love comes it absolutely sweeps her off her feet, but is the playboy Vronsky quite so smitten?

I have read *Anna Karenina* the original version. My feeling about this adaptation is that it is quite different to the original: I liked that it was so modern. Some parts of it matched the original really well – certain sentences were literally word for word. The ending was a real shock and they didn't cover it as well as I thought they could, but the part when Anna finds the locket was truly lovely. The characters

'ending was a real shock'



were very well described so that, even if you haven't read Tolstoy's version, you will get this. My only complaint is that occasionally the modern slang just didn't ring true.

AILSA TULLY
Holy Rood High

The Great Godden

Meg Rosoff
Bloomsbury £12.99 ISBN 9781526618511

The family summer holiday starts like every other, relaxed and contented. But then in stride the Godden brothers – Kit, who is charming and handsome and knows it only too well; and quiet, watchful Hugo who's seen it all before. Everyone can see that Mattie is crazy about Kit. But Mattie isn't the only one that Kit has his eye on.

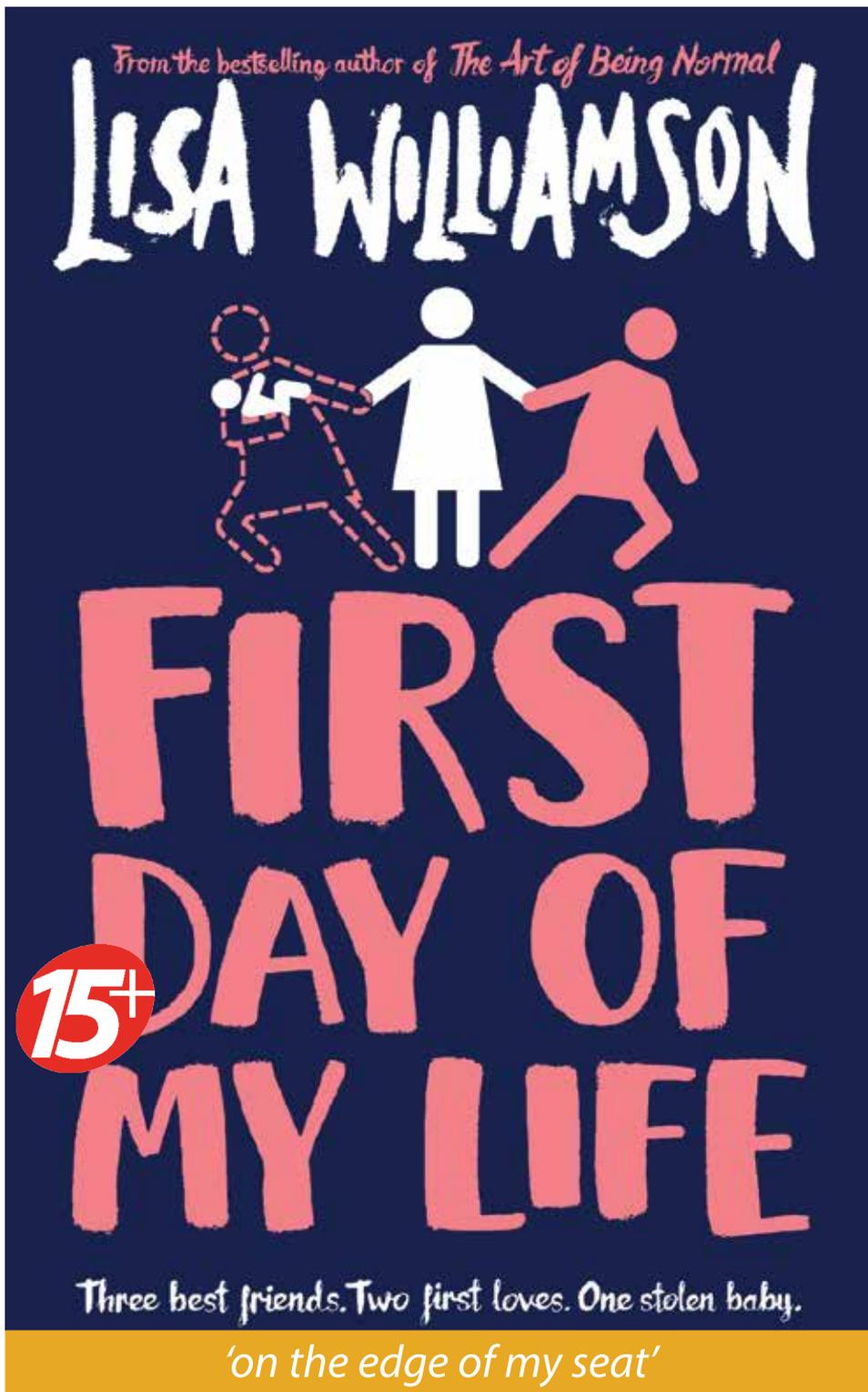
Loved the characters; loved the setting; loved the writing. I would totally recommend this book.

ANNA KILGOUR
Liberton High

'loved the writing'



15+



First Day of My Life

Lisa Williamson
David Fickling £12.99 ISBN 9781788451536

On her way to see her GCSE results, Frankie's way is blocked by the police. Nearby, a baby has been stolen. At school, Frankie's best friend, Jojo never shows up. Frankie's worried. When she gets a hold of Jojo on the phone, a baby cries in the background. Could it really be that Jojo has stolen a baby? To

find out, Frankie asks her ex-boyfriend Ram to drive her to Swindon, where Jojo has run away.

Lisa Williamson's prose in *First Day of My Life* is very well-written. She successfully encapsulates the minds of her characters and presents them to her reader. She is also rather good at mastering suspense – I was on the edge of my seat for pages. While a good read with quite a few twists along the way, they aren't really that jaw-dropping. It is not very unique in terms of

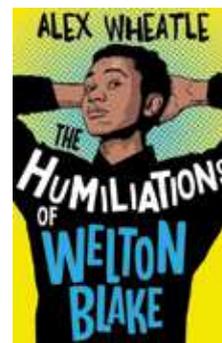
its ending as well. The romance between two of the characters felt rushed and forced for cheap drama. I felt that the main character and her best friend had more romantic chemistry than the two Williamson set up in the end, and it would have served as a more emotionally fulfilling ending. The plot also seems to drag on in some spaces for longer than I felt was necessary. It was a bit too slow for my liking. I did, however, enjoy the book. There are just some things about it that I would have changed had I written it.

ELLIE LOGAN
Broughton High

The Humiliations of Welton Blake

Alex Wheatle
Barrington Stoke £7.99 ISBN 9781781129494

Welton Blake is not exactly the luckiest person in the world. His parents split up, he moved, and the school bully doesn't like him. When he asks the prettiest girl in school out for a date he cannot believe that she says yes. But then his phone breaks and things start to get worse and worse. Will he be able to go on that date with Carmella?



I couldn't really connect with this book. The writing wasn't very descriptive so the settings and characters were hard to visualise and relate to. I found that the situations the main character got into were more frustrating than funny and that there were too many Star Wars references, so the book began to feel repetitive and boring very quickly. I can't really tell who the book is targeted towards, as it has a lot of high school specific situations, but the writing style feels like it was written for very young children.

ÉLODIE BERRILL
Broughton High

Eve Out of Her Ruins

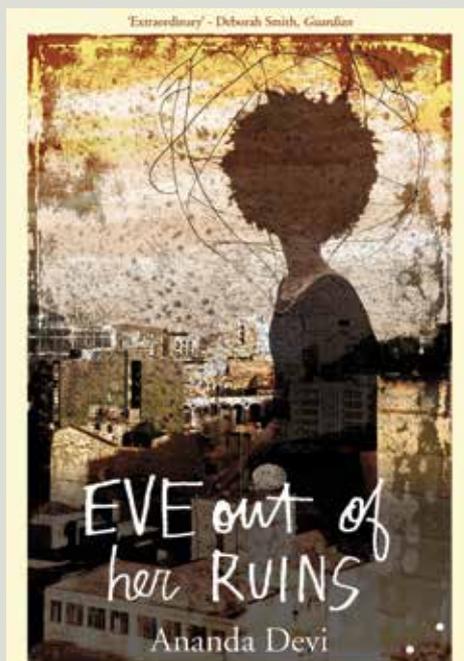
Ananda Devi
Les Fugitives £7.99 ISBN 9781838014148

This is the story of four young people whose lives are interconnected in their slum neighbourhood on the island of Mauritius. Eve and Savita are best friends and true soul mates, Savita is the only one who tries to protect Eve from the men in the



neighbourhood. Saadiq is in love with Eve and longs to be a poet. Clelio is part of the neighbourhood gang, constantly involved in violence and crime, and longs to escape to France to be with his brother. TRIGGER WARNING: this book does contain references to violence, child sexual abuse, rape and prostitution.

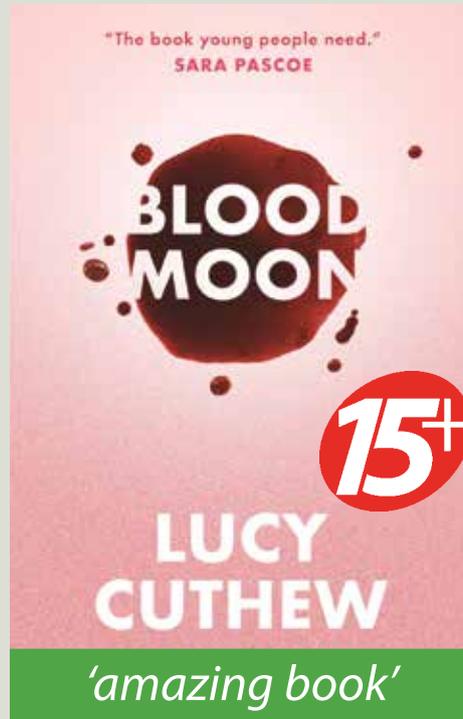
Whenever a book (or any other form of media) includes a controversial and disturbing subject matter it is important for the author to write it in a way that it does not come across as gratuitous. There are many examples of writers including scenes of sexual violence in their works that serve no purpose other than briefly shocking the audience without fully taking into consideration the impact that it would have on the characters in the story. Where *Eve Out of Her Ruins* excels is in how it manages to include topics such as child abuse and sexual violence and blend it into the story so that, while it remains disturbing, it never feels forced in purely for shock value. The book is one of the best I have read in a long time, a totally enthralling (if at times uncomfortable) read with a unique writing style. Ananda Devi manages to create three of the most human and natural characters I have come across, with Eve absolutely stealing the show in characterisation as we are given context behind why she views the world through her self-destructive lens. I have to say that the writing style may not be for everybody. You almost have to read it like a poem at times, unravelling the metaphors to really understand what is being said. I personally liked this blend between poetry and prose. I can, however, see that some casual readers might find it confusing at times. If you can find



'one of the best'

samples of the book anywhere, read a page or two. If you like what you read, you will really like this book. I personally loved it and do recommend it.

JOHN GALVIN
Broughton High



Blood Moon

Lucy Cutheo
Walker £7.99 ISBN 9781406393446

Intense and emotional, this verse novel tackles period shaming. A tender encounter between Frankie and Benjamin quickly becomes a social media nightmare so vitriolic that Frankie asks herself if she will ever be able to survive it? With her life spiralling out of control – will she ever get it back again?

What an amazing book! I was a bit confused at first because it looked like it was a book of poetry (not necessarily my thing) but I am SO glad I stuck with it! Frankie's period starts when she is with Benjamin and they agree that it is 'only blood' but then the online shaming begins. Frankie no longer knows who she can trust and even worse she thinks she is disgusting. This book addresses period shaming in a very real and powerful way and should be on the reading list of all girls (and boys). I've already recommended it to my friends.

JULA KINROSS
Leith Academy

A great read about a subject that should be looked at more often. Girls have to deal with many things as they are growing up, but we should not be made to feel ashamed about our periods. The author tells this 'story' in a very real way and the lyrical verse only adds to it. Some

of the storyline was quite brutal at times but it was great to be on a journey with Frankie as she discovered who her friends were and who she could rely on. Tissues ready for the end!

MISSY MCNAUGHT
Leith Academy

Jemima Small Versus the Universe

Tasmin Winter
Usborne £7.99 ISBN 9781474927284

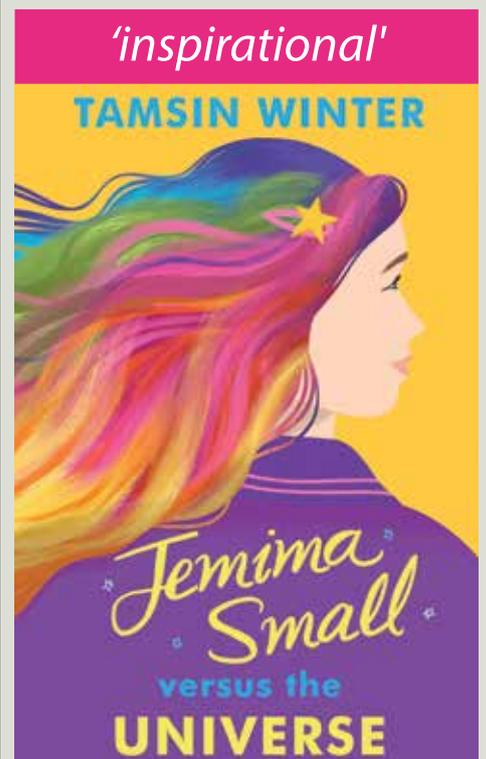
Jemima Small is overweight and is mercilessly bullied at school because of it. In this funny and insightful novel, she is sent to a 'fat club' by her anxious mum, where she learns she needs to start loving herself first of all if her life is to improve.

I like this book about body shaming as this is a serious matter that people need to know about. Jemima's big ambition is to get selected for her favourite TV show. But people are mean and tell her she won't make it because of her size. To succeed she needs to ignore the bullies and learn to love herself for who she is. I think this book is good so people can feel confidence, and maybe just to learn about these issues will have a ripple effect for others.

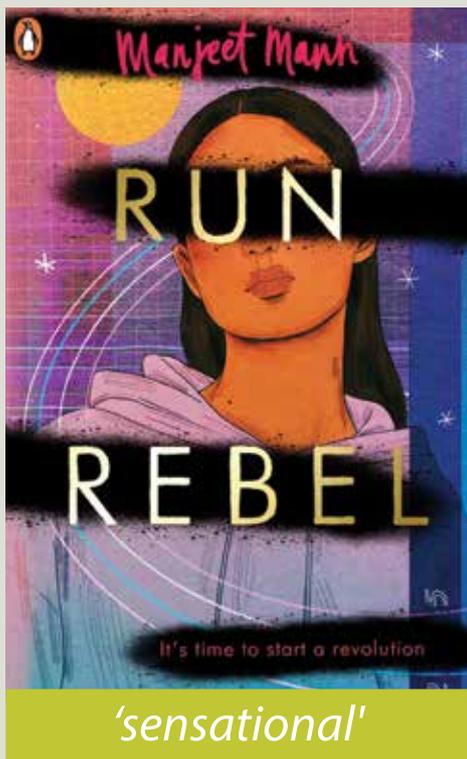
FAYE HERMISTON
Drummond Community High

Jemima Small is an extremely inspirational book about being yourself. The main message is that everyone is beautiful.

MIRIAM QAYUM
Drummond Community High



TEEN ISSUES



Run, Rebel

Manjeet Mann
Penguin £7.99 ISBN 9780241411421

This verse novel follows the story of Amber born to immigrant parents who can't speak English. Amber desperately wants to make her own choices in life enabling her to pursue her dream career. How can she overcome the main obstacle in her life? Then again, she is a rebel.

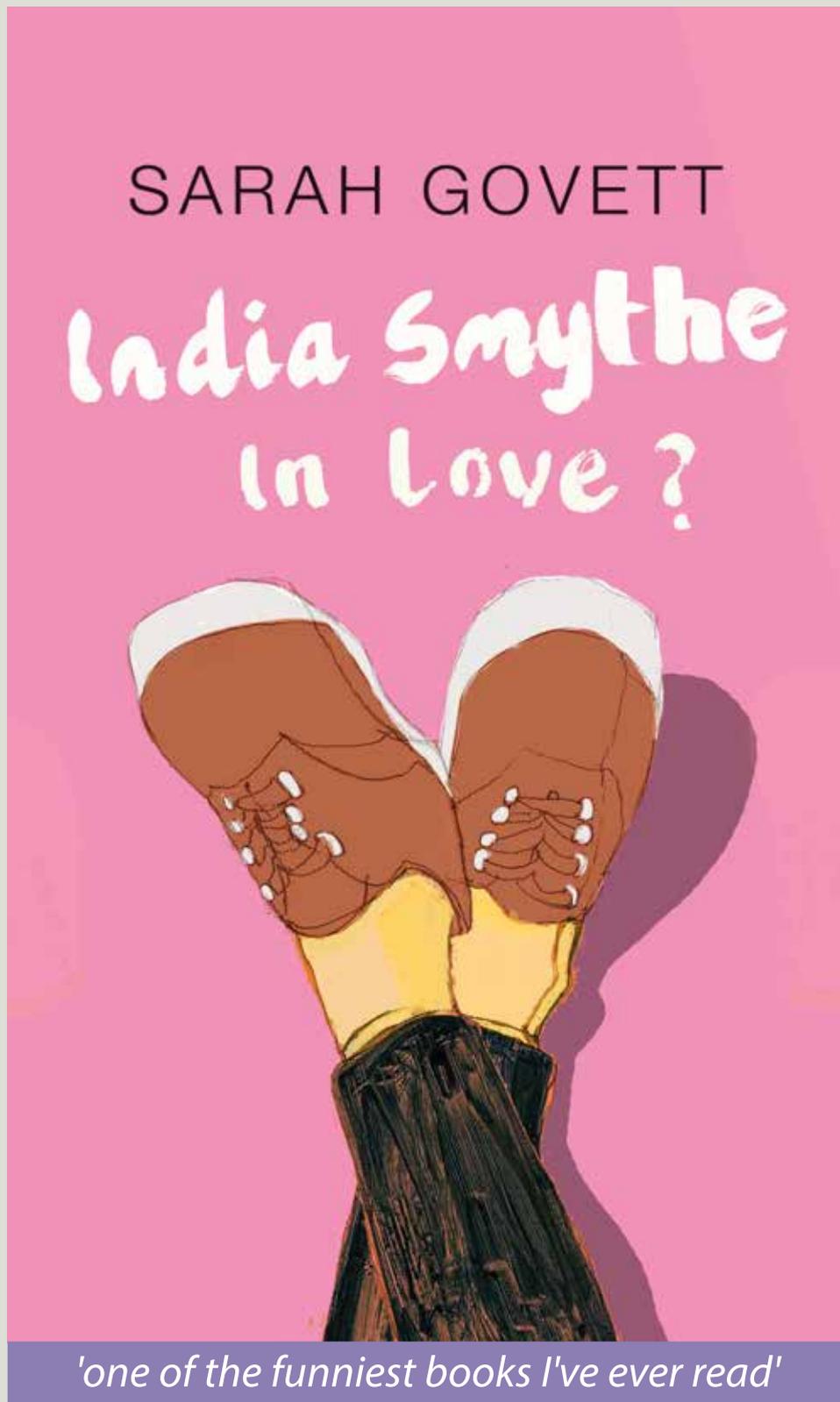
Run Rebel is a fantastic book to read and I would definitely recommend it for teenagers. The author has expressed immense emotions in just simple words. I love this book so much, it gets its readers hooked on to its poetic style of words. This book is written in poems. In reading *Run Rebel* I was able to empathise with many women who are still struggling with patriarchal societies. A sensational book based on how one teenager stands up to gender inequality. I can't express the simple emotions that run through the reader's mind when reading this book. The book has empowering words that touched my heart every time I read it. This was a thoughtful, empowering and courageous book.

ISHWARI ROY
Drummond Community High

India Smythe In Love

Series: India Smythe
Sarah Govett
Marotte £7.99 ISBN 9781916152649

India finally has a boyfriend and she can't believe it! It's making all her other cringeworthy situations (such as her tutor



who thinks she fancies him and her revision techniques that go disastrously wrong) that much easier to bear. But then she starts hearing people talk a new thing called Covid. How do you deal with your love life when the world starts locking down?

This was genuinely one of the funniest books I've ever read – I actually laughed out loud whilst reading it! India was a hilarious main

character and I thought the other characters were well developed too. The author had a really good understanding of what it's like to be a teenager today, making the book relevant and relatable. This was also the first book I've read set in lockdown and I think it handled it really well. I'd definitely recommend it!

ROSIE BRETT
Broughton High



Photo © Pete Bedwell

'Butterflies on bicycles' – Lauren James

Gracemount High pupils Ashley Kalczak and Natalia Reszkowska spoke to Lauren James about *The Deep-Sea Duke*, the sequel to *The Starlight Watchmaker*.

Q There are so many themes within *The Deep-Sea Duke* – Diversity, LGBTQ, Climate Change, Ecology, Sci Fi, Refugees, Kindness/Empathy. What was your main idea?

A I wanted to apply a social issue to a sci-fi world, as I find science fiction most interesting when it works as a metaphor for something in the real world. In *The Starlight Watchmaker*, the first book about Hugo and Dorian, I talked about working conditions and poverty. Here, I wanted to continue that message with climate change. It was really interesting, seeing how I could apply that to a world without cars or carbon emissions – but I'm really proud of it.

Q Are you a big fan of *Dr Who*/*Star Trek*? Where did you get the ideas of the different life form on each planet?

A A huge fan! I find it really hard to develop alien species, because I always like to explain the science behind things in my books. In this series, I forced myself to ignore all that and just have fun with it. The Studio Ghibli movies like *Howl's Moving Castle* were a huge influence – I love the fantastical creatures included in those films, which don't really have any explanations, they're just there because: why not? That's what I tried to do with the aliens in the books – living volcanoes, butterflies on bicycles and all!

Q Where did you get the idea of Hugo's character? His lack of self-esteem – subordinate, not believing in his genius.

A I really adore characters who have a strong character arc, where they start off very unsure and really come into their own. It's so satisfying to see a really pure, good-hearted person succeed, just on the back of their own morality. I would love to write more about Hugo – I think he's still got a long journey ahead of him.

Q You come from a science background, and have been shortlisted for a STEAM award. However, did you always eventually want to become an author?

A I studied Chemistry and Physics at university, so if I hadn't become a writer, I would probably be a research scientist focusing on physical chemistry. I would love to go back to science one day – I really miss it! Luckily, I get to write lots of science-based books that let me keep my head in the science world. I've written about space, extinction and the climate.

Q When you wrote *The Deep-Sea Duke*, did you have every chapter planned ahead, or did you gather idea and add them as you went along?

LAUREN JAMES

A I knew I wanted to write a sequel to *The Starlight Watchmaker* a year before I started work on it, so I kept a list of ideas on my phone, and saved pictures which inspired me (underwater photos, art of mermaids, etc). Then I wrote a 3500-word outline, which explained everything which would happen, and pitched it to my editor at Barrington Stoke. She gave me some feedback, and after I'd made some changes, I started writing.

Q Climate change activism is a huge theme in the book, have you ever taken part in any activism?

A My next novel, *Green Rising*, is about a group of climate activists rewilding the planet after they develop the ability to grow plants from their skin. I had to do a lot of research into climate change while writing the book, and it really inspired me to get more involved in climate activism. I founded the Climate Fiction Writers League (<http://climate-fiction.org/>), an organisation of over a hundred climate writers. I run a biweekly newsletter of essays about climate writing, in order to encourage readers to take action. It's been really positive seeing how many people are thankful for the group, and it's already led to some amazing opportunities for our members to get more involved in activism. I think it's made me feel a lot less scared about the future too, because I'm doing something positive to help.

Q Who or what has inspired you?

A I'm really inspired by young activists working to raise awareness of important issues, like Amika George and Greta Thunberg. It's hugely brave to make a stand like that at a young age.

Q What kind of books do you like?

A I'm currently obsessed with Lois McMaster Bujold, Naomi Novik, Zen Cho, Mary Robinette Kowal – all modern sci-fi greats. I highly recommend any of their writing.

The Deep-Sea Duke

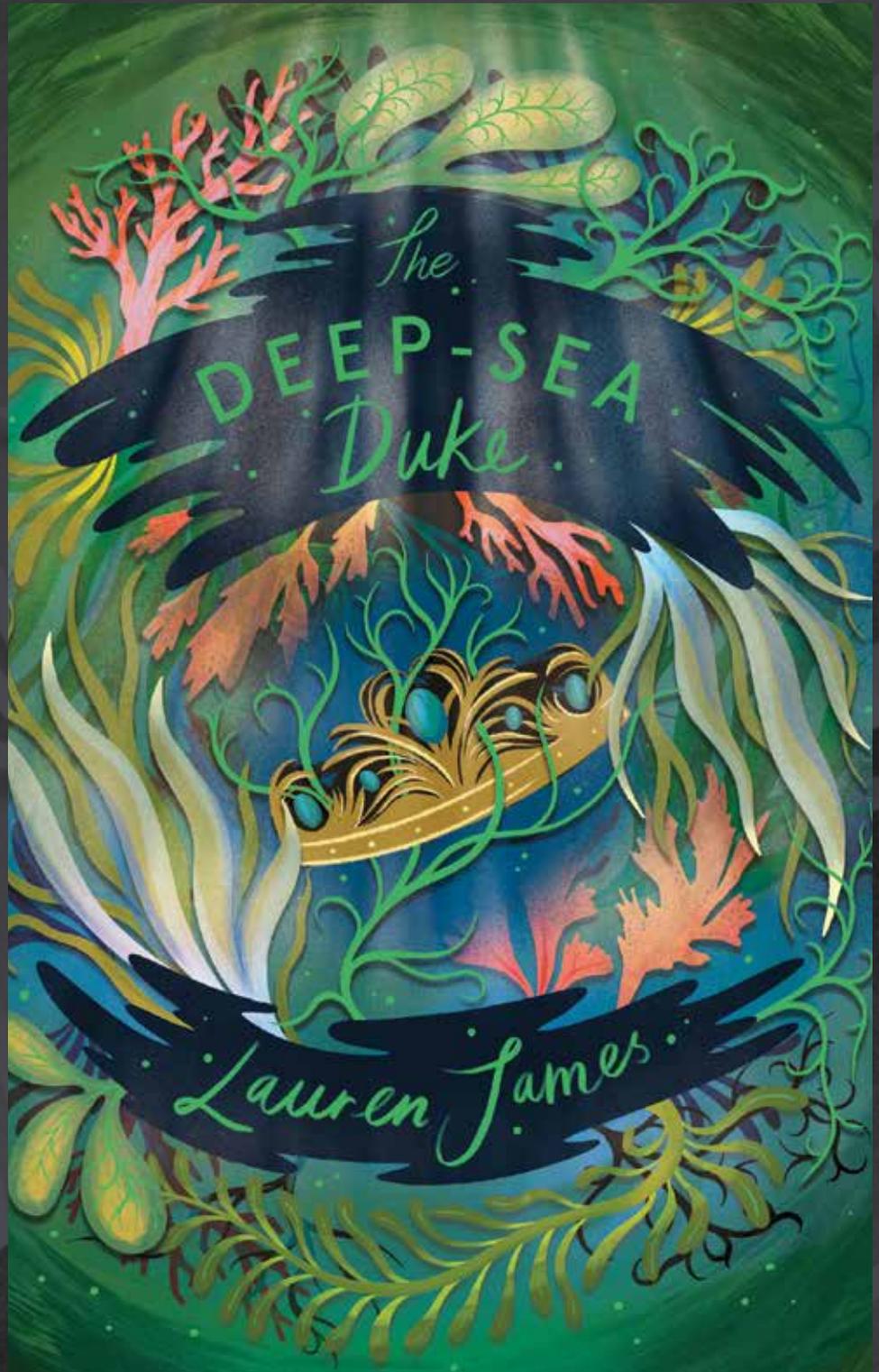
Series: The Starlight Watchmaker

Lauren James

Barrington Stoke £7.99 ISBN 9781781129593

Hugo the android is amazed that he and Ada, the baby planet, have been invited to spend the school holidays on their friend Dorian's home planet, Hydrox. He feels he is not worthy. However, when they arrive at Hydrox, there is a huge refugee crisis, with butterflies arriving from another planet, having to escape due to a climate change. Couple this with destructive sea otters, the trio of friends have to try and save Hydrox from being overrun and future extinction.

This was a really good book, I read it in one go. I liked the way the author merged sci-fi with



'I love sci-fi and fantasy'

everyday 'human' issues. I am normally a fan of action adventure stories, but there was enough pace and fun in the story to make it very enjoyable. My favourite part was discovering the otters had taken all the gold.

ASHLEY KALCZAK
Gracemount High

I found *The Deep Sea Duke* quick to get into. I love sci-fi and fantasy, so it was great imagining

what the planet Hydrox looked like; Earth with loads more water. I loved the friendship of such different characters and it is nice to know that androids can have feelings. I am still trying to get my head around Ada, being a continually growing volcano. I now need to go back and read *The Starlight Watchmaker*.

NATALIA RESZKOWSKA
Gracemount High

THRILLERS & CHILLERS

THRILLERS & CHILLERS

This book is about two twins whose father passes away and they each go on their own adventure but end up together. This book I would say is for people between 10–14 years of age. The meaning of the story I think is that however far apart you are from something you will get to it in the end.

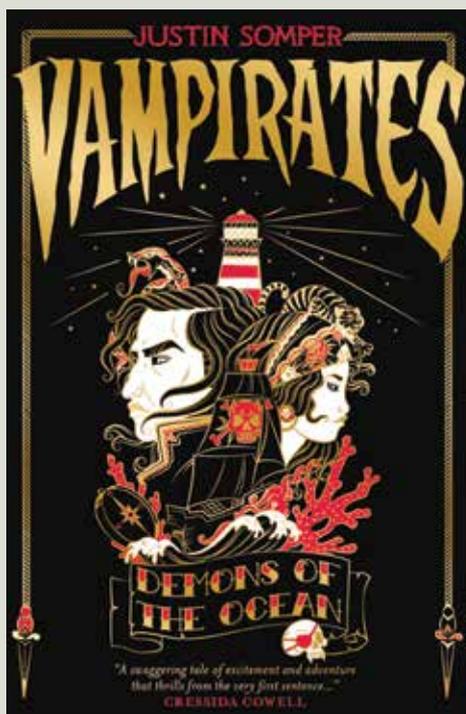
RORY CAMPBELL
Royal High

Unstoppable

Dan Freeman
David Fickling £7.99 ISBN 9781788450508

Kaine and Roxy are twins, once close but not any longer; both could become professional sportspeople in tennis and football but problems at home cause jealousy and resentment. Kaine's aggressive attitude puts him in the path of Sheldon, a local gangster, who offers a deal that Kaine finds very hard to refuse.

I feel this book is a good light read. It didn't feel too dragged out but still managed to tell the story well. The author managed to describe the characters well and their dialogue felt genuine, but there were points where you could tell it was an adult writing about teenagers, and the characters didn't feel very relatable. The plot, however, flowed well and kept me engaged throughout and the characters felt authentic. Overall, I would recommend this book to anyone between 12–14 that enjoys plot twists



Demons of the Ocean

Series: Vampirates, no 1
Justin Somper
Uclan £7.99 ISBN 9781912979110

Homeless after their lighthouse keeper father dies, twins Grace and Connor escape in a small boat towards an uncertain future. Shipwrecked by a storm they are rescued by two very different vessels, one a pirate ship, the other resembling the strange characters described in a sea shanty their father used to sing, I'll tell you a tale of Vampirates.

and reading about sports. If I had to choose three words to sum up this book, they would be engaging, fun and believable.

KAI ILLINGWORTH
Royal High



'exciting and thrilling'

Wranglestone

Darren Charlton
Little Tiger UK £7.99 ISBN 9781788951210

Peter lives on an island in Lake Wranglestone with his dad. Winter is coming and the small community prepare for danger as the lake freezes over, giving the Restless Dead access to their home. Peter is not the natural fighter that his friend Cooper is, but events unfold that cause him to leave the safety of his home and in doing so he will unearth Wranglestone's dark and bitter secret.

Although this was the first LGBT fiction book I have ever read, I was able to connect and empathise with the characters. I liked the way the author described Peter and Cooper's bond of love and friendship throughout the story. The book creates an element of romance while keeping the plot exciting and thrilling. For me, I would have liked to have been introduced to the characters' backstories and read more about their life before the apocalypse. I also think the ending could have been more memorable or dramatic. I recommend this book because it presents a positive representation of gay young boys in a gripping adventure tale, and I did enjoy the suspense as the mystery unfolded.

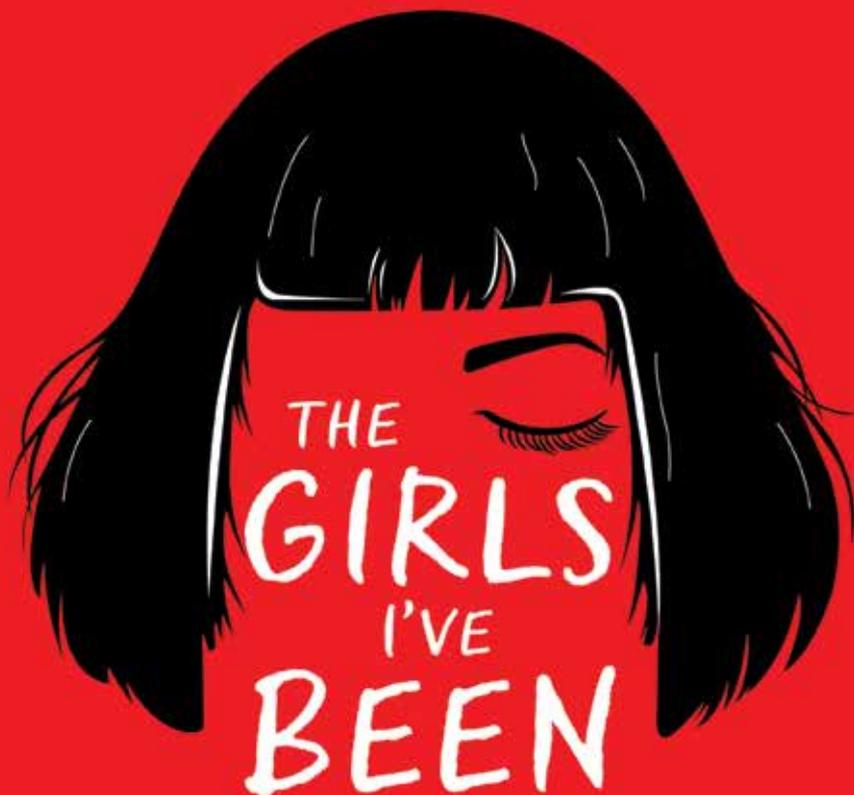
NINA SMITH
Boroughmuir High



'kept me engaged'

THRILLERS & CHILLERS

YOU THINK YOU KNOW ME?
TRY AGAIN.



TESS SHARPE

'suspenseful page-turner'

The Girls I've Been

Tess Sharpe
Hodder Children's £7.99 ISBN 9781444960112

Caught up in a bank heist, Nora is a girl moulded by her con artist mother. The back story to Nora's many personas is interwoven

throughout the book. These different personas taught her life-saving skills which she needs to use now if she and the others trapped in this bank are to come out alive.



The Girls I've Been is a suspenseful page-turner that will envelop the reader until the end, with twists and turns galore. The story has not only an engaging premise, and a masterful plot but also unique and admirable characters that demonstrate a true feminist message and LGBTQ+ representation. Sharpe handles the book's more sensitive themes with great care and poignancy also.

EVA HUSH
Liberton High

The Last Girl

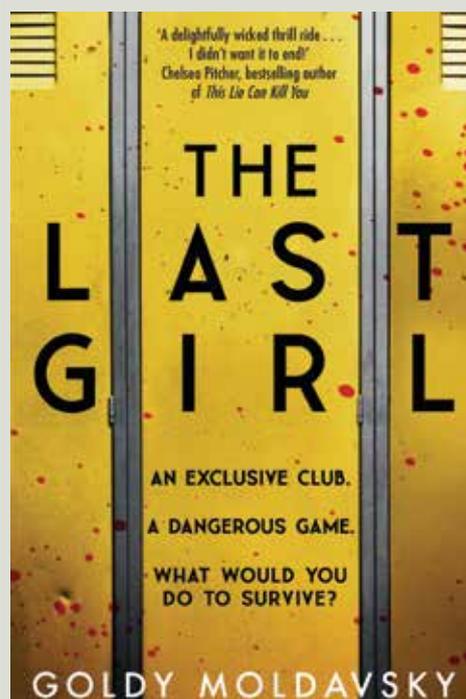
Goldy Moldavsky
Electric Monkey £7.99 ISBN 9780755501526

After a horrible experience at her old school, Rachel sees her new start at Manchester Prep, an exclusive New York school, as a chance to begin again, a fresh start. And when she gets invited to be a member of a secret club that plays dangerous games, she leaps at the chance. She is a survivor and this is one game she will definitely win ... won't she?



I loved this book. My favourite character was Rachel as I liked her personality. This book I would recommend for 15+ due to the storyline. I could not put the book down, it was a very addictive book with an amazing storyline.

ABIGAIL STRACHAN
Broughton High



'could not put the book down'

TOP TEEN TITLE

Daisy on the Outer Line

Ross Sayers
Cranachan £8.99

ISBN 9781911279778

After annoying her Mum, her therapist, and then aw her pals, Daisy gets drunk and falls asleep on the underground. And when she wakes, she's no got her ain face. Tae git hame agin, she's got tae save a life. But she disnae ken whose, and her guardian angel isnae exactly being helpful.

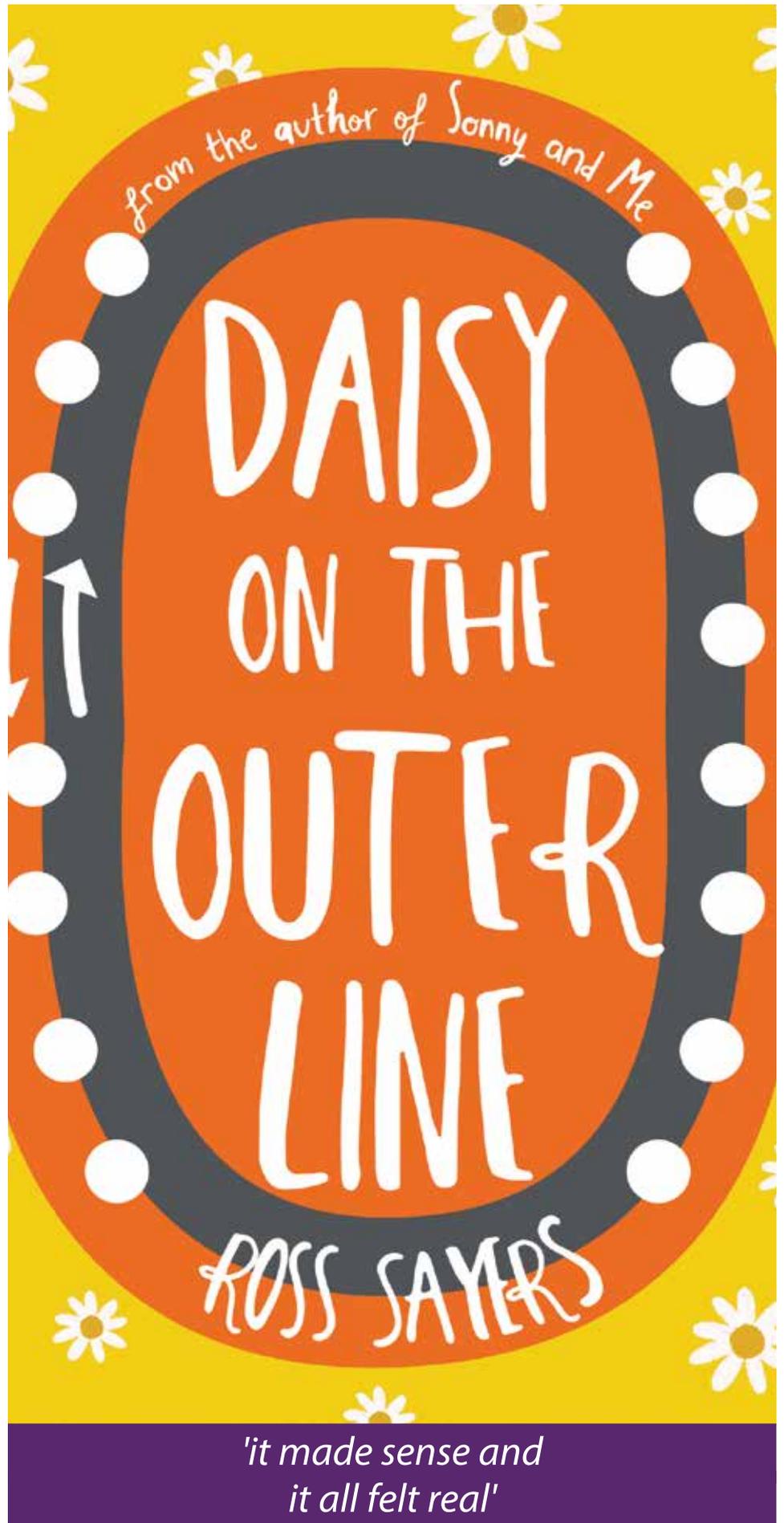


This was a wonderful book. In some other books the characters feel like props there to advance the plot, but in this book they feel like fully developed people. The attention to detail and how things she did in the past affect her future even from the start makes the book a circular narrative. It was an understandable time travel story – it made sense and it all felt real.

REBECCA PHILPOT
Holy Rood High

The time travel element of this book is quite confusing, but the characters are very strong and sometimes really funny. When I started this book, I had no idea what was going to happen. It was a very unpredictable read!

SARAH SMILES
Holy Rood High



KODY KEPLINGER



Q&A

with Kody Keplinger

Hania Luza and Miss McGrory and Mr Parker's 3D2 English Class at Queensferry High speak to comic book writer Kody Keplinger about *Poison Ivy: Thorns*, her new graphic novel with artist Sara Kipin.

Q How did you come up with this original storyline for *Poison Ivy*?

A I bounced around a few ideas when I was given the opportunity to pitch a *Poison Ivy* story. I always knew I wanted to lean into her queerness and to play with elements from some of her past origin stories. After some back and forth, DC was really interested in a few specific elements from my pitch. I realised those elements were all really appropriate for a modern gothic – which happens to be a favourite genre of mine. When I suggested that direction to my editors at DC, they were very much on board. From there, they gave me a lot of freedom to play around with those different gothic horror and romance elements. Basically, this project is a combination of so many of my favourite things: queer romance, gothic horror tropes, and the beauty and terror of nature.

Q When is this story set?

A *Thorns* is set in the modern-day, though because I knew we were going gothic I wanted to give the story hints of timelessness. So there's modern technology, for example, but Pamela always wears vintage clothes from various eras. And her house is very old-fashioned. The goal was to kind of blend different eras, almost creating an effect that would leave readers unsure of when it was taking place, but without feeling dated exactly either. So while it's set in the present, there are definite throwbacks to a variety of other eras.

Q How did you come up with the original characters you created for this story?

A One decision that was made early on, despite my great love for a lot of the Batman characters, was to keep the focus fully on *Poison Ivy*. This is very much her story, and we didn't want her to be overshadowed by other familiar faces. That meant I needed to create new characters that would make sense in her life. Alice, her love interest, was created when I sat down and asked myself two questions: 1) what kind of girl would serve as both a loveable romantic interest as well as a foil for Ivy's darker side? and 2) what kind of character would fit into this story's aesthetic? Alice is a goth girl in the modern sense of the word. She's sweet but also strong. She supports Pamela, but is also there to sort of challenge Pamela's vengeful instincts. Once I knew all of that, I really felt like I understood her character and had a great time writing her scenes.

Q Did you pull from personal experience when you designed the character, Brett? He was very impatient and the bully of this story.

A I think most people – but especially women – have met someone like Brett. Even if they weren't harassed directly by them, they've witnessed that sort of behaviour. Brett was inspired by a lot of entitled men and boys I and my friends have dealt with in the past.

Q Do you think Pamela was always going to end up being *Poison Ivy* or do you think what she went through made her that way?

A I think she always would have ended up being *Poison Ivy*, but what happens in this story sort of shapes her motivations and her approach. But when the story starts, she's already an eco-terrorist. She is already willing to hurt others to save plants. She was already on the path to being the villain we all know and love, but in the events of this story certainly.

Q The storyline and art style are very gothic and dark. Were you inspired by gothic literature?

A Oh, I love gothic literature. Very much for this story, I was inspired by a variety of things, including *Frankenstein*, *Jane Eyre*, and, a more recent classic, *Fingersmith*. I have little nods to gothic literature tropes

that I love in the writing of the story, and I was so excited to see that Sara's art really, really captured the vibe I wanted.

Q Which villainous character did you enjoy creating the most?

A Pamela! I'd argue she's still a villain in this story. She's just a villain whose motives you can kind of understand and sympathize with. Aside from her, though, I loved writing scenes with her father. He's terrifying and cold. I got to play with a lot of mad scientist elements with him, which was so much fun!

Poison Ivy: Thorns

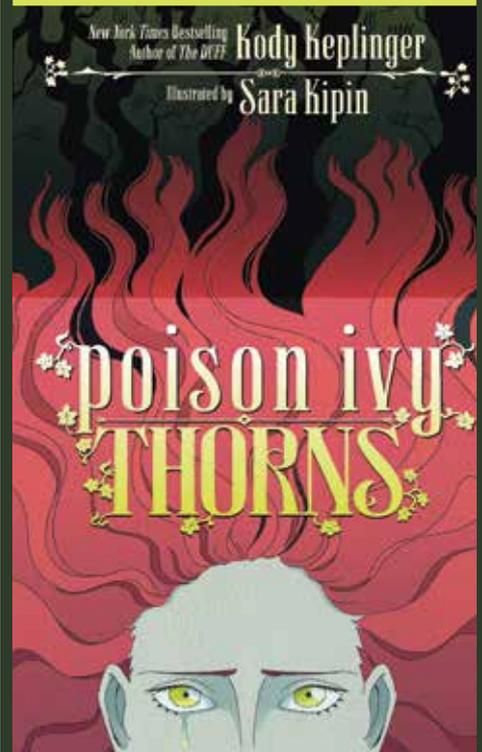
Kody Keplinger and Sara Kipin
DC Comics £12.99 ISBN 978401298425

In this graphic novel, eco-warrior Pamela has dark secrets which her scientist father has warned her that she must keep hidden. When she meets and falls in love with goth girl Alice, she wants to be open with someone for the first time in her life, but her past threatens to destroy her.

I've really enjoyed reading *Poison Ivy: Thorns*. Pamela is very emotional and she really cares about the environment, but it, however, leads to her making bad decisions. This comic book has a lot of well-written evil characters. I like the gothic and dark artwork; the opening scene is really twisted and memorable.

HANIA LUZA
Queensferry High

'I like the gothic and dark artwork'



AUTHOR FACTFILE



Elle McNicoll

Elle McNicoll

Elle is a Scottish and Neurodivergent writer, happily living in London. She graduated with a first in Creative Writing and has worked as a bookseller, bartender, blogger and babysitter – all while writing stories for her own amusement. See page 2 for a review of *Show Us Who You Are*.

Kieran Larwood

Kieran Larwood, author of *Uki and the Outcasts* (reviewed on page 4) has loved fantasy stories since reading *The Hobbit*. He worked as a teacher and has just about recovered. He now writes full-time although, if anybody was watching, they might think he just daydreams a lot.

Kieran Larwood



Caroline Logan

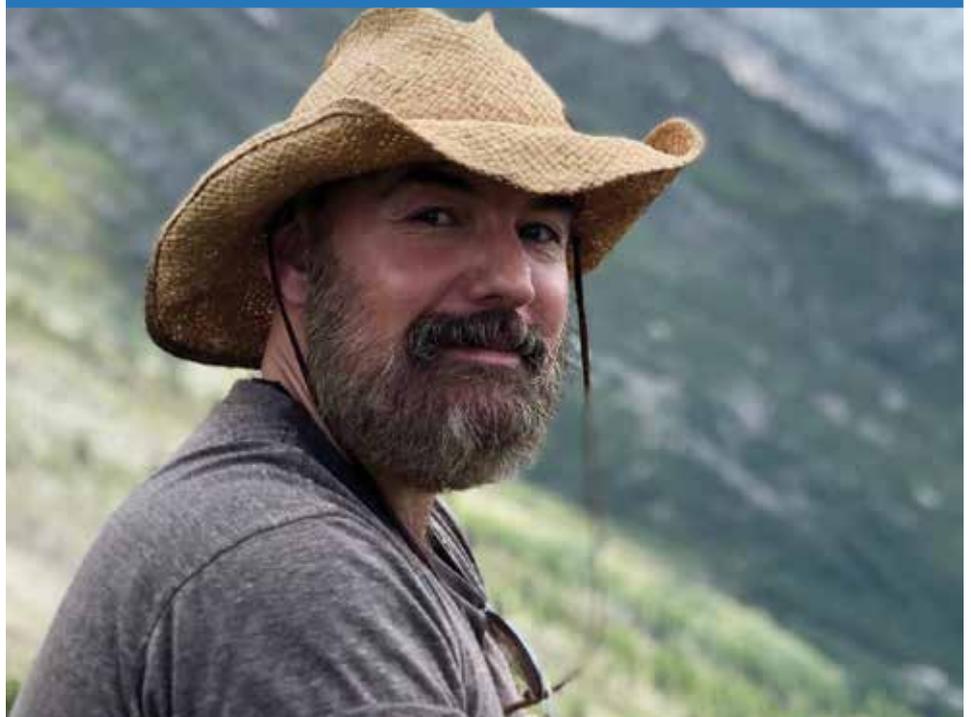
Caroline Logan

Caroline Logan is a writer of young adult fantasy. Her debut novel, *The Stone of Destiny*, is the first in *The Four Treasures* series. Caroline is a high school biology teacher who lives in the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland, with her fiancé. In her spare time she tries to ski and paddle board, though she is happiest with a good book and a cup of tea. *The Cauldron of Life* is reviewed on page 3.

Darren Charlton

Darren lives in Hastings and has worked in social care for the last fifteen years, most recently for the homeless team at Guy's and St Thomas' hospital in London. Darren's debut, *Wranglestone* (reviewed on page 21), was listed as one of the Times Best Children's Books of 2020 and has been shortlisted for the Costa Book Awards and the YA Book Prize.

Darren Charlton



AUTHOR FACTFILE



Photo © Joshua Aaron Photography

B B Alston

B B Alston

B B Alston lives in Lexington, SC. *Amari and the Night Brothers* (see page 6) is his debut middle grade novel. When not writing, he can be found eating too many sweets and exploring country roads to see where they lead.

Struan Murray

Struan Murray, author of *Shipwreck Island* (reviewed on page 4) is Scottish and grew up in Edinburgh, the youngest of a large, rowdy family of redheads. He has a PhD in genetics and is now a lecturer in biochemistry at the University of Oxford. *Orphans of the Tide* was his first novel, published by Puffin February 2020.

Struan Murray



Ananda Devi

Ananda Devi

Born in Mauritius, Ananda Devi is a novelist, short-story writer and poet. Translated into a dozen languages, she is considered a powerful voice in modern African writing in French and has won several prestigious literary awards. She lived for many years in London, where she obtained a PhD in social anthropology; and in Congo-Brazzaville. She currently lives in Ferney-Voltaire, in France. *Eve Out of Her Ruins* is reviewed on page 16.

Berlie Doherty

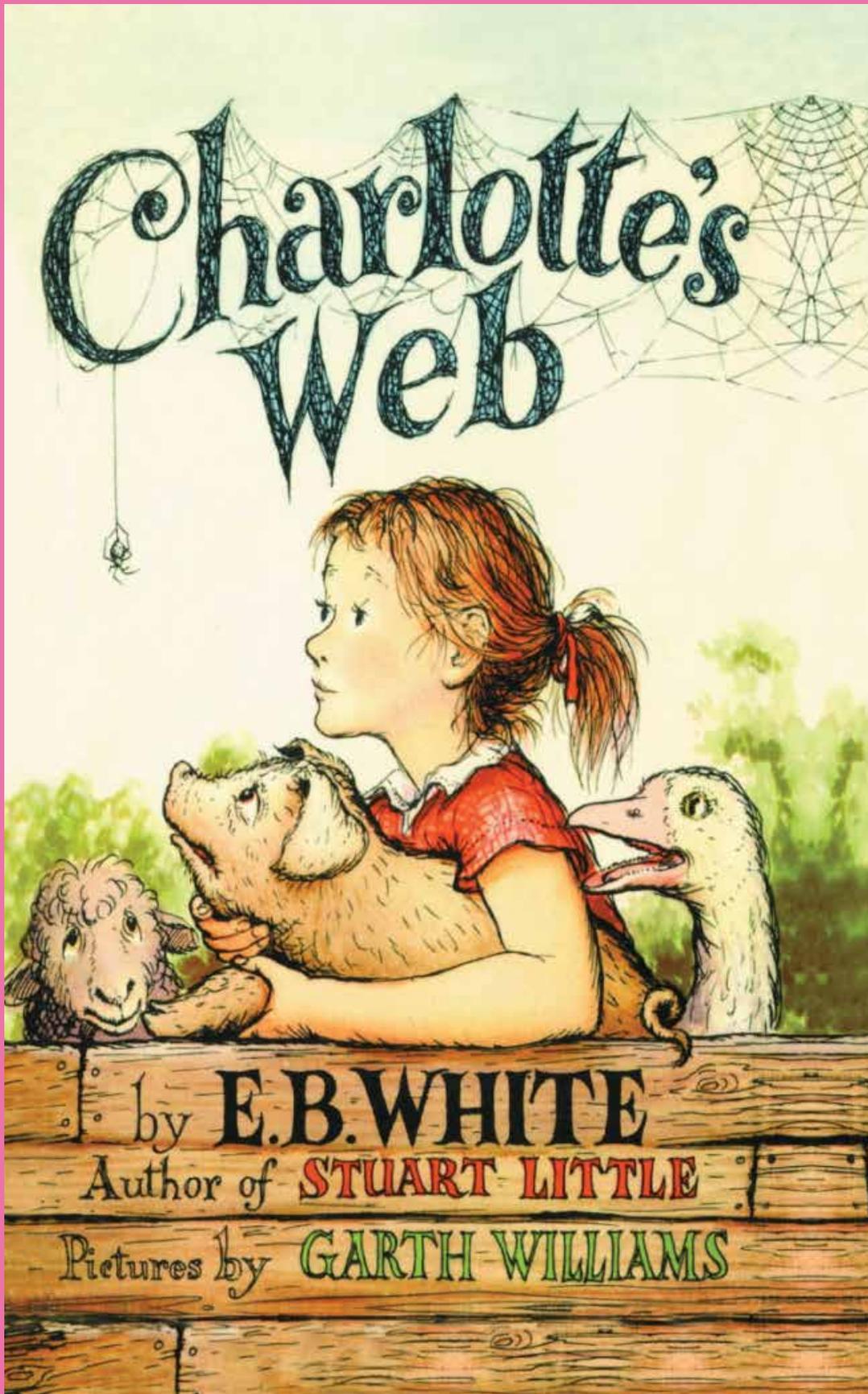
Berlie Doherty is the author of over 60 books for children, teenagers and adults, and has written many plays for radio, theatre and television. She has won many awards, including the Carnegie medal for both *Granny Was a Buffer Girl* and *Dear Nobody*, and the Writers' Guild Award for both *Daughter of the Sea* and the theatre version of *Dear Nobody*. She has three children and seven grandchildren, and lives in the Derbyshire Peak District with Alan James Brown. *Deep Secret* is reviewed on page 12.

Berlie Doherty



READERS WRITE

We are delighted to publish reviews from the Cardinal Allen High School in Fleetwood. Many thanks to those who sent reviews in. If you would like to see your reviews in print, please send them to us.



Phoebe Barcock, Cardinal Allen rates ...

Charlotte's Web

E B White

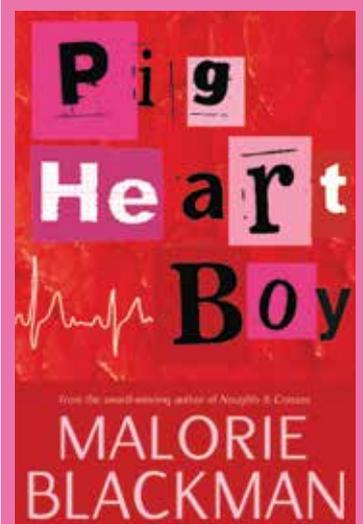
In *Charlotte's Web* there is a girl called Fern and a pig called Wilbur. Fern saves Wilbur from being killed and cooked and then, one morning, something magnificent happens. I found this story very effective because this book is written in the third person so you can see what all the characters are feeling throughout the story. The most interesting thing in this book is when Charlotte the spider has babies. It ends in a sad way but I don't want to give it away. I wouldn't want to change a thing about this novel.

Tia White, Cardinal Allen rates ...

Pig Heart Boy

Malorie Blackman

I love this book so much. I have read it so many times over and I haven't got bored of it. It is about a 13-year-old boy called Cameron whose heart has stopped working and he is desperate to get a heart transplant. He becomes a medical saviour by testing a pig's heart. When you get into the book you begin to learn about all of his problems which don't end when he gets his new heart; it makes you feel so bad for him.



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Serafina Ramos
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Trinity

Ollie Perren
Emma Steedman

Escape, Connect, Relate



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OUR ADDRESS

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