

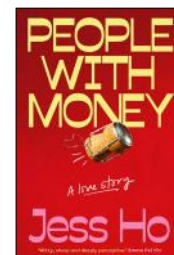
Readings Monthly

FREE | SEPTEMBER 2026

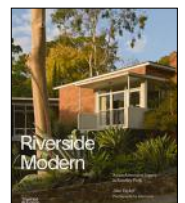
Announcing the Readings New Australian Fiction Prize shortlist

pages 12 and 13

New books from
Rachel Cusk,
Kate Atkinson,
Sebastian Barry
and William Boyd



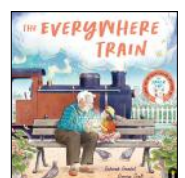
JESS HO
page 5



JAKE TAYLOR
& JACK LOVEL
page 15



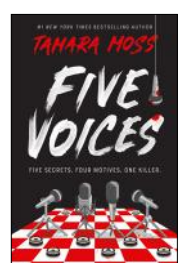
MEG TANAKA
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DEBORAH
FRENKEL &
DANNY SNELL
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MARYAM
MASTER
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TAMARA
MOSS
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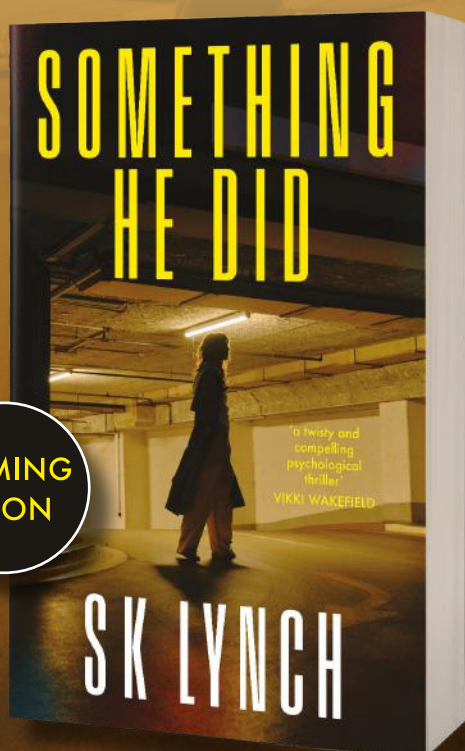
STEP INSIDE THE TIME TRAVEL AGENCY...

'A powerfully emotional
novel from a master
storyteller.'

The Guardian

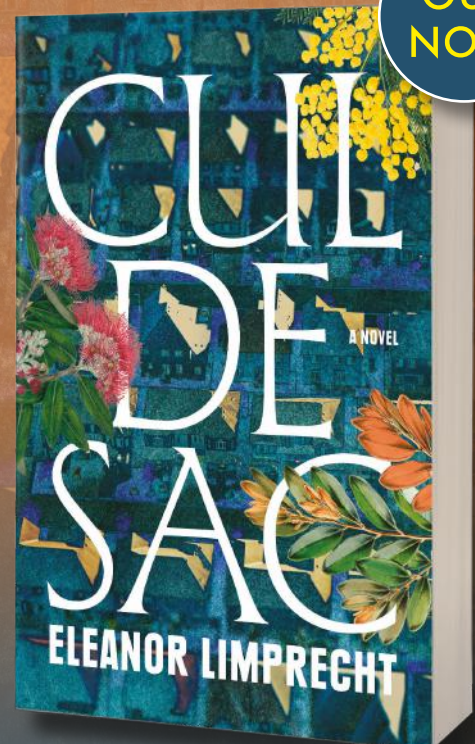


THE TWISTIEST THRILLER YOU WILL READ ALL YEAR



In the gridlocked heart of Melbourne,
a split-second of road rage
changes everything...

HOW FAR WILL A MOTHER GO TO SAVE HER CHILDREN FROM A PICTURE- PERFECT LIFE?



'My read
of the year!'

HAYLEY
SCRIVENOR

'Limprecht is a master
of tension and control [...] *Cul-de-Sac*
re-affirms her
many talents.'

RICK MORTON

ultim
press

News

The Readings New Australian Fiction Prize

The shortlist for The Readings New Australian Fiction Prize 2026 has been announced. Head to pages 12 and 13 to discover the shortlist.

Readings' A Day in Carlton

A Day in Carlton is back for 2026! Running from 12 to 14 November, it's a (little over) 24-hour celebration of books, culture and community. To be the first to know when the full program launches, sign up to our e-news at readings.com.au/e-news

Emerging Writers' Festival

The Emerging Writers' Festival (EWF) is this month! Running from 10 to 18 September, EWF brings together writers, artists and audiences across generations and practices, and remains a vital space for emerging voices, creative experimentation and literary community. To book your tickets, head to emergingwritersfestival.org.au

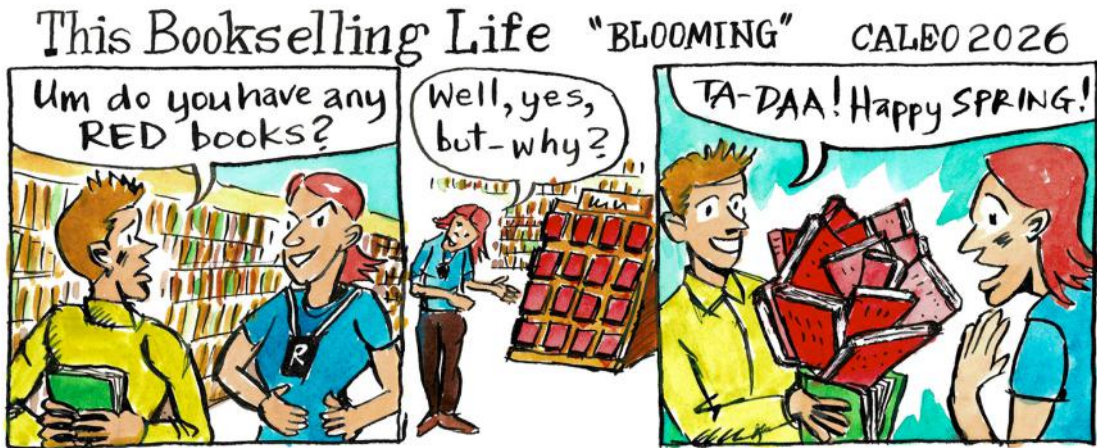
Promos

3 for 2 fiction favourites

Fill those gaps in your bookshelves with this great offer on a selection of fiction favourites. Purchase two books and choose a third title in the range (of equal or lesser value) for free! This offer is available in Readings shops (except Readings Kids) until 30 September 2026. Not available online. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.

3 for 2 Julia Donaldson books

To celebrate the release of *Gruffalo Granny*, we are offering 3 for 2 on a range of Julia Donaldson's earlier works. Purchase two books and choose a third title in the range (of equal or lesser value) for free! *Gruffalo Granny* releases on 15 September and will be at the special price of \$21.99 (save \$5!) This offer is available in Readings shops (except Readings Carlton) until 30 September 2026. Not available online. Offer valid on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. Not valid with any other offer.



Events

with Chris Gordon



Recently, I realised that many of the books I'm reading share a common theme: fear. These fears include loneliness, young men, U.S. leadership, and the climate – perhaps unsurprisingly. I began to wonder what the antidote to fear might be: surely, it's connection and hope? Perhaps this is why we attend literary events, book groups, dinner parties and festivals. We are better together. So, this spring, I have a bold and ambitious aim: to ensure Readings events help counter our shared fears through community and connection, allowing us to lean further towards hope. Join me?



For our full events calendar, the latest events information and to book tickets, scan the QR code or visit readings.com.au/events

Sonia Orchard & Louise Milligan in conversation

Tuesday 15 September at 6.30pm
Readings State Library, 285–321 Russell St, Melbourne
Free, but bookings are essential

Join us to hear Sonia Orchard in conversation with Louise Milligan about Orchard's new book, *Before the Harm: Preventing Abuse, Protecting Children*, the latest in MUP's *In the National Interest* series.

Sheree Joseph in conversation

Monday 21 September at 6pm
Readings Carlton, 309 Lygon St, Carlton
Free, but bookings are essential

We are delighted to have Michael Dulaney chatting with Sheree Joseph about her memoir of heartbreak, healing and rewriting the narrative, *Juicy*.

2026 Ned Kelly Awards

Thursday 24 September at 6pm
Readings Hawthorn, 687 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
Free, but bookings are essential

Please join us for the announcement of the 2026 Ned Kelly Awards for Australian crime writing. Enjoy a panel discussion about crime writing and then raise a glass to celebrate the winners.

Pip Williams & Toni Jordan in conversation

Monday 5 October at 6.15pm
Athenaeum Theatre, 188 Collins St, Melbourne
Tickets are \$65 per person (\$55 concession) and each includes a signed first edition of The German Ward

We are delighted to offer you this once-in-a-Melbourne springtime opportunity to hear award-winning writer Pip Williams chat about her new book, *The German Ward*, with Toni Jordan.

READINGS MONTHLY

The *Readings Monthly* is a free, independent newspaper published by Readings. The print edition is available in all our shops and a copy is included with every online order. Sign up to our e-news to receive a link to a digital copy of each new edition or view them online at readings.com.au/readings-monthly

EDITOR

Elke Power

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

Judi Mitchell

PROOFREADERS

Nico Callaghan & Lucie Dess

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Natasha Theoharous & Megan Tran

CARTOON

Bernard Caleo

FRONT COVER

The September *Readings Monthly* cover features artwork from the cover of *The Office as a Boat* by Moya Costello, courtesy of the publisher Pink Shorts Press. Cover art by Ben Giles. Find out more on page 5.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Readings acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work. We pay respects to all First Nations people of Australia, and recognise their connection to the land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

PRICES AND AVAILABILITY

Please note that all prices and release dates in *Readings Monthly* are correct at time of publication, however prices and release dates may change without notice. Special price offers apply only for the month in which they are featured in *Readings Monthly*.

Readings donates 10% of its profits each year to the Readings Foundation. Learn more about the foundation at readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation

SHOP INFORMATION

See shop opening hours, browse and buy online at readings.com.au. Australian online, mail and phone orders have \$9 flat-rate shipping, with free shipping on orders \$100 and over.

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KEY

Your key to getting the most out of the *Readings Monthly*

Review

Events

Special price



Foreword

with Joe Rubbo



I was excited to see Omar Musa win the Miles Franklin Literary Award for his second novel, *Fierceland*, which was released in September last year. I reviewed *Fierceland* for the *Readings Monthly* and it was our fiction book of the month, so it is

nice to see it being rewarded with Australia's most recognised literary prize. It is a staggeringly good book; I can't recommend it highly enough. We were also lucky enough to host Omar's Melbourne launch for the book. If you have never seen Omar read his work, in particular his poetry, I recommend you make it your mission to do so. He is an incredible performer. I don't want to give too much away, but he might be appearing at a Readings event in the near future. Check our website or future editions of the *Readings Monthly* for updates.

Speaking of prizes, the judges for The Readings New Australian Fiction Prize recently convened to decide on the 2026 shortlist. I was one of the 15 Readings staffers who put their hand up for the job. It is a very difficult thing to try to figure out – all the books are so good and make a valuable contribution to Australian letters. Angela Crocombe, The Readings Prize coordinator, gives a great run-down of the process on page 12 of this issue, where you can also see all the shortlisted entries. The really hard part is about to begin: trying to decide the winner!

One of our major suppliers, Alliance Distribution Services (ADS), has been hit by a critical IT issue and has been unable to supply us with books for over a month. ADS distributes books published by Hachette, as well as smaller local publishers such as NewSouth and Magabala. The IT situation has disrupted the publication of a number of the titles you will see in this *Readings Monthly*, but we have made a note of this on any title that may be affected. We are hoping that the delay will only be a week or so beyond the original release dates, but we've made the call to include the books this month because we're sure they will become available sooner rather than later, and this will be their only chance to feature in the catalogue as there are many more books coming in October and before the end of the year. We hope for everybody's sake – ADS, the publishers, authors and readers alike – the supply chain will be fully restored soon, and in the meantime, if you are keen to get hold of any of the books we've flagged as having an uncertain release date, we recommend checking our website or calling your local Readings to confirm availability before you come in.

Comments and Note

with Kim Gruschow



As we hurtle towards the end of the year, there are so many exciting books hitting our shelves. Midway through this month sees the release of *Gruffalo Granny* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.

This will be the first new *Gruffalo* story in over 20 years. Originally published in 1999, *The Gruffalo* has sold over 13.5 million copies worldwide, and when you add *The Gruffalo's Child*, that takes the *Gruffalo* sales overall to a total of 18 million copies worldwide. When you consider that favourite picture books are read over and over again, I would imagine that *The Gruffalo* is probably one of the most-read books of all time.

What makes this particular story so enduring? Well, there's the great rhyming, the repetition of phrases for everyone to join in with when reading aloud, and a plot in which the littlest being triumphs. The plot was inspired by a traditional Chinese folk tale, and small readers are in on the joke as the trickster mouse avoids becoming the lunch of all the bigger animals in the deep, dark wood. In a clever twist, when a real *Gruffalo* shows up, the mouse once again outsmarts everyone! Axel Scheffler's illustrations are perfectly pitched – the *Gruffalo* is a little bit scary, but at the same time appears silly enough to avoid invoking major terror. I'm sure people will be reading and re-reading *The Gruffalo* for many years to come.

I have just finished reading *The Neverfear*, the third instalment of Katherine Rundell's *Impossible Creatures* series, which is also being published this month. As someone who is already a huge fan of these books, I'm very happy to report that I loved *The Neverfear*. In this series, gates from our world access 'The Archipelago', a hidden place where islands are filled with creatures from mythology. Some are familiar, but the *Impossible Creatures* bestiary also includes lesser-known creatures that Rundell has drawn from literary history and brought into being. Extinction is a theme, and in addition to flora and fauna, Rundell is also concerned with conserving our broad history of ideas and culture. Comparisons to Philip Pullman and J.R.R. Tolkien have been made, but Rundell's books are more graspable. The chapters are brief, the pace is breakneck – as a writer, she understands the importance of immediacy and is extremely resourceful. Rundell packs each page with an astounding amount of detail. There is so much action, but also wit, warmth, and food you can taste.

I admire Rundell's writing and I also admire her advocacy for children's books. Her small treatise, *Why You Should Read Children's Books, Even Though You Are So Old and Wise*, is well worth a read, and if it's been a long time since you've read a children's book, the *Impossible Creatures* series is a great place to start! **R**

Fiction

Australian Classics

Penguin Modern Australian Classics

Various authors
Penguin. HB. \$35 each
Available 8 September



The second round of books in the beautiful new series of clothbound hardback Penguin Modern Australian Classics arrive in shops this month. With cover art by Jessica

Cruikshank, these deluxe editions draw from Penguin's vibrant publishing history and are the perfect addition to any book lover's collection. Whether you're looking to reconnect with a beloved favourite or hoping to discover a new one, there's something for everyone with Penguin Modern Australian Classics.

The second six books are: *True History of the Kelly Gang* by Peter Carey, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan, *Once* by Morris Gleitzman, *Playing Beatie Bow* by Ruth Park, *The Light Between Oceans* by M.L. Stedman and *A Fraction of the Whole* by Steve Toltz.

Already available are: *Holding the Man* by Timothy Conigrave, *Stasiland* by Anna Funder, *Hating Alison Ashley* by Robin Klein, *Looking for Alibrandi* by Melina Marchetta, *The Yield* by Tara June Winch and *Cloudstreet* by Tim Winton.

Australian Fiction

The Extraordinary Florence Stoker

Karen Brooks
HQ Fiction. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



 Dublin, 1878. Florence Balcombe marries rising theatre impresario and novelist Bram Stoker and soon becomes the darling of London's literary, theatre and art world. But

underneath their success, Bram is in thrall to the actor Henry Irving, their friend Oscar Wilde is in court for gross indecency and Florence is afraid for her family, of her secrets, and of the recurring visions of a monstrous fanged demon. Florence will fight for her family and rid herself of the dangers that plague her, even if it threatens her own sanity.

The Office as a Boat

Moya Costello
Pink Shorts. PB. \$32.99
Available 1 September

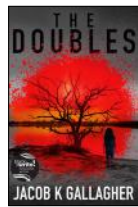


An unending heatwave heightens the strange claustrophobia of the nine to five. Lou, Sarah, Verity, Susan, Casey, Isabel, Nell and Audrey all work together; they know the intimate details of each

other's lives, but also nothing at all. They are co-conspirators and competitors, support network and enemies. They track the moods of the men in charge on a menstrual chart while dreaming of escaping to their gardens. First published in 2000, Moya Costello's deadpan field study of working life now has a new introduction from bestselling author Holly Gramazio, and makes for a quirky and very funny desk companion.

The Doubles

Jacob K. Gallagher
Hachette. PB. \$34.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



 Jacob K. Gallagher's debut novel reads like an outback crime thriller, while being woven throughout with a unique and compelling magic.

Kring is an Envoy – part assassin, part detective – working on behalf of angelic Higher Powers to banish the magical monsters that occasionally stray into the human world. When she's put on the case of a strange presence in Warrigundi, NSW, her angelic handlers see it as a regular job, but to Kring it's also a homecoming – and an unwelcome one at that.

The silver lining (of sorts) is that there's little time to dwell on difficult memories, with a magical Trespasser possessing local Aboriginal kids, before leaving them for dead on the top of a mountain. Partnered up with a local Legion officer – the magical law enforcement – Kring needs to work out what the creature is and what it wants, before it kills again.

Gallagher blends genres easily and manages to flesh out his magical world with no heavy-handedness – readers gradually learn more and more about Kring and the strange order of angels that she answers to, but the focus is always on the case at hand and the local lives being affected. The history of the land and people of the Liverpool Plains is integral to the story, but it's equally focused on what the present looks like for the Kamilaroi people – the everyday concerns of family, work and community.

Kring is also a fascinating character to follow – she's hardboiled, world-weary and has a bluntness that ruffles small-town feathers, but she isn't gratuitously rude or inconsiderate (in the way of classic noir anti-heroes). She's got a dry sense of humour, warmth under her thick shell and at her core, she's lost – moving from job to job with no life beyond hunting monsters, and only the feeblest ties left to the human world she's fighting to protect. It's a compelling contrast to her staggering competence.

The State Library of Queensland's black&write! fellowship has been nurturing incredible First Nations writers since 2011, and Gallagher is the latest of its recipients whose publishing journey has sprung from that project. *The Doubles* is an accomplished debut, which has me keen to follow what he does next (a sequel, surely!) and grateful that unique genre fiction like this is finding its place in Australian publishing. I can heartily recommend it to lovers of contemporary fantasy, but I think it's also perfect for

crime readers looking for something a little different from typical outback noir.

Bella Mackey is the digital content lead

The Phantom Surrealist

Geoffrey Gates
Transit Lounge. PB. \$34.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



When Christopher Tiffen discovers a painting by little-known Antipodean surrealist Robert J. Wake in the Sydney Art Gallery one summer, he is smitten by both the mysterious artist and the woman by his side viewing the painting – Agnès Alert of Barcelona. Tiffen is struggling with his research and Robert J. Wake offers him a rich seam. So begins the intriguing search from Sydney to London and Wake's early days as a surrealist painter; to France and to Barcelona where he disappears in 1937, and beyond.

Common Places

Gillian Hagenus
UQP. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



 Haunting and humid, Gillian Hagenus's debut short story collection, *Common Places*, skilfully captures the human and environmental eeriness of suburban Australia in 14

hazy, self-contained terrariums of creeping Gothic terror. The stories are set in the past, present and future, from a refreshing range of perspectives, including a streak of particularly remarkable tales told by children that smack of schoolyard suburban mythologies, made all the more evocative for the retelling. Featuring a varied range of villains including an obsessive attic squatter, pre-teen girls and a hungry ravine eating indiscriminately, *Common Places* invokes the choking heat of dry summers, silent streets and the persistent hubbub of small-town gossip with equal parts devotion and discomfort. Simmering with unspoken suburban fears, each story unfolds like a midnight walk home – behind each narrative door hides the constant threat of violence.

Particular stand-outs include the chilling 'Oh', told from the perspective of The Haunting, a collective spirit living with Gran, an at-home abortionist, and her former customer, now companion Delaney. Two particularly delightful ghost stories are the mundane everyday of 'Impermanence', where suburban ghosts traverse their lonely commutes, and the eternal servitude of 'Myer Is Our Store', in which unpaid spectral sales associates roam an understaffed department store. Another delightful pair of stories is 'Sandpiper' and 'The Year of the Birds', both engaging richly and wildly differently with the intersection between nature and the invasive species: urban sprawl.

The theme of the collection may be suburbia – that famous homogeniser – but each story is more unique, unexpected and unforgettable than the last. Echoing

cautionary tales, ancient stories and urban myths, Hagenus's deft approach and the thoughtful arrangement of the pieces ensures that on rereading particular pieces, you'll want to return to those either side because of the contrast and context they provide in this disconnected but nevertheless unified portrait of suburbia.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

People With Money: A Love Story

Jess Ho
Affirm. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



 Amy Chan is many things: a POC artist and seller of wine and luxury fashion, a broke hedonist, queer and nonbinary, twentysomething, tired and trying their best.

Edward – white, older, a CEO – coasts through life like a shark swimming in alcohol and generational wealth: the trick is never to stop, or people might notice how drunk and lonely he is. Amy has spent most of their working life serving people just like Edward and his family – he isn't a puzzle to solve, or an enigma to unravel; he's easy, slightly hopeless, and kind. Amy is unlike anyone Edward has ever met before. So begins a relationship that will force them both to renegotiate their boundaries, values, priorities, and, ultimately, their relationship with their own identities.

Peppered with recognisable landmarks of the local hospitality scene and rich with the same vibrant energy that made author Jess Ho's debut memoir, *Raised by Wolves*, such an enthralling read, *People With Money* is filled with, by Ho's own admission, some observations from their years in fine dining that they couldn't put in their memoir for fear of being sued for defamation. Anyone who has worked in industries negotiating the egos of the wealthy will both relish and recoil at the accuracy of the interactions in this novel.

Darkly humorous and often uncomfortably real, *People With Money* is all about the doorway between wealth and culture, and how fiercely the people on both sides yearn to walk through it. It's also about a couple that we meet at the place where so many relationships end: arguing in couples counselling, litigating the story of how they found their way together, and the way that money (or a lack thereof) can rule our lives, our choices and our sense of self.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Ordinary Funny Tragic

Bridie Jabour
HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



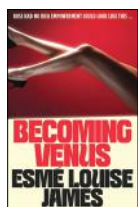
Crimson's life has been shaped by her magnetic, clever, self-absorbed mother, Villy, who left the family years ago for another man. Now, as Crimson juggles single parenting, Villy has

declared she is dying. Crimson and her brother, Marty, are summoned to her bedside and, following her death, as requested in her will, they escort their mother's body home to family in England. They are entirely unprepared for the eccentric family, the overwhelming grief, how their lives are going to change, and the duck!

Becoming Venus

Esmé Louise James

Affirm. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



Years after an unforgettable but fleeting night with Adrian, Rose is pulled back into his orbit following the end of a long-term relationship. Loosely inspired by the erotic fantasy *Fanny Hill*, this debut novel, set in Melbourne, follows Rose as she is drawn into a seductive underground world of clubs and play, leading her into new realms of sexual exploration and empowerment. Forced to confront the scars of her past, Rose redefines her understanding of intimacy, trust and what it means to know yourself and your desires.

The Second Child

Malcolm Knox

A&U. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



I love a good historical period piece – and Malcolm Knox's *The Second Child* certainly does not disappoint! Set amid the frantic atmosphere of a post-Second World War Soviet Union, we follow the life of Melor Murtov as the adopted daughter of Lavrentiy Beria – acting as his informant among the children of the Kremlin who might collectively reveal Stalin's next scheme.

What really drew me in was the unpredictability of the story that Knox tells – I was always on the edge of my seat, uncertain whether a newly introduced character would be pivotal to Melor's mission, or a hindrance. This creates a really exciting read that matches the reality of Soviet politics – unpredictability was the only certainty you could expect, all fostered by Stalin's cult of personality and his unyielding grip on life and death.

Amid all that, Melor as a character is incredibly captivating to follow. She grew up admiring Stalin, yet her future path leads her to be at direct odds with him. What are Melor's true ambitions and desires? Who can she trust? In the final hour, who would she protect?

Lastly, I'd be remiss not to mention how utterly funny this book is. We imagine the indomitable leader of the Soviets as an iron figure with unending intelligence and sharp judgement – but Knox paints a very different picture, exposing Stalin's flaws, insecurities and weaknesses with biting comedy. Knox spares no one in Melor's orbit, either!

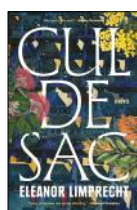
Overall, *The Second Child* is a brilliant blend of historical suspense and dark satire. Highly recommended for fans of historical fiction who appreciate a healthy dose of wit!

Anson Cheng is from Readings Doncaster

Cul-de-Sac

Eleanor Limplecht

Ultimo. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



R Jacquie has achieved the American Dream. Married with two children, living in the affluent suburbs of Northern Virginia, you'd think she has it all. But it is only when Jacquie and her children go

to her mother's home in New South Wales for Christmas that she truly begins to breathe. Away from her husband, Brandon, she is finally able to see just how controlling he has become in every aspect of their lives, how his quick anger frightens the children, and how, no matter how perfect she tries to be, it is never enough. Yet the longer she stays away, the less certain she is of what he will do and of what he is capable.

After I finished the novel, I kept thinking back to Jacquie and Brandon's first interaction at the coffee shop where she worked. When they meet, Brandon is overwhelmed by an endless list of sandwich options, prompting Jacquie to remark on the paradox that having too many choices can lead to indecision. Their first conversation revolves around independence, the freedom to choose, and the misguided belief that restrictions on choice are always good and necessary.

Eleanor Limplecht's *Cul-de-Sac* is an emotionally raw, riveting and powerful novel about a woman reclaiming her voice after years of being made to feel small and weak. Jacquie's story, like those of many survivors of domestic violence, is one at which some may shake their heads, imagining how differently they might have responded in that situation. However, Limplecht tenderly explores the human instinct to endure and internalise – especially pain – and dangerous illusions about such situations, including that outward tolerance equates to acceptance.

Cul-de-Sac is a beautiful testament to the strength of mothers and a poignant reminder that motherhood is a journey that demands an ever-evolving identity, learning from every mistake and life lesson along the way.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

the long cloud

Hector Mackenzie

Scribe. PB. \$29.99
Available 15 September



R the long cloud is a novel about coming home after a long time away and feeling like you've time travelled. It's about slipping into the pleasant haze of the past. It's about the sickly sweet

feeling of nostalgia and how quickly it curdles into something ugly and desperate. It's about Xander: he's just turned 30; he hasn't been home to New Zealand in a decade.

Xander spent his 20s in London as a model, riding a wave of success and validation and money and coke and parties until it all dried up and disappeared in the rearview mirror. All he has left is a loving yet staggeringly famous girlfriend – who seems poised to leave him behind for a world of actors, directors and actor-directors – and the plane ticket home she's bought him as a birthday gift. Back in his small hometown, so much has changed and yet so much has stayed the same: his family is still suffocating to be

around, his mates are still down for a pint, and Xander still doesn't know what he wants. His life in London may be petering out, but New Zealand doesn't seem any better when the family farm is up for sale and his old exes only remind him of the lives he could have led. He's looking for an escape and finds one, young and beautiful, in a local bar. Charlotte is a chance to relive his glittering youth, but there's only so long he can hide in the past before the future comes knocking.

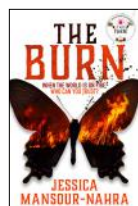
Told in vignettes never longer than a few pages and frequently much shorter, *the long cloud* has a frantic, breathless quality, like it was written on the Notes app at 2.00 in the morning. In Xander, Hector Mackenzie captures the frenzies of youth and the ruins it can leave behind, delivering a man whose tragedy is no less gripping for being entirely self-inflicted.

Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

The Burn

Jessica Mansour-Nahra

Hachette. PB. \$34.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



In 2030, bushfires plunge Australia into lockdown. The solitude suits Carmen, but when restrictions lift her best friend Eleni convinces her to join her, her boyfriend Dan and their friend on a road trip, saying they need a week of reconnection. The trip isn't what Carmen expects. Everyone has changed. Stuck in isolated cabins in national parkland, secrets spill and arguments erupt. On their final morning, new fires close in and they are forced to escape together. But how, when they no longer trust each other?

The Treasure House

Amy Matthews

S&S. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



Zoe and her daughter Florence need a new start. The only affordable option is a cottage in a tiny seaside town. It's filled to the brim with junk, but Florence loves the old house, its knick-knacks and memories, but Zoe is daunted. As she clears out the house with the help of her grouchy, handsome neighbour Jake, Zoe becomes intrigued by its previous owner, Marly. As she uncovers her secrets, Zoe is forced to face her own past. With her heart and home on the line, can Zoe put her fractured life back together?

Big Little Truths

Liane Moriarty

Pan Mac. PB. Was \$34.99
\$29.99

Available now



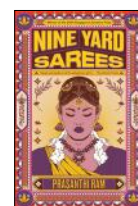
Parenting teens is not for the faint-hearted, but Madeline, Jane and Celeste have been through worse. It's been a decade since the school trivia night that changed their lives and they're now living blissfully ordinary suburban lives. But when an anonymous grisly package arrives at the local high school, and a man in a green Volvo is seen lurking around the kids, everyone in their beautiful

beachside community is uneasy. Is this history repeating itself or something new and more shocking?

Nine Yard Sarees

Prasanthi Ram

Pink Shorts. PB. \$32.99
Available 1 September

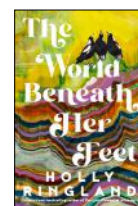


An award-winning debut, *Nine Yard Sarees* takes us from 1950s India to contemporary Singapore, Australia and the US through 11 interconnected stories. Following these women across decades as they navigate oppressive structures such as patriarchy, casteism and homophobia, this story cycle is a resonant portrayal of the evolving diasporic experience – full of humour, grief, heart and unforgettable characters. A multigenerational portrait of nine women within and beyond one Tamil Brahmin family.

The World Beneath Her Feet

Holly Ringland

Fourth Estate. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



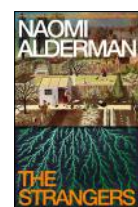
Maggie Byrd lives a happy life in London. Working at the Natural History Museum, she shares a home with her best friend and her partner. However, when she inherits her beloved uncle's rewilded property in south-east Queensland, Maggie is forced to confront a past she never wanted to unearth. *The World Beneath Her Feet* is a luminous, deeply emotional and absorbing novel about belonging, memory and the loves and landscapes that make us – and what it takes to come home to ourselves and each other.

International Fiction

The Strangers

Naomi Alderman

Fig Tree. PB. \$34.99
Available 22 September

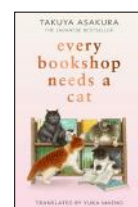


A few months after her mother's death, novelist Naomi Alderman installs a wildlife camera in her parents' garden. It captures the first image of a strange new animal: the mimmoth. As Alderman grapples with her grief, the elusive, intelligent mimmoths spread across the world. Alderman feels she has a growing connection to the animals and is pulled into currents of conspiracy theories and global power struggles. Have her forms of mourning lent recent events a surreal air, or is our reality changing irrevocably?

Every Bookshop Needs a Cat

Takuya Asakura & Yuka Maeno (trans.)

HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



Amame Morikawa arrives at the bookshop she's inherited from her grandfather in Onomichi, only to find a dusty space with empty bookshelves – and a group of cats who've made it their home.

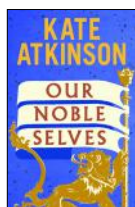
Comforted by her new feline friends, Amare begins to connect with the people around her, each meeting drawing her closer to a new purpose: reopening the bookshop. But the shop needs more than repairs. Can the cats, mysterious guardians of the bookshop, lead Amare to the missing piece that will bring it back to life?

Our Noble Selves

Kate Atkinson

Doubleday. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 September



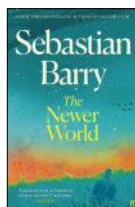
Summer, 1951 in Britain and everyone wants to put the war behind them. The government's solution is The Festival of Britain, a celebration of the country's creativity, grit and ingenuity. For former war reporter Harry Flynn, having failed to resume his journalistic career, it might offer the chance of redemption. But when a woman he has been dating goes missing, Flynn is drawn into a mystery requiring the help of straight-talking 13-year-old Veronica and her scruffy terrier.

The Newer World

Sebastian Barry

Faber. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 September



I was introduced to Sebastian Barry through his 2016 novel *Days Without End*, which has become one of my all-time favourite books. Barry is one of the most talented authors alive today. His novels have received numerous awards across his career, including making the Man Booker shortlist for several novels, and he has won the Costa Book of the Year in both 2008 for *The Secret Scripture* and 2017 for *Days Without End*. His writing is always lyrical, but it morphs into the voice of his characters, thereby transforming the grammar and structure to create a unique rhythm in the sentences. In this manner, Barry writes about human nature's most horrific aspects, about pain and death, without the story growing heavy with it. There is a transformative levity in moments of joy, community and connection.

The Newer World is Barry's latest novel. It maps the life of Tennyson Bouguereau, who was a minor character in *Days Without End*, born into slavery then freed during the American Civil War. From there, he journeys through a post-Civil War America, longing for a home that is not just a place but also a time and a people. If you've read Barry's previous novels, you'll find some familiar characters in this book, but it also stands alone perfectly well.

It's difficult to explain what I found so compelling about this novel without spoiling it, but I'm not exaggerating when I say I was gripped by the story until the last page. It was something in the complexity of Tennyson's relationships, both familial and friendly, and how they guided him through his life. It was also the unflinching representation of colonial America's brutality towards those deemed 'other', and the magic of being immersed in a narrative. This is a fantastic novel, beautifully written.

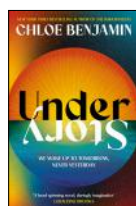
Stephanie King is from Readings Emporium

Under Story

Chloe Benjamin

Tinder. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



If you could change your yesterdays, would you do it? When I saw Chloe Benjamin had a new work coming out, I was so excited. The author of *The Anatomy of Dreams* and *The Immortalists* (whose characters I still think about) took me into the world I thought I knew. Where would she take me this time?

Laurel is barely managing in the aftermath of life-altering changes, until her mum randomly mentions a job opportunity in Antarctica. Not in Laurel's field of biology, but as a dishwasher. With no expectations, perhaps this is the reset she needs. New people, a new routine, a landscape unlike any other – and no one needs to know why she left America. She leaves everything behind. Yet life has a sense of humour and, soon enough, her ex-husband, Eli, arrives.

He is part of a research group sent to understand a strange phenomenon, known as the Arc, which is occurring on the continent. Eli is a physicist and their science backgrounds come together in this new setting in startling ways, from real-time experiments at McMurdo Station to the (speculative) idea of a two-sided, symmetrical universe. However, you don't need a degree to hold this book in your hands. Benjamin skilfully articulates these ideas by centring the book on the relationship between Laurel and Eli: the mistakes, choices, losses and desperation. As the reader, we fully understand that if we had the opportunity to alter past events in our lives, we too might grasp at a second chance.

Benjamin guides us through memories and introduces wonderful supporting characters. This novel is rich in pathos, with a surprise laugh or two and strange, beautiful details that render the worlds breathtakingly real. I'll go anywhere with Chloe Benjamin.

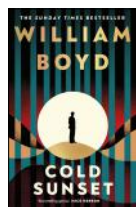
Caz Watson is from Readings Doncaster

Cold Sunset

William Boyd

Viking. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 September



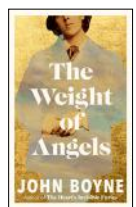
Gabriel Dax is en route to Russia, tasked with delivering a mysterious Blanco drawing to celebrated defector Kit Caldwell. But Caldwell is convinced that the KGB suspects him of treachery and he wants to get out – now. When Gabriel is ordered by his handler to help, he is pulled into a web of shifting loyalties. As tensions rise and trust fractures, he is forced to confront the fine line between devotion and deception. But which will he choose?

The Weight of Angels

John Boyne

Doubleday. PB. \$34.99

Available 22 September

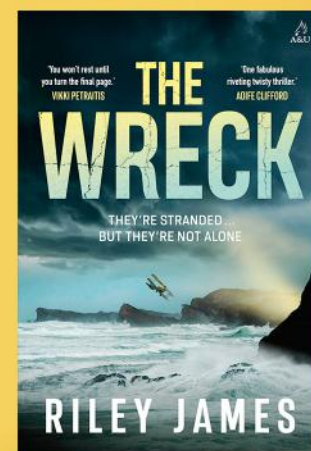


Can one rash decision prove the difference between a life well lived and a life destroyed? When the Marquess of Queensberry left his calling card at the Albemarle Club in February 1895, it bore

A GRIPPING SURVIVALIST
THRILLER ABOUT RESEARCHERS
MAROONED ON A REMOTE ISLAND WHILE
SEARCHING FOR THE WRECKAGE OF
A PLANE THAT DISAPPEARED UNDER
MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES
TWENTY YEARS EARLIER.

'A lethal landscape plus characters with dangerous secrets equal one fabulous riveting twisty thriller.'

AOIFE CLIFFORD,
author of *It Takes a Town*



SET IN 1945 BETWEEN HITLER'S DEATH AND HIROSHIMA, *THE SECOND CHILD* IS A SATIRICAL THRILLER ABOUT ONE YOUNG WOMAN'S PLOT TO OUTSMART THE SUPREME DICTATORS IN A WORLD ON FIRE. FROM THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED, BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE FIRST FRIEND*.

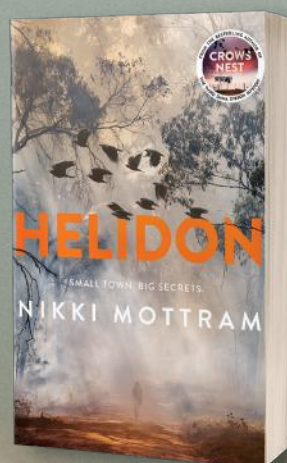
'A gripping, thoroughly contemporary satire of postwar Kremlin offspring and their sadistic strongman dads.'

CHARLOTTE WOOD,
author of *Stone Yard Devotional*



ALLEN & UNWIN

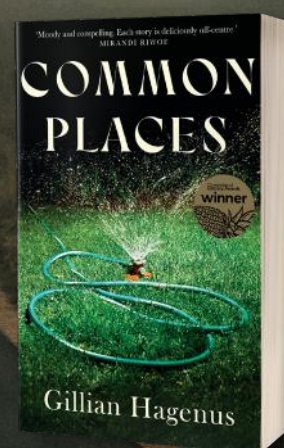
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WHEN ALL YOU WANT IS
A GOOD PAGE-TURNER...

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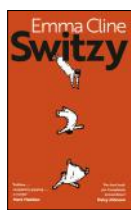
only his name and five words: 'For Oscar Wilde, posing Sodomite'. The most feted playwright of his day famously sued for libel, which led to his arrest, criminal prosecution and ultimately prison. His gilded existence spiralled into public disgrace and an early death. But what if he had simply ignored the insult? John Boyne gloriously imagines one of the great what-if stories.

Switzzy

Emma Cline

C&W. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 September



R David is travelling to a Switzerland clinic to end his life through an assisted dying program. It's a topic that seems to be in many movies of late, but prior to this one, I hadn't come across many books

tackling it. In *Switzzy*, Emma Cline masterfully tells the story of an older man's unravelling mind. David no longer has his full faculties and his efforts are stripped back to simply getting through the basics of the day: dressing, navigating eating, and not getting lost or falling over. All of which is a lot more difficult when you are travelling.

Cline takes the reader inside David's head as he moves in and out of consciousness, his dementia taking hold. It's incredibly powerful writing, prompting us to wonder what it all comes down to when your accomplishments are gone, you are lost in your thoughts and memories, and you have little understanding of reality anymore. This novel contemplates the littleness of life, in a sense. It examines class and ageing, but completely without sentimentality: 'You had to live life to know it, to understand it was real, and now he had done it and any wisdom or interest ginned up, it didn't matter: there wouldn't be another go.'

Cline has written two previous novels, both completely different from one another – she is definitely a young author to watch. *Switzzy* has already been longlisted for the Booker Prize 2026, so I have been keenly awaiting the opportunity to read it. A longlisting for such a prestigious prize sets a certain level of anticipation for any book, but I wholeheartedly believe this one lives up to expectations and deserves to be on that list. I thoroughly recommend it.

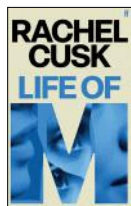
Melanie Barton is from Readings Carlton

Life of M

Rachel Cusk

Faber. PB. \$32.99

Available 1 September



R Rachel Cusk's new novel continues her brilliant challenge of the novel form, alongside our fascination with fame and beauty.

It begins with a writer who has a friendship with a famous actor and suggests they will write an autobiography of her. The reader learns about the privileged existence of M, who has been famous since she was a child, and who doesn't seem to move through the same world as the rest of us. Her fame and beauty have removed her from the ugliness and violence of everyday insignificance that most of us are forced to endure.

Both the writer and the actor live in a beautiful city that is not their original home. This beautiful city is marred only by a tower that the writer describes as 'brutal in its ugliness'. The only place you can't see it is when you are in the tower itself, and Cusk equates fame with being in this tower: the only way to escape seeing it is to be entrapped in it, but the only way to really experience the world is to be immersed in it.

We follow M as she lives her life. She goes to a spa, meets friends for coffee, visits an exhibition, gives an interview for the cameras and has a holiday in a converted farmhouse. The novel discusses themes of the impossibility of truly knowing other people, as well as the difficulty of being authentic to oneself. The narrator feels as if they are never truly themselves around the famous actor, and that the actor is more authentic or, perhaps, better at playing her role.

Even before release of this novel, there was online speculation that M is based on Natalie Portman, and that Portman may not be happy with her depiction. Whether or not it is a representation of her is irrelevant to the reader's enjoyment of the novel, and this controversy also plays into discussions of fame and authenticity. Near the end of the novel, M has a meeting with the writer in which M complains that the depiction of her is hurtful. The narrator explains that the person in the book isn't anyone and the narrator imagined the character.

As is often the case with her novels, Cusk raises more questions than she answers, but her contemplation of fame, authenticity and how we move through the world is a fascinating, erudite and unputdownable read.

Angela Crocombe is The Readings Prize and The Readings Foundation coordinator

Good-Bye

Osamu Dazai &

Ralph McCarthy (trans.)

New Directions. PB. \$29.95

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



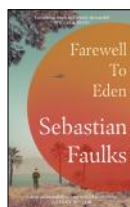
A must-have for Dazai fans, *Good-Bye* spans his delightfully multifaceted, if tragically foreshortened career. Most of the eleven works of short fiction and vignettes in this book have never appeared in English and show the range and breadth of Dazai. They include 'Memories', a tale of teenage love; 'Tengu', a tongue-in-cheek critique of august hucksters of haiku; 'A Bluff Illusion', which presents a literary murder story, and 'Good-Bye', the chapters of a comic romance that was left unfinished.

Farewell to Eden

Sebastian Faulks

Hutchinson Heinemann. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 September



Philip Deval, a soldier recently returned from Normandy, is sent to Palestine in the final days of the British Mandate. The war-weary troops marvel at the sun and paradise which belie a new conflict about to erupt. Years later, Philip, now a teacher in rural England, meets music mistress Frances Darwood. Over long evenings spent listening to records they grow close. But Philip is a changed

man and must confront the secrets and scars of all he has lived through – which threaten to upend his future.

The Leveret

Anna Goldreich

Hamish Hamilton. PB. \$34.99

Available 29 September



Hoping for a fresh start, Clare and Phoebe move to the countryside after the miscarriage of their baby. Back in the community she ran from, Phoebe feels suffocated and throws herself into work on the family farm. Clare withdraws into isolation, drifting around their cottage. When Clare finds a leveret in a nearby forest, it becomes a surrogate to love and as the hare grows into a wild adult, Clare retreats from reality. Desperately clinging to the woman she loves, Phoebe questions whether the hare is a cure for Clare's grief.

Hollywood, Ending

John Green

Penguin. PB. \$34.99

Available 22 September



For rising young actors Kai Laramie and Juniper Castillo, being cast in the buzzy biopic *Andy Warhol Never Gets Old* is the opportunity they've both been waiting for. They're on the verge of breaking out, and maybe even falling in love. Soon, the movie is blowing up, and so are their lives – in exciting, but also terrifying, ways. Told through dual points of view, John Green artfully blends a behind-the-scenes Hollywood love story with an unflinching examination of the insatiable attention economy.

How Can My Manager Be So Stupid?

Kazumasa Hayami &

Haydn Trowell (trans.)

MacLehose. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Kyoko loves books, but life at the Musashino Bookstore is hindering her: she's unable to promote her favourite stories. Her manager's obsession with self-help books and 'inspirational' speeches frustrates her, and as the shop lurches from crisis to crisis, Kyoko's only joy is the prospect of changing a life by selling the perfect book. One day she is given a book that speaks to all her frustrations and opens her eyes to an alarming possibility. What if there's more to her manager's obnoxious antics than meets the eye?

Hafni Says

Helle Helle & Martin Aitken (trans.)

Giramondo. PB. \$29.95

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Hafni says she's getting divorced. To celebrate, she sets out across southern Denmark on a smørrebrød tour to sample Danish classics, open-faced sandwiches and afternoon teas. A month later, she makes a phone call from a rest stop to the novel's narrator to

explain how she went wrong, and why a trip that was meant to take a week has ended up consuming a month. Infused with Helle Helle's subtlety and dark humour, *Hafni Says* explores the desire to be someone else, and what it means to try and remake yourself.

Our Cut of Salt

Deena Helm

Run For It. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



R Haifa is shocked when her daughter, Marina, says she wants to see her grandmother's home in Haifa, Palestine. Haifa has never been to the place of her namesake, feeling that she could never live up to her mother's perfect memory of her city. Marina's grandmother, Nuhad, never spoke about her childhood, making Marina all the more curious to reconnect with her culture and family story.

But her grandmother's home is haunted. The house has not been the same since its family and thousands more Palestinians were displaced in 1948. The house kills all who enter it. But it calls to Marina to come back. It calls to Haifa to return, even if Nuhad's ghost warns her not to.

Our Cut of Salt is a harrowing novel, with prose that drips like honey and characters who stare straight into your soul. The story alternates between today and Nuhad's adolescence in 1948, when the State of Israel was established and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced. Through their eyes, we see how genocide, displacement, and occupation have echoed throughout generations, plaguing their homeland, their identity and very existence. We even see from the perspective of the house as it yearns for its family back, loathing the violation it has had to endure, and developing an insatiable thirst for vengeance.

In her brilliant debut, Deena Helm has gripped the horror genre by the throat, revealing that sentient houses, haunting spectres and supernatural events are a mere embellishment; the true horrors are an everyday experience for many Palestinians. Yet she shines a light on the beauty that remains: the taste of salt in the sea, the kindness of locals, the sense of belonging that no one can ever take away.

Our Cut of Salt is a powerful and heart-rending story of losing your home and returning to it, only to find it irrevocably changed.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

The Witches of Cambridge

Alice Hoffman

Scribner. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 September



R It's 1950 and witchcraft runs deep in Massachusetts' veins: hidden in the shadow of the prestigious Harvard University lie the legacies left by countless women whose histories speak of magic and violence in equal measure. Women whose ancestors now walk the halls of Radcliffe College, gathering as members of the mysterious Lilith Society

and learning the crafts and enchantments of their inheritance. This year, the society's two pledges seemingly couldn't be more different: Lauren is wealthy, self-assured and certain of her place as a witch, whereas Ava is still tangled in her upbringing in Maine, where her parents keep a tight grip on her freedom and where magic was a closely guarded secret. Nonetheless, the two girls' tight friendship is quick to form and as solid as iron. In the beautiful and thrilling world of *Lilith House*, they begin to see beyond the limited worlds they previously knew.

Yet Massachusetts bears another legacy, whose grim consequences lie 20 miles north-east of Cambridge: although the witch trials that made it infamous have long since come to their bloodstained end, the fear and persecution of Salem lives on and now threatens to rise again. Witches are mysteriously disappearing, and Ava finds herself falling for Jamie Mather, disgraced son of a rich Cambridge family and descendent of Cotton Mather, cruel architect of the trials that claimed the lives of so many of her kind. Can she trust him when it feels like the safety of *Lilith House* is now more tenuous than ever? Does she even have a choice when the bond between them burns just as brightly as any spell she might weave?

The Witches of Cambridge is a lush and heartfelt story of love and friendship, dense with poetic imagery and historical detail – perfect for anyone looking for a world to get lost in.

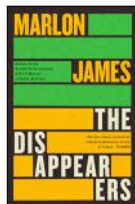
Joe Murray is from Readings Kids

The Disappearers

Marlon James

Hamish Hamilton. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 September



When eight gay men answer a casting call for an openly queer play, in Kingston in 1988, they are taking a big risk. But nothing prepares them for a mob attack at a rehearsal which leaves one man dead, all injured and two subsequently missing. As each survivor heals in their own way, they confront the homophobia and bigotry the assault exposed, but all are forever scarred. And this story won't stop until both the disappearers and the perpetrators have been tracked and an ending reached.

Please Form Pairs

Chiren Kina &

Phil Charbonneau (trans.)

Brazen. PB. \$32.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



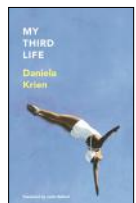
Mishin Mizushima isn't nearly cool enough by Japanese standards. Even her mum has ditched Mishin for a new lover, leaving her alone in their tiny apartment. At school, towering alpha females move and think as a single, terrifyingly beautiful organism. The betas know to lie low. The rest grovel at the bottom of the cut-throat food chain. But one day, a new teacher questions the natural order with a simple instruction – and unleashes a gladiatorial catfight for survival. *Mean Girls* meets *Squid Game* in this lolly-coated death game.

My Third Life

Daniela Krien & Jamie Bulloch (trans.)

MacLehose. PB. \$32.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Linda is entering her third life. Her last chapter ended in tragedy and heartbreak. She has left her family home in Leipzig, escaping to a rural farmhouse in the Saxon countryside. Here, Linda's days are quiet and

simple, revolving around the upkeep of the house, feeding the chickens and tending the garden. But a chance encounter with her neighbour punctures Linda's routine. And through this new, surprising friendship, Linda begins to reach once more towards happiness.

Taipei Story

Rebecca F. Kuang

Borough. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 September



R *Taipei Story* follows college freshman Lily Chen as she embarks on a study-abroad trip. She has enrolled in an intensive language program, hoping to connect with the culture she has inherited, but never

fully understood. A few weeks into her time abroad, the novelty starts to wear off. Her classes are gruelling, her roommate Anna is driving her insane, and to top it all off, a nasty rumour starts to circulate about Lily and another one of her classmates.

Then, shocking news arrives: Lily's grandfather has passed away. The loss forces her to grapple with now-unanswerable questions about her family history. As Lily grieves, she's drawn into a journey of self-discovery, piecing together memories, stories, and silences through a series of hilarious and devastating attempts at connection.

Loosely based on Rebecca F. Kuang's own time studying abroad, *Taipei Story* delivers her biggest offering yet. It is a delight, as a reader, to be taken on this journey of culture, language and coming of age. Vivid descriptions of Taipei's landscape and food scene brought me right into the story. The plot is incredibly engaging, and I felt like I was reading something new and fresh. It's always nice to see an author really writing about something they're inspired by. You can almost feel the excitement within the words on the page. This is a story Kuang HAD to write.

Fans of Kuang should expect a departure from her previous works, but should also get ready to embrace and enjoy another beautifully written novel. I learnt so much reading *Taipei Story*, and it only increased my awe at how smart and engaging Kuang is as a writer.

Thomas Busse is from Readings Doncaster

The Home of the Drowned

Elin Anna Labba &

Elizabeth Clark Wessel (trans.)

Harvill. HB. \$34.99

Available 22 September



Every summer, Ingá, her mother and her aunt travel west to their village on the lake. But the summer Ingá is 13, they arrive to find their home and possessions have disappeared under water,

the land flooded by a dam built to supply hydropower to a society that has continually stolen from them. Following these women's fortunes over 40 years – from 1942 to 1982 – *The Home of the Drowned* is a powerful, haunting saga of a family of Sámi women fighting for their way of life in a changing world.

The Pirate Queen

Ariel Lawhon

S&S. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 September



Born at sea and raised by her father, chief of clan O'Malley, Grace O'Malley learns early that her dreams are not compatible with the life expected of her. Married to a neighbouring chief, she raises a family and supports her husband's battles while never abandoning her passion for the open water. Ousted from her husband's land after his death, Grace begins her career as a pirate in earnest, claiming new territories only to find her livelihood and family threatened by incursions from the powerful Elizabethan regime.

A Tender Age

Chang-rae Lee

Summit. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



Korean American Jeon-Gi is torn between competing ideas of himself. At home, his working-class parents dote on him. Outside, he is part of a roving pack of kids with dominion over a derelict baseball field, weedy parking lot and rusty jungle gym. Getting into and out of trouble is all-consuming. But the summer he turns eleven, he becomes embroiled in a staggering series of events reverberating far beyond himself and his family. A spellbinding story of guilt, innocence, and a boy on the cusp of adolescence.

Clutch

Emily Nemens

HQ Fiction. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



As undergrads, Gregg, Reba, Hillary, Bella, and Carson formed a rare bond. Twenty years later the women, though spread across the country, are firmly linked through their group chat. They've made it through Covid, childbirth and midcareer challenges, but no one can anticipate what's coming next. Converging on Palm Springs for an overdue reunion, the stakes are higher than ever. With wit and heart, *Clutch* asks how much we can give to our friends and our families, and what space we can save for ourselves.

Hollow Bones

Jodi Picoult

Pan Mac. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 September



Molly Fitzgerald and her husband Jesse are no strangers to trauma. Molly's mum went missing on 9/11 and didn't come home. Molly now heads a disaster response unit. Jesse's family was

torn apart by a court case that pitted his parents against his siblings. He sees deception every day in his work as a police polygraph expert. The couple manages to keep the past behind them until a medical emergency exposes a secret, threatening everything they know to be true.

All Her Beautiful Deaths

A. Rushby

HQ Fiction. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



R Culpepper House is an oddity: sitting alone atop a cemetery, it shields its unconventional occupants, twins Edith and Edmund, away from the world after the untimely deaths of their parents and sister. But Minnie, Edith's new maid, is in no position to ask questions; her own twin sister is deathly ill, and few employers in Victorian London offer her more hope than these heirs to a pharmaceutical empire. If Minnie can ignore the macabre whispers that Culpepper House swallows vulnerable women whole, she might just be able to cure her sister – or she may just disappear herself.

Nearly two centuries later, Australian artist Hadley is grieving the deaths of her mother and her mentor when her abusive ex-partner reveals that he has stolen and defaced a priceless heirloom of hers for his own exhibit. Incensed, Hadley goes public on a mission to reclaim the item – a beautiful example of Victorian death photography depicting a recently deceased young woman – and set the record straight. However, her actions catch the eye of Kit Culpepper, the modern scion of his elusive family, who will pay any price to obtain the photograph and Hadley's silence.

From the glamour and fog of 1860s London to the cut-throat Sydney art scene of the 2020s, A. Rushby's *All Her Beautiful Deaths* is a seductive modern Gothic novel that illuminates a long history of stifled women's voices. The threads that bind Minnie and Hadley's stories are expertly woven; Rushby, having published over 30 books under various pseudonyms, has a keen eye for narrative structure and building a foreboding atmosphere. This latest offering, both a compelling mystery and an examination of the endless fractals of grief, is Rushby at her best: sharp as a knife and eerie as the quiet that follows.

Gene Pinter is from Readings Chadstone

Exit Party

Emily St. John Mandel

Picador. PB. \$34.99

Available 15 September



R Emily St. John Mandel's novels are strangely compelling and eerily prescient. I read Mandel's well-known 2014 novel, *Station Eleven*, in March 2020, right before the Covid lockdowns began

and just before boarding a flight to Sydney, from where I wouldn't be able to return to my home in Melbourne for over nine months. *Station Eleven* reveals an alternate future where society has collapsed from a deadly flu pandemic. The descriptions, in particular those of planes grounded on an overgrown runway,

took on a literal significance in the following months.

Exit Party is also set in a near-future dystopia, in a collapsed US, dominated by unrest and border skirmishes. It begins with Ari, who has just been released from prison into a drastically changed world after an 18-year sentence. In Ari's first few months out of prison, she attends a party where reality starts to shift. The number of guests at the party changes: people double or disappear entirely. Years later, the events of this party catch up with Ari as she seeks to make a new life in the fragmented US.

From there the plot kaleidoscopes out, moving dreamily through time and place, weaving in initially disorienting shifts in perspective that are later revealed to be masterful. *Exit Party* wouldn't be a Mandel book if it didn't explore the places where reality grows thin – where different worlds start to leak into each other. This novel conjures a world that seems to be just below the surface of our own. *Exit Party* is a standalone novel, but it's compelling in the manner of *Station Eleven*, while containing the surreal beauty of *Sea of Tranquillity* and *The Glass Hotel*. I just hope it remains fiction.

Stephanie King is from Readings Emporium

You'll Love It Here Natalie Sue

Borough. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



When Mona moved into her glorified broom closet in a broken-down apartment block, she didn't mean to stay long. But somehow, she's spent years with the late-night noises, the missing

packages, and the fact underwear keeps disappearing from one of the dryers. So when she's offered free rent in exchange for some work around the building, she jumps at the opportunity to save some money and escape. As long as she doesn't have to talk to any of her neighbours, it should be fine. But the longer she sticks around, the more this falling-apart building – and the weirdos who live inside it – start to feel like something worth fighting for.

Primeval and Other Times Olga Tokarczuk & Antonia Lloyd-Jones (trans.)

Text. PB. \$34.99
Available 15 September



First published in Polish in 1996, this fable-like novel by Nobel Prize-winner Olga Tokarczuk charts Poland's turbulent 20th century through three generations in the life of a mythical Polish village.

For the denizens of Primeval, the world beyond its fields and forests is but a dream. Cornspike, an outcast, raises her daughter in the forest, the squire Popielski loses his faith and becomes obsessed with a dream game, and Nonhuman beings have their stories, or Times, too. Yet in 1914, as war carries the miller away, bloodshed, betrayal, and the dramas of daily life mark the birth, life, and decline of Primeval's world and Times, making us consider afresh the stories by which we comprehend our own.

The Housekeeper Rose Tremain

C&W. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Mrs Danowski, Danni, is the housekeeper of a grand mansion on the Cornish coast. When young writer Daphne du Maurier arrives to research her new novel, she and Danni are drawn into a clandestine and intoxicating affair. For Danni, it is an all-consuming love; for Daphne a submission to long-suppressed desires. But their relationship is destined for heartbreak. When Danni finds herself transformed into a malign, jealous character in Daphne's novel, she seeks respite from the hurt by telling her own story: *The Housekeeper*.

Everything to the Sea Alicia Upano

Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99

Available 1 September

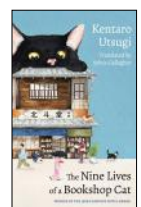


Home in Hilo, Hawai'i for one final summer, Jane is working and saving for her senior year, on her way to her dream of becoming an architect. Jane doesn't remember Kenji but he hasn't forgotten her, always buried in her studies. Jane tells herself it's only a summer fling but as the days pass the pair find they are falling in love. When a tsunami destroys much of Hilo they are convulsed with grief. Jane leaves while Kenji stays to help rebuild. Seven years later, Jane and Kenji meet again – and find that the past is not as easily laid to rest as they thought.

The Nine Lives of a Bookshop Cat Kentaro Utsugi & Sylvia Gallagher (trans.)

MacLehose. PB. \$29.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability

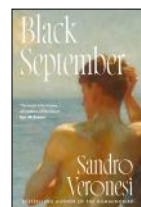


In his third life, Kinnosuke the cat belonged to a famous author. Now in his ninth he wants nothing more to do with humans. Drawn to the city in search of food, he comes across the Hokuto-do Bookshop, owned by a woman who has four adopted cats. Soon Kinnosuke notices the mysterious shop's quirks and discovers the other cats also once belonged to famous authors. When a young aspiring writer faces tragedy, Kinnosuke must confront his own life and the bookshop's hidden past to help keep her dream alive.

Black September Sandro Veronesi & Michael F. Moore (trans.)

Sceptre. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Summer, 1972. At his family's summer house in Tuscany, 12-year-old Gigio Bellandi is on the cusp of adolescence. As he discovers the adult thrills of music and reading, Gigio begins to learn who he is and to see his family without the veils of childhood. When Astel Raimondi enters his orbit, a girl who kindles feelings

he could never have imagined, his life is changed forever. But every new chapter has an ending, and as an unexpected storm starts to threaten an idyllic summer, Gigio's world will be overturned.

Graphic Narrative

You Must Take Part in Revolution: A Graphic Novel

Badiucao (illus.) & Melissa Chan

Affirm. PB. \$39.99

Available 1 September



It's 2035. The US and China are at war. America is a proto-fascist state. Taiwan is divided into two. As conflict escalates between nuclear powers, three idealistic youths who first met in Hong Kong develop diverging beliefs about how best to navigate this techno-authoritarian landscape. Andy, Maggie, and Olivia travel different paths toward transformative change, each confronting to what extent they will fight for freedom, and who they will become in doing so. A powerful and important book about global totalitarian futures, and the costs of resistance.

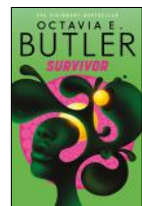
Science Fiction & Fantasy

Survivor

Octavia E. Butler

Headline. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



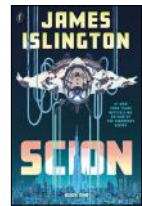
In this classic back in print for the first time in 50 years, Alanna flees a plague-scarred Earth to a new planet, believing she has found a peaceful new home for humanity. Instead, she finds herself caught between two battling civilisations. Now she must play a dangerous game to survive. Make alliances, while plotting betrayals. Assimilate, while retaining her humanity. Open her heart, while risking everything. Alanna knows that the mission of her fellow colonists is to preserve humankind. But what if the best way to retain her humanity is to leave it all behind?

Scion (Scion, Book 1)

James Islington

Text. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



As a fan of James Islington's *Hierarchy* series, I was very curious to see what he would do with *Scion*. At around 200 pages, *Scion* is a very different reading experience from his previous works. There's no expansive fantasy world to get your head around or an enormous cast of characters to keep track of. Instead, Islington throws you straight into a bleak cyberpunk world and lets the story move. The protagonist, Azure, is a cybernetically enhanced assassin who is used to taking out 'Lifers', the wealthy elite who can medically extend their lives while everyone else is left struggling with limited resources and miserable living conditions.

Azure's life gets considerably more complicated when he takes a job protecting an ultra-wealthy woman. What initially seems like a fairly straightforward assignment quickly turns into something much darker, as Azure finds himself trying to work out why she is being hunted and who he can actually trust. At the same time, the mystery connects back to an explosion that killed his friend four years earlier, giving Azure a much more personal reason to uncover what is really going on.

I really enjoyed how quickly *Scion* moves. There's murder, conspiracies and cybernetic enhancements. It has that classic dystopian feeling of a society where the rich are literally able to buy more time while everyone else is left to deal with the consequences. But it never feels overwhelming in explaining every little detail of the world. The story is very much centred on Azure and his mission, which works perfectly for such a short novel.

I'd recommend it to fans of cyberpunk thrillers, dystopian fiction or *The Murderbot Diaries*. If you like morally questionable characters, murder mysteries and futuristic worlds, *Scion* might be the book for you.

Nicole Vasilev is from Readings State Library

Massif

Garth Nix

A&U. PB. \$34.99

Available 8 September



R Making his adult science fiction debut, Garth Nix's *Massif* is a must-read for anyone who grew up on Nix's stories. Fans of his YA works will instantly be able to recognise Nix's writing

style, but the content is a bit more mature. We also follow characters with more life experience, who have become somewhat jaded with the world around them.

Massif follows humanity after it has been granted access to the cosmos thanks to huge, extraterrestrial objects known as Massifs. Our protagonist is Parnell, a pilot and soldier in Earth's intergalactic navy, who is currently serving aboard one such Massif. The Massifs are easily the most intriguing element in the world Nix has created. No one understands how the Massifs work, where they come from, or even why they allow humans to continue to use them in their intergalactic wars. The mystery surrounding the Massifs and their avatars becomes very unsettling and will keep the reader intrigued. The way Nix writes about the ships is evocative and absolutely gorgeous, with some passages starting to lean quite strongly into horror. It is classic Garth Nix and reminded me very much of his *Old Kingdom* series.

This book is definitely more sci-fantasy as opposed to hard sci-fi. Think of the vague mysticism of *Dune* over the highly detailed science of *Children of Time*. The mystery of the Massifs means a lot of the details about how things work are intentionally unexplained, which might be frustrating to readers who want to be able to understand exactly how everything functions. Complementing the mystery of the Massifs is the story of a ragtag military crew desperately trying to rescue a member of their team who has become stranded during combat. This is a fun sci-fi standalone perfect for adults who loved Nix's work when they were younger.

Alicia Guiney is from Readings Kids **R**

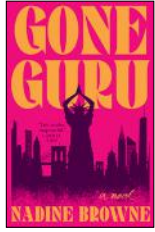
Crime

Gone Guru

Nadine Browne

Fremantle. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



R Noni Barlow believed moving from Western Australia to New York to join a creative writing program at New York University would be an exciting and revitalising adventure. She didn't think she would end up loathing her writing workshops, that the one and only Joyce Carol Oates would particularly hate the novel Noni had been working on, or that her roommate would go missing. Her roommate, Vincent: a meditation guru with a massive following online, who turned out not to be quite the proletarian socialist he claimed. After he disappears, Noni discovers that he has, in fact, a million-dollar trust fund. As she looks into his mysterious background and suspicious family members, Noni will finally discover just what a mess she has entangled herself in – and perhaps this might, finally, be her big break as a writer.

Gone Guru is part mystery, part literary fiction, and it explores the mediums we use to either forget or confront the past. Amid the mystery of her missing roommate, we often delve into Noni's own past and her life growing up in a strict, evangelical, doomsday cult. Leaving for NYU wasn't just pursuing a dream; it was an escape from a home Noni could never call hers.

Drawing upon the author's own experiences studying writing at NYU (including her own critiques from Joyce Carol Oates!), *Gone Guru* is written with quirky humour, flair and wit. It is at times a funny and scathing review of the creative process and our sources of inspiration. One man's trash is another man's treasure – or, in this case, one person's tragedy might be another person's literary masterpiece. Nadine Browne meditates on how humans react to their past, what outlets they find to deal with it, and what that says about us as a creative, imaginative species.

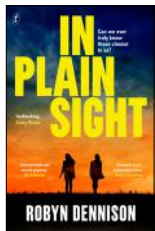
Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

In Plain Sight

Robyn Dennison

Text. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



R When Lara Wilton, a detective whose job involves solving sex crimes and child abuse cases, is called to investigate a case in her hometown of Birchwood, NSW, she is glad to have her mind distracted from a recent betrayal she's experienced. In Birchwood, a man has been arrested for possessing child abuse material of identical twins – both easily identifiable and known to all in the town. He claims he found the material on a USB left in a pub bathroom. But if that's true, who left it there – and why? And why are the twins, Lucy and Violet, so actively resisting the investigation?

Robyn Dennison, author of YA novel *Blind Spot*, which was shortlisted for The Readings Young Adult Prize in 2024, enters the crime genre with a novel full of the same complexity and sensitivity as her debut. *In Plain Sight* is a compelling and unflinching character study of those who pursue justice – the mental and emotional toll of such endeavours, and the weight of the responsibility. Detective Lara wants nothing more than to find the person responsible for these terrible crimes and imprison them for life. But how should she respond when the victims don't want to come forward and instead want to leave their past behind them?

Dennison challenges the reader with this question and many others that can arise in cases of sex crimes – among them questions of agency, privacy and power. *In Plain Sight* is a chilling and enthralling mystery about confronting the demons of the past, whether or not you choose to fight them.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

The Wreck

Riley James

A&U. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



R It's 1997 and Teo, a PhD student, is trying to figure out what happened to a Tiger Moth plane and its pilot, Van Spector, when they disappeared in 1977 over Bass Strait. Both Teo and his obnoxious academic supervisor, Waffle – who has made a career speculating on the mystery – hear rumours that plane wreckage has been found on a remote island. They book a fishing boat, which comes with Flinty as captain and Hannah as deckhand, and set off to find out. But things don't go smoothly. When their boat capsizes in a storm and the party is split up, Teo and Hannah find themselves stranded on a beach with no supplies and no idea where they are. When a mysterious woman called Malin appears, the pair are grateful to have been found and think that rescue is imminent. But things are not so simple. Is she a helper or a hindrance? Are there others on the island? What dangers lie in wait for them? Will they ever get off this island?

The Wreck raises interesting questions around the drive to self-preservation and when that crosses over into selfishness. It highlights the dangers of losing one's humanity when self-interest is the only motivation, and how the struggle to survive can dehumanise some while others demonstrate compassion. Riley James debunks some of the myths around living off the land – be prepared for a few grisly details. The book also shows what happens when hope, dreams and ambitions are extinguished: '... death had been unfurling behind her like the train of a black wedding gown.' With echoes of *Lord of the Flies* and *Heart of Darkness* in its juxtaposition of civilisation and savagery, *The Wreck* exposes the ugly side of human nature – but *The Wreck* also has friendship at its heart, and a quest to solve a longstanding mystery

that has personal ramifications for one of the characters. This is a book to curl up with and read inside on a wet weekend, far away from the roaring winds and desolation of a remote island in Bass Strait.

Pauline Hopkins is the manager of Readings Hawthorn

We Chase Shadows

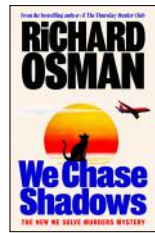
(We Solve Murders, Book 2)

Richard Osman

Viking. PB. Was \$34.99

\$27.99

Available 1 September



Richard Osman's globe-trotting series *We Solve Murders* returns with another thrilling new mystery. In the Italian hills, a body is found on the steps of a private villa at sunrise. Our

mismatched detective trio Amy, Rose and Steve return, in pursuit of an elusive and ruthless killer. Between Italy and Palm Springs, via Barcelona and Steve's sleepy village pub, they uncover an impossible case where it seems that everyone is hiding something.

The Reckoning

Vikki Petraitis

Summit. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September



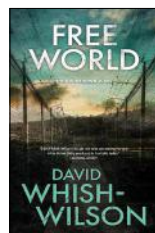
R When two convicted rapists are freed on appeal, the people of Deception Bay are split down the middle. The men swagger onto a packed cricket ground on Australia Day to a hero's welcome. Before lunch is over, dozens of people fall ill. Among them, the newly released men. As panic rips through the town and emergency services buckle, Detective Antigone Pollard and her partner, Wozza, scramble to figure out what has happened. Is it an accident? Or was this deliberate? When Antigone's mother, a doctor, vanishes while responding to a call for help, Antigone enters a desperate race to find her. But time is running out. With no good options left, Antigone does what she always does – relies on herself.

Free World

David Whish-Wilson

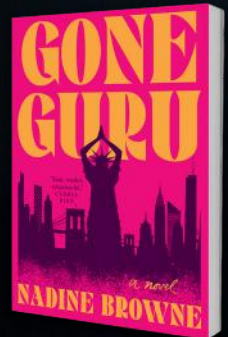
Fremantle. PB. \$34.99

Available 1 September

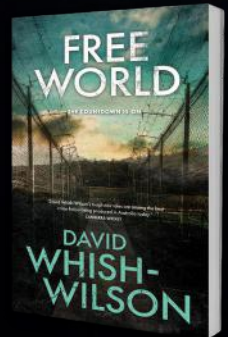


When an assassination attempt in a prison cell winds up with the wrong man dead, Lee Southern is hired to protect the real target. The millennium is just weeks away and rumours of a complete technological meltdown have guards and prisoners on edge. As violence simmers, tensions ignite, and Lee's hopes of a quick mission disintegrate. Going undercover in a prison full of killers is his most dangerous assignment yet. **R**

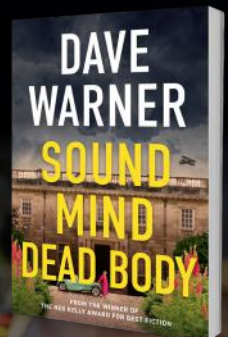
A COCKTAIL OF CRIME



Noni Barlow is broke, jet-lagged and alone in New York with nothing but a dream and a manuscript.



Going undercover in a prison full of killers is Lee Southern's most dangerous assignment yet.



Devon, 1929, and Fred Willets flies into murder most foul in a manor most fine.



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The Readings New Australian Fiction Prize 2026 shortlist



Angela Crocombe is
The Readings Prize and
The Readings
Foundation coordinator

Angela Crocombe takes you into the judges' meeting and shares the story of how the shortlist was decided this year!

This year, we have taken a new direction with The Readings Prize and will be announcing news relating to our Children's, Young Adult and New Australian Fiction Prizes separately to give each branch of the Prize more individual attention. We are beginning with the shortlist for New Australian Fiction.

Shortlisting time is always exciting. Never more so than this year, when we have changed how we run the prize to bring it back to being more grassroots and reflective of the large Readings team – across our nine shops, web, warehouse, events and head office – as an entire cohort. Rather than limiting the number of judges to four as we have done in the past, this year we put out an unlimited call-out and consequently have had 15 judges, ranging in age from their early 20s to their 70s, reading and reflecting on our longlisted titles to determine the shortlist.

'It was remarkable to me that these 15 people could have such different reading experiences of the same books. It reminded me that our reactions to books depend on so many different factors at any given moment'

of judges who love each book, and why they love them, which means these factors can be incorporated into the assessment. It's much fairer to the books this way, and it's a more democratic process.

Right from the get-go, the debate was feisty and there was a high level of possessiveness over the books the judges wanted to champion. We went around the table, giving everyone a chance to nominate their favourites from the longlist. Enthusiasm levels were high, the discussion went on for a long time, and many interjections had to be shushed so people could speak. As moderator, I wondered if we could ever possibly come to an agreement. In retrospect, wrangling four judges is fine – trying to find consensus among 15 seemed at some points nigh on impossible!

I've learnt that I may need some instruction in high-stakes negotiation techniques, but I've also enjoyed a lively demonstration of something I already knew, but don't often have the opportunity to see in action at such a scale: that my colleagues are highly intelligent individuals with many thoughtful opinions. It was remarkable to me that these 15 people could have such different reading experiences of the same books. It reminded me that our reactions to books depend on so many different factors at any given moment, including our background and life experiences, of course, but also what is happening for us emotionally, physically and intellectually at the time of reading. Books hit us in different ways at different times.

The six books we finally chose are passionately loved by most judges and agreed upon as highly deserving by the others. They are all well-written and speak to a diverse range of Australian experiences; each has something unique to offer all readers.

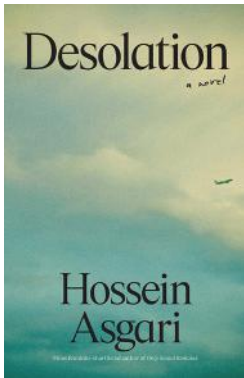
We have a delightful take on Australian history that provides some alternative scenarios, a coming-of-age tale about growing up in an immigrant family in Adelaide, a story about the aftermath of trauma in Iran in the 1980s, and a look at contemporary Sydney and the tensions around race and class. Finally, there are two speculative tales that look at our natural environment and responses to its degradation in strikingly different but equally beautiful ways.

We are utterly delighted to share these six Australian novels with you. Each speaks to some aspect of our identity and our dreams in the current moment. Our judges will be sharing their passion for these books with you throughout the month across Readings' social media, so please keep an eye out for them and let us know which is your favourite book on the shortlist.

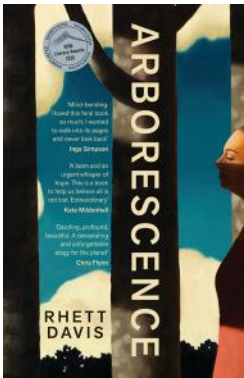
As coordinator of the prize, it is a fascinating process reading the ratings and comments as they come in – and oh my, how they differ. A book that several readers absolutely LOVE might leave another reader unmoved, or even strongly reacting in the other direction! In the past, with so few judges (and this is also the case with many prizes generally), if there is a pronounced negative reaction to a book, it will often be removed from the potential shortlist, unless one judge is prepared to fight tooth and nail for it. In our revamped judging process, there are more judges and therefore more advocates to speak up for the books, so it is more about the numbers

Author photo credits

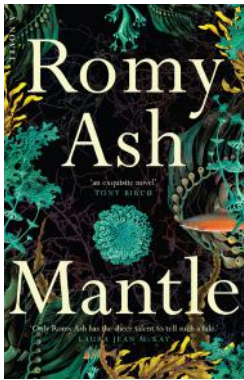
¹ Hossein Asgari by Cath Leo, ² Romy Ash courtesy of Hardie Grant, ³ Rhett Davis by Ben Hoffman, ⁴ Olivia De Silva by Ben Matera, ⁵ Zeynab Gamielden courtesy of Ultimo, ⁶ Wayne Marshall courtesy of Pan Macmillan.



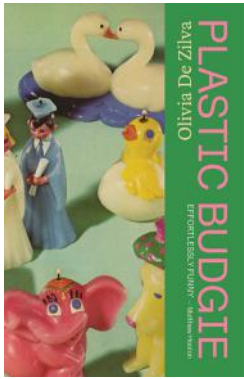
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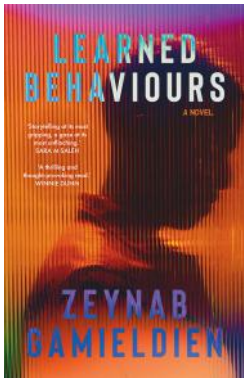
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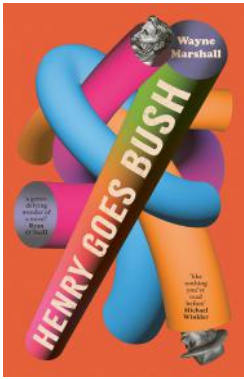
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6



1 Desolation

Hossein Asgari
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99

In 1980s Iran, Amin is a teenager who has fallen in love with the girl next door. His brother is a mathematical genius who wants to make his fortune in America, but he is killed in the downing of Flight 655 on his journey there. As Amin grapples with his family’s tragedy and attempts to make a new life for himself, his relationships expose him to new truths and dangers. *Desolation* explores the enduring power of storytelling in the face of tragedy.

2 Mantle

Romy Ash
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99

Ursula, a geologist, leaves her job to be with her dying mother on the coast of Tasmania. A strange sickness is infecting everyone. It starts as a rash and then psyllium strands start growing on the body. As she grieves her mother’s death, Ursula takes up with a younger man from the pub and develops the sickness herself. This is a strange, beautiful rumination on environmental decline, pandemics and grief.

3 Arborescence

Rhett Davis
Hachette. PB. \$32.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability

Bren works online doing tasks and has never met his co-workers. His boss may not be real. When his partner, Caelyn, discovers a group of people purporting to become trees as a response to the climate crisis, she starts investigating. This takes her on a journey away from Bren to become a high-profile international speaker. This is the story of a relationship and of a passionate response to a world in crisis.

4 Plastic Budgie

Olivia De Zilva
Pink Shorts Press. PB. \$32.99

This coming-of-age novel about growing up as a child of Asian immigrants in parochial Adelaide is razor sharp, nostalgic and laugh-out-loud funny. Olivia is raised not only by her parents, but also her beloved grandparents, Poh Poh and Gong Gong. Questioning how our memories and our families make us who we are, this is autofiction at its absolute best – a joyous, delightful ride.

5 Learned Behaviours

Zeynab Gamiel Dien
Ultimo. PB. \$34.99

Zaid is climbing the ladder as a barrister in the staid corridors of his law office, trying to fit in with the old money. It’s a long way from his Western Sydney high school and the traumatic events of his final year, when his best friend, Hass, was arrested for murder. When Hass’s sister, Amira, finds him and asks him to read her brother’s diary, Zaid is pulled back to the world he left behind and starts to consider whether Hass might have been innocent.

6 Henry Goes Bush

Wayne Marshall
Picador. PB. \$34.99

In 1892, Henry Lawson is banished to Bourke by his publisher to discover the real bush and hopefully stem his alcoholism. His literary feud with ‘Banjo’ Paterson is at its peak when he challenges Paterson to an actual duel to the death. Using a fascinating blend of fact and fiction, this is a hilarious and surreal story of how Lawson’s life might have happened differently. **R**

Whether you are for or against AI, think it will solve all our problems or create untold new ones, Professor Toby Walsh's new book, *God AI*, will open your eyes to the existential questions AI raises that we all need to face now.

Are you an AI boomer or doomer?

'Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history. Unfortunately, it might also be the last.'

Physicist Stephen Hawking, 2014

God AI is the most important book I've written. But it is not a book I wanted to write. Or indeed a book I wanted you to read.

For the last 50 years, I've had a dream. It was a simple dream: I wanted to build artificial intelligence. I thought this was a good dream, since AI would help make the world a better place. And, in many ways, AI already has made the world a better place.

DeepMind's AlphaFold has solved one of science's grandest challenges, transforming biology with AI that predicts the three-dimensional structure of proteins, the molecules of life. OpenAI and the Khan Academy have built Khanmigo, an AI tutor that provides personalised support in maths, science and humanities. And Darktrace have developed Antigena, an AI-powered 'digital immune system' that detects and responds to cyber threats before humans are even aware of them. What's not to appreciate about AI like this?

This is the sort of AI-powered future I had dreamt about for 50 years, ever since I was a young boy reading too much science fiction. It's a future in which AI solves many of humanity's problems. And it's these AI dreams that have driven my passion for our AI future ever since.

But recently something has changed. There is now increasing fear about our AI-powered future.

I opened the entertainment system on a recent flight and discovered that one of the movie categories, after 'Action Movies' but before the ever popular category of 'Family Movies', was 'AI Doom'. It was a whole bloody category!

How did we get to AI doom?

To understand what has changed – and what has made me, a long-time AI researcher, step back and question what I have been working towards for my whole life, you need to appreciate three things: a recurring pattern, a troubling paradox and a prior prediction.

Let's start with the recurring pattern.

In the last few years, I started to observe something odd. Many people I knew who had also dedicated their lives to advancing AI were becoming afraid. These were not sceptics or technophobes on the fringe of the field but some of its leading figures. They were people who understood AI and its future direction better than most. Consider my colleague Geoffrey Hinton. In May 2023, he shocked the AI community when he quit his job at Google. The reason? He wanted to be able to speak freely about his concerns regarding AI. Now, Hinton isn't just any old AI researcher. Just after he left Google, Hinton won the Nobel Prize in Physics for his foundational work in deep learning – the breakthrough powering much of modern AI. And he wasn't leaving just any job. In quitting Google, one of the companies leading the AI race, he gave up access to its almost unlimited resources to build artificial intelligence – and in AI, resources are key to success.

What made Hinton's departure from Google even more striking wasn't just what he said – that humans might be 'merely a passing stage in the evolution of intelligence' – but the echo of the past that many noted. In 1950, Alan Turing wrote what is considered the first scientific paper about artificial intelligence.¹ A year later, he made a prediction on a BBC broadcast that continues to haunt the field today. Once machines could learn from experience like humans, Turing said, they 'would not take long to outstrip our feeble powers ... At some stage therefore we should have to expect the machines to take control.'²

When interviewed by *Life* in 1970, another of the field's founders, Marvin Minsky, predicted that 'man's limited mind may not be able to control such immense mentalities ... Once the computers get control, we might never get it back. We would survive at their sufferance. If we're lucky, they might decide to keep us as pets.'

This isn't sounding too good. So how could machines take control?

Irving Good, a mathematician who worked alongside Turing at Bletchley Park during World War II, predicted how. He called it the 'intelligence explosion'. This is the point where machines become smart enough to improve themselves, leading to an unstoppable cascade of ever-increasing intelligence. This idea is now more popularly called the 'singularity'.

Good predicted that the singularity would create an ultra-intelligent machine – and, somewhat ominously, that this would be 'the last invention that man need ever make'³ But what if this was the last

invention that humanity ever makes, because the invention of an ultra-intelligent machine actually hastens our end?

Such an ultra-intelligent machine might seem to us like a god in its capabilities. Indeed, there are even those who think that we might create an actual god. Tech entrepreneur and biohacker Bryan Johnson has predicted that 'we are creating God in the form of superintelligence ... the irony is that the human storytelling got it exactly in the reverse, that we are the creators of God, and that we will create God in our own image.'⁴

This brings me to the troubling paradox. AI is often compared to electricity, another 'general purpose technology' that has impacted many parts of our lives.⁵ Now, the better someone understands electricity, the less likely they are to fear it. But the opposite seems to hold for AI. The better someone understands artificial intelligence, the more likely, it seems, that they fear it.

I started seeing this fear everywhere. My colleague Stuart Russell, one of the authors of the leading textbook on AI, warned that success 'could be civilisation ending'.⁶ Another friend, Max Tegmark, author of a New York Times bestseller about AI, called it 'a suicide race where everybody loses'.⁷ Marietje Schaake, from Stanford's Cyber Policy Center, pointed out that we 'are talking about the destruction of the human race, the end of human civilisation'.⁸ Nate Soares, president of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute, claimed that he doesn't set aside money for a pension. 'I just don't expect the world to be around,' he told a reporter from the Atlantic in 2025.⁹

In early 2023, the Center for AI Safety published a worrying statement about the risks of AI. 'Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war,' it said. The hundreds of signatures included those of some of the industry's most influential people, such as Sam Altman, Dario Amodei and Demis Hassabis, who head the three leading AI labs: OpenAI, Anthropic and Google DeepMind, respectively.

Oddly, the statement didn't connect AI risk with what is arguably the most pressing societal risk facing the planet today: the climate emergency. But, this objection aside, the present is catching up to these fearful warnings with terrifying speed. AI-generated 'deep fakes' have been used to rob banks of millions of dollars. AI-powered chatbots have encouraged vulnerable people to commit suicide. And AI-powered drones have hunted down soldiers fleeing on the battlefield. These aren't science-fiction scenarios; they aren't even warnings. They happened.

Now to the prior prediction. In 1965, in the United States, the President's Science Advisory Committee issued a report warning about carbon dioxide as an 'invisible pollutant'. It described humanity as 'unwittingly conducting a vast geophysical experiment' that could result in a runaway exponential that changed our climate.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the committee's warnings went largely unheeded. The energy companies causing this change not only ignored the scientific concerns but also tried to bury them. Back in 1965, it would have been so much easier to have corrected humanity's course. Instead, we continued with our human-driven experiment in changing the planet's climate.

Was this a forerunner of the situation we face today with AI? Are we unwittingly conducting another vast technological experiment that risks creating a runaway exponential? A human-driven experiment that, like climate change, could threaten our very existence? And are the companies behind this change again ignoring the scientific concerns? Will we, once again, act to curb the danger only after it is too late?

There's something particularly devastating about watching a preventable exponential disaster occur. By the time the consequences become obvious to the general population, the window for prevention has passed. Just ask an epidemiologist about pandemics, or a climate scientist about tipping points – or, increasingly, ask one of my colleagues about artificial intelligence.

Our problem, I've come to realise, isn't only artificial intelligence. It is also human intelligence. How good is our capacity to recognise and respond to existential risks before they become existential realities? Is humanity wise enough to respond in time?

These are the issues I explore in *God AI*. How does artificial intelligence threaten our very existence? What happens if – or should that be 'when' – AI hits the singularity? Could machines become much smarter than us? And could they perhaps become so intelligent that it is game over for humanity?

These are serious questions. They demand serious answers.



God AI: Boom or Doom?
What to Expect When
Machines Outsmart Us
Toby Walsh

La Trobe. PB. \$36.99

Available 1 September

Toby Walsh is one of the world's leading researchers in artificial intelligence. He is a professor of artificial intelligence at the University of New South Wales and chief scientist at its AI institute, UNSW.ai. He is the author of five books about AI, including *God AI*, published this month.

Content notes

This is an edited extract from *God AI*. Numbered endnotes referenced in the text can be found in the book.

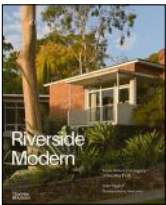
† In honour of Alan Turing's foundational work, the most important prize in computing is named the Turing Award. It is often considered to be the Nobel Prize in computing. Hinton won the 2018 Turing Award before collecting the 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics.

‡ I imagine that women will go on making inventions and not being properly recognised for doing so, as in the past. **R**

Nonfiction

Architecture

Riverside Modern: An Architectural Legacy in Studley Park
Jake Taylor & Jack Lovel (photog.)
T&H. HB. \$85
Available 1 September



Riverside Modern journeys into one of Melbourne's most remarkable architectural enclaves: Studley Park. Framed by the Yarra River, this quiet neighbourhood contains Australia's finest concentration of modernist houses. In the decade after the Second World War, visionary architects including Robin Boyd, Peter McIntyre and Dione McIntyre refined ideas about light, site and modern living that would shape Australian architecture for decades. This book explores key residential projects to reveal the creative energy behind this extraordinary pocket of design.

Australian Studies

Quarterly Essay 103: Time of Monsters – What Future for Liberalism?
Waleed Aly
Black Inc. PB. \$29.99
Available 7 September



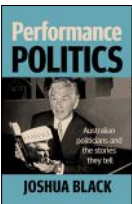
In this wonderfully clarifying essay, Waleed Aly examines what happened to liberalism. As a set of ideas, it offered equality and guaranteed freedoms. But increasingly, we live in a post-liberal world. Aly maps the new politics arising – both conservative and progressive – as mainstream politics loses its appeal. He examines the new battles over identity, injustice and speech, and discusses the way instability has become central to contemporary life. When did freedom start to feel so unfree?

The Big Steal: How Steel Tycoon Sanjeev Gupta Fooled Australia and the World
Paul Barry
A&U. PB. \$36.99
Available 1 September



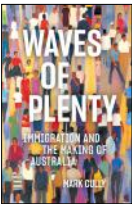
When fast-talking billionaire Sanjeev Gupta jetted into Whyalla, South Australia, to buy its bankrupt steelworks in 2017, he promised to invest billions of dollars in a mega green steel plant that would help save the planet. Now, his promises are unfulfilled, and his global empire is collapsing. Corporate police from several countries are chasing Gupta for suspected fraud, fraudulent trading and money laundering. This is the incredible story of the meteoric rise and fall of an entrepreneur, and how he got away with it.

Performance Politics: Australian Politicians and the Stories They Tell
Joshua Black
NewSouth. PB. \$44.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



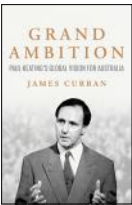
Performance Politics explores how Australian politicians have fashioned and refashioned stories about themselves, their lives, personal ambitions and political entanglements. Drawing on memoirs, autobiographies, documentaries, media coverage, personal papers and original interviews, the book reveals how much of our recent political history has been delivered through the prism of the publishing house, the book launch, the documentary, and the lounge rooms where political retrospectives were broadcast.

Waves of Plenty: Immigration and the Making of Australia
Mark Cully
La Trobe. PB. \$39.99
Available 22 September



In this landmark work, Mark Cully tells the full story of immigration to Australia, from pre-colonial origins through colonisation, the gold rushes, the post-war immigration boom, the end of the White Australia policy, and the modern era of unbound temporary migration. Tracing how immigration has changed Australia, Cully dismantles persistent myths, gives human faces to statistics, and maps the forces that transformed a distant colony into one of the world's most diverse societies.

Grand Ambition: Paul Keating's Global Vision for Australia
James Curran
Scribner. HB. Was \$49.99
\$39.99
Available 1 September



As Australia stands on the edge of the greatest reappraisal of its strategic circumstances, what is the relevance of Paul Keating's vision for Australia in the world today? Written with never-before-seen documents from Keating's archive, and drawing on conversations and interviews with him over many years, this book explores the ambitions for Australia and its place in the world that guided Keating: arguably the last Prime Minister with a compelling long-term vision for the country.

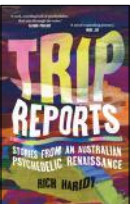
Handing Over the Keys: Indigenous Peoples and Carceral Injustice
Linda Mussell
MUP. PB. \$39.99
Available 15 September



Generations of Indigenous people have experienced injustices wrought by institutional confinement. Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Canada have all recognised their enduring

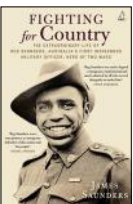
records and rates of Indigenous imprisonment. Linda Mussell compares these countries seeking the keys to transformative change through rigorous policy analysis and interviews with frontline practitioners, policy professionals, and people who have lived experience of imprisonment. Her goal is policy transformation to address both Indigenous hyper-imprisonment and intergenerational impacts.

Trip Reports: Stories from an Australian Psychedelic Renaissance
Rich Haridy
NewSouth. PB. \$34.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Psychedelics have been one of the most exciting – and controversial – developments in mental health treatment in recent years. But what are these mind-altering drugs actually doing? And are psychedelics about to hit the mainstream? In *Trip Reports*, Rich Haridy takes a deep dive into the experimental science and treatments happening across Australia and the world, from the little-known history of psychedelic use in medicine in 1960s Melbourne, to the latest science on the impacts of microdosing and new models for psychedelic therapies.

Fighting for Country: The Extraordinary Life of Reg Saunders, Australia's First Indigenous Military Officer, Hero of Two Wars
James Saunders
A&U. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



Told by his nephew James, this is the story of Captain Reginald Saunders MBE, Australia's first Indigenous commissioned officer, who served with distinction in World War II and Korea. Enlisting in regional Victoria, 1940, Saunders' journey would take him across three continents, and he would be decorated, discriminated against, wounded, bereaved, forsaken but victorious. More than a story of his remarkable military career it is also the story of Reg's family, his people and his postwar life of struggle and service.

A Suitable Man: The Eccentric Empire of Fletcher Jones
Jock Serong
HarperCollins. PB. \$36.99
Available 1 September



Many Australians know of Fletcher Jones – the stores, the clothing, and the dad slacks – but few know the man behind it all. Born into poverty in Bendigo David Fletcher Jones left school at 13, fought in the First World War, and became a travelling salesman. Jones then went on to revolutionise menswear with his

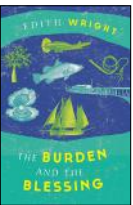
ready-to-wear trousers as well as founding his manufacturing and retail empire on profit-sharing and staff ownership. This is the remarkable life and success of a visionary businessman and entrepreneur.

Melbourne's Palace: The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens
Dr Michelle Stevenson
Museums Victoria. HB. \$49.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



In most great cities there is one building that epitomises its spirit and history. In Melbourne, it is the Royal Exhibition Building, surrounded by the Carlton Gardens. Built for the Melbourne International Exhibition held in 1880–81, the site was granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 2004 – the first building in Australia to achieve that honour. Including beautiful modern photography and a diverse array of archival imagery, this authoritative guide allows readers to view this remarkable site from all angles.

The Burden and the Blessing
Edith Wright
Magabala. PB. \$34.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Edith Wright explores the complex legacy of her great-grandfathers, Harry Hunter and Adrien D'Antoine, two white European men who came to rule Australia's pearling industry and who changed the face of Broome and the Kimberley forever. Fathering many mixed-race children and known for violence towards Bardi Jawi people the two men and their Aboriginal children lived complicated lives in a time of racism, exploitation and government control. This is a powerful reckoning with family, history and belonging.

Biography

Great and Unfortunate Things
Jason Arday
S&S. PB. \$36.99
Available 1 September



The late Jason Arday was no stranger to headlines. At the age of 37, he became the youngest Black professor in the history of the University of Cambridge. In *Great and Unfortunate Things*, Arday writes about growing up in a London council house, being diagnosed with autism and global development delay at age three, and being non-verbal. With the support of his family, friends and mentors, Arday finally found his voice at 11, learned to read at 18, and discovered a passion for education and helping others that would transform his tragically short life.

Hawking: His Life and Work

Graham Farmelo

John Murray. PB. \$36.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



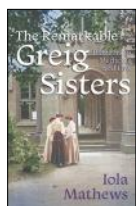
A brilliant theoretical physicist, with an insatiable curiosity and appreciation for life, Stephen Hawking lived one of the most extraordinary lives of the past century and transformed our understanding of black holes and the origins of the universe. And yet, none of this should have been possible. Aged 21, he was given only a few years to live and spent the next 55 showing what can be achieved despite near-hopeless odds. *Hawking* is the definitive portrait of an exceptional man and extraordinary intellect.

The Remarkable Greig Sisters: Pioneers in Medicine and Law

Iola Matthews

Monash. PB. \$32.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



The Greig sisters arrived in Melbourne in 1889 in search of a university education. Jane and Janet would be among the first women doctors in Australia, and Flos became the first woman to practise

law. With other equally remarkable women, they fought for women's rights and established organisations such as the Queen Victoria Hospital and the Lyceum Club. Their stories provide insight not only into their own lives, but into their times and the progress they and others would make for their 'sisters' yet to come.

How to be Hopeful

Caitlin Moran

Ebury. PB. \$36.99

Available 15 September



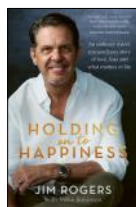
Realising she has reached 'Peak Despair' from not enough sleep, doomscrolling and feeling anxious from bad news, Caitlin Moran decides to go on a domestic quest, to stay in the same house and locality but feel more hopeful about the frantic modern world. Over the course of a year, Moran changes her habits by leaving social media, avoiding the 24/7 news cycle and instead connecting with her community surroundings. Once you've changed your days, maybe you can change the world. Just a little bit.

Holding on to Happiness: An Ordinary Man's Extraordinary Story of Love, Loss and What Matters in Life

Jim Rogers with Millie Robinson

Pan Mac. PB. \$36.99

Available 1 September



When Jim Rogers was diagnosed with Young-onset Alzheimer's at 55, it was another devastating blow to a family already familiar with loss. But with the support of his husband and children, Rogers refused to disappear. Instead, he became one of Australia's most recognisable voices for people living with dementia, and those who love them.

Written with his daughter Millie, Rogers reflects on a life shaped by heartbreak and devotion. Funny and tender this is a story about family, identity and resilience.

Somewhere Here the Future's Hid: The Extraordinary Life of Lesbia Harford

Jeff Sparrow

Monash. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Lesbia Harford (1891–1927) is a major figure in Australian letters. Writing during the Great War, Harford celebrated same-sex desire with a boldness rare for her era and, decades ahead of her time, she melded radical politics with modernist sensibility. Drawing on years of research, Jeff Sparrow sets Harford's writing and extraordinary life against the Great War and the tumultuous events that created modern Australia, showing how and why one of Australia's best artists is still relevant a century after her death.

The King Under the Mountain: In Search of J.R.R. Tolkien

D.J. Taylor

Constable. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



More than a life and times, *In Search of Tolkien* is a provocative and suggestive account of Tolkien's life and work. It explores hidden corners and previously unseen trails – determined to bring us back to the books that are deeply loved and respected across the globe. It heads towards the heart of a writer who has managed to acquire an extraordinary international reputation, but whose many admirers have found elusive – until now.

Middle Rage

Myf Warhurst

Hachette. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Life is messy and people are complicated, and Myf Warhurst thought she was navigating it all okay. But around the time she turned 50, things shifted. Part confessional, part manifesto, *Middle Rage* is full of Warhurst's humour, warmth and wisdom, with tips thrown in to help women live their best middle-aged lives and recognise when things are not as they should be. She asks the questions: without the shackles of life's often needless expectations and arbitrary rules, who are we, and what can we hope to become?

A Life in Letters

Simone Weil, Robert Chenavier & André A. Devaux (eds) & Nicholas Elliott (trans.)

Belknap. PB. \$49.95

Available 19 September



Now in the pantheon of great thinkers, Simone Weil lived largely in the shadows. *A Life in Letters* is the first complete collection of missives she wrote to her parents and brother from childhood

onward and chart her intellectual range as well as her itinerancy and shifting preoccupations, revealing the singular personality at the heart of her brilliant essays. The letters vividly illustrate her thought taking shape as she joins the Spanish struggle against fascism and the transatlantic resistance to the Nazis.

Hell Days: Into the Inferno of Hormonal Mood Disorder

Laura Elizabeth Woollett

Scribe. PB. \$32.99

Available 1 September



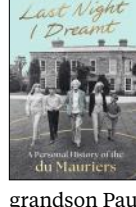
In 2018, acclaimed novelist Laura Elizabeth Woollett finds herself meticulously plotting her own death. Until her period arrives, and equilibrium with it. After years of dismissing these monthly turns, she's diagnosed with premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). Then she falls pregnant and experiences a reprieve. Through extensive research, and forays into history, true crime, and algorithmic rabbit-holes, Woollett looks beyond herself to assemble a chorus of PMDD sufferers, along with dedicated scientists and clinicians, to navigate the impossible terrain between a potentially fatal disorder and treatments that can be almost as dangerous.

Last Night I Dreamt: A Personal History of the du Mauriers

Paul de Zulueta

Virago. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Born into a well-known artistic dynasty, Daphne du Maurier defied convention to become a writer, creating classics such as *Rebecca* and *Jamaica Inn*. In *Last Night I Dreamt*, du Maurier's grandson Paul de Zulueta draws on family archives, interviews and his own memories to explore the turbulence and contradictions of du Maurier's life – war, family dynamics, marriage, and unrequited love – which inspired her writing, and uncovers the influence of her forebears. This is a moving portrait of one of the great British artistic families of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Cooking

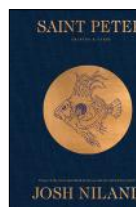
Saint Peter: Chapter & Verse

Josh Niland

Hardie Grant. HB. Was \$80

\$70

Available 1 September



In 2026, Saint Peter marks a decade at the forefront of global dining – a restaurant that has quietly but decisively reshaped the way we think about fish. This landmark work captures the philosophy, craft and evolution of Josh Niland's celebrated seafood restaurant through expansive essays and over 100 defining recipes. Blending story, technique and world-class cookery, it offers an unprecedented look inside one of the most influential kitchens of its generation.

Ottolenghi SIMPLE TOO

Yotam Ottolenghi

Ebury. HB. Was \$69.99

\$54.99

Available 1 September



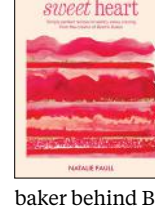
It's a noisy world out there, so stop, take a minute or two, listen to the soup bubble, and let simple cooking be your solution. Bring Yotam Ottolenghi's innovation to your everyday with 135 new recipes for breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert. Every dish has simplicity at its core and can be made in under 30 minutes, cooked in one pot, or prepped ahead. Whatever your barriers to cooking, this book brings you into the kitchen with a promise that even the simplest of meals can be full of flavour and joy.

Sweet Heart: Simply Perfect Recipes to Satisfy Every Craving from the Creator of Beatrix Bakes

Natalie Paull

Murdoch. HB. \$49.99

Available 1 September



What does your sweet heart desire? Whatever you're craving, *Sweet Heart* is your one-stop bake book. The recipes in this unmissable offering from the legendary baker behind Beatrix Bakes is organised by flavour, serving up classics and inspired flavour twists which are so heart-burstingly good, they will make you weep with joy. Featuring a 'bake-tionary', along with Nat's classic Adaptrix advice this gorgeously photographed and illustrated collection is one to hold close always.

OSOZAI: Everyday Japanese Home Cooking

Meg Tanaka

Harper By Design. HB. \$39.99

Available 1 September



Bringing balance, colour and flavour to the family table, osozai are everyday dishes in Japanese home cooking. Bright salads, quick pickles, simmered vegetables and satisfying mains – simple, home-style dishes designed to fit everyday life and be enjoyed together. Featuring 80 accessible recipes made for sharing, this cookbook showcases the food Meg grew up eating and the food she now cooks at home for friends and family. This is modern Japanese cooking at its best: thoughtful, nourishing and full of joy.

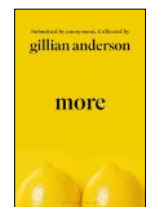
Cultural Studies

More

Gillian Anderson

Bloomsbury. PB. \$36.99

Available 8 September



The sequel to *Want*, Gillian Anderson's landmark bestseller, *More* invites us to leave shame and fear at the door as she dials up the heat on women's sexual fantasies. Where *Want* sparked the

fire of a quiet revolution, this collection of anonymous intimate letters gives women the fuel to let it roar. Diving more deeply into what women everywhere think, feel and dream about in their most private moments, *More* proves that the freedom for women to fantasise without restraint is as exhilarating and vital as ever.

**What If We Got AI Right?
How to Stop Catastrophising and
Build an Ethical Future**
Eleanor Drage
Profile. PB. \$34.99
Available 1 September



We're confused about AI: what it is, and where it's leading us. Yet this is hampering efforts to make meaningful change in an industry with very real problems. Leading AI ethicist Dr Eleanor Drage unpicks the culture and ideas that drive the AI arms race to explain that we need new language and ideas to re-determine what AI is for and how we should use it. Only by bringing feminism, reparative justice and climate politics into the debate can we create a better future with machines.

The Spinster Cookbook: Culture, Politics and Pleasure in the Single Woman's Kitchen
Eli Davies
The Indigo Press. PB. \$34.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



R Do not be put off by the title of this book; it is not what you think it might be. While *The Spinster Cookbook* certainly delves into the long-held negative associations of a woman cooking for herself, specifically in a world that is designed for couples and families, it is a fascinating exploration of how we as individuals can change this outdated narrative and explore the possibility of food, and the pleasure of cooking and eating a meal – whether it be shared or alone – as an act of community rather than exclusivity. Sure, this is easier said than done. However, Eli Davies manages to subtly question how we approach these ideas and aspects of daily life. The book is clearly heavily researched, but Davies also shares her deeply personal experience following the break-up of a long-term relationship: the shock of cooking for oneself again, along with the universal experiences that go hand in hand with this, including heartbreak, loneliness, financial pressures, gendered associations with domestic cooking and social norms.

While *The Spinster Cookbook* definitely sits in the cooking memoir genre, what is refreshing about Davies' approach is that she is not coming from a bombastic and egotistical lens. Heavily leaning to the British experience, she generously cites many chefs and cooks that have influenced her, including Nigel Slater, Ruthie Rogers and Rose Gray of the famed London institution The River Café, and Nigella Lawson. Of course Nigella is the embodiment of cooking and indulging unashamedly, whether it be with others or even better, on one's own. Authors get a mention, too: Zadie Smith, Deborah Levy, Annie Ernaux, Barbara Pym and Ottessa Moshfegh; they may not be experts in the world of food, but their observations – whether personal

or character-driven – offer insight into the lives of women within cultural and political contexts. There's also analysis of the optimism of the 1990s (and here's where I might be a little biased!) and the juggernaut of influence it had on food and frankly, everything, can't be denied! Pesto, anyone?

While solutions aren't necessarily obvious, *The Spinster Cookbook* is full of personal reflection and a healthy dose of nostalgia. It's a companionable read and offers a glimpse of possibility of what food and community can do if we approach it a little differently, for all.

Danielle Mirabella is a senior buyer

End Times Fascism: And the Fight for the Living World
Naomi Klein & Astra Taylor
Allen Lane. PB. \$36.99
Available 29 September



The far right is on the march again – but this time it's different. A new, apocalyptic alliance of religious fundamentalists, billionaire Silicon Valley tech kings and ethno-nationalists is on the move. They believe that some kind of cleansing cataclysm is coming, and they welcome a future of shocks, scarcity and collapse, convinced they'll be among the saved. In this blistering reckoning with our age, Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor take us deep into this man-made Armageddon complex – and show us how to resist it.

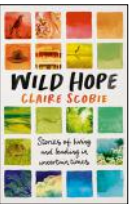
Environmental Studies

The Vanishing Earth: A Journey Through the Last Days of Abundance
James Crawford
Scribe. PB. \$39.99
Available 8 September



Humanity has remade the Earth with startling speed leaving behind immense wounds from extraction: mines, quarries, poisoned rivers and more. James Crawford travels through the living ruins of extraction and meets the people living within its extremes, from Chile's lithium flats and Greenland's melting ice to AI cloud centres, and reveals the true cost of this reckless growth. Yet within these same landscapes lie radical alternatives and the hope of finding the path to repair for a world pushed to the brink.

Wild Hope
Claire Scobie
NewSouth. PB. \$36.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability

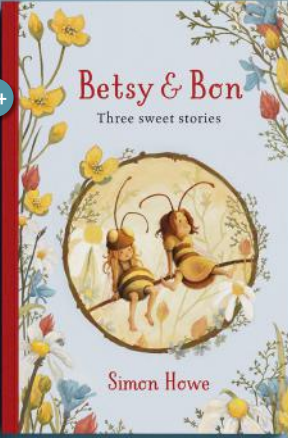


When a seemingly ordinary moment cracks Claire Scobie's world open and certainties fall away, she and her husband move to Gumbayngirr Country on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. There she meets people who are reimagining their communities, from a river restoration project in Melbourne to children speaking Gumbayngirr in a school hall and learns what happens



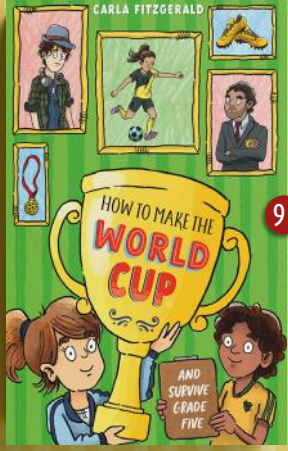


For the millions of home cooks who loved **Ottolenghi SIMPLE**, discover the pleasure of keeping things **SIMPLE TOO**



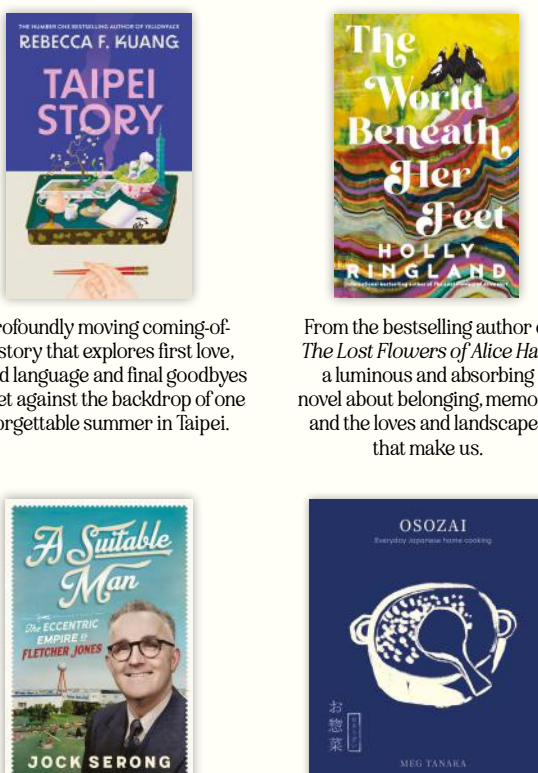
This gentle short story collection is perfect for bedtime reading or for children transitioning from picture books to chapter books.

FEEL GOOD READS



In her funniest book yet, Carla Fitzgerald serves up a winning story about sport, friendship drama and finding the guts to have a go.





TAIPEI STORY
REBECCA F. KUANG
A profoundly moving coming-of-age story that explores first love, second language and final goodbyes – all set against the backdrop of one unforgettable summer in Taipei.

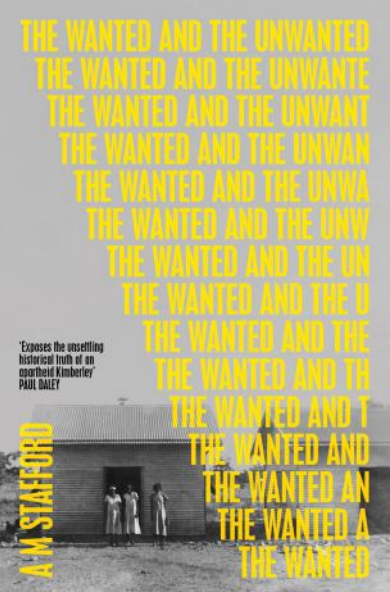
The World Beneath Her Feet
HOLLY RINGLAND
From the bestselling author of *The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart*, a luminous and absorbing novel about belonging, memory, and the loves and landscapes that make us.

A Suitable Man
JOCK SERONG
The remarkable life of Fletcher Jones – the stores, the clothing, the daggy dad slacks – and his determination to run an enterprise for profit while seeking to do good.

OSOZAI
MEG TANAKA
This is modern Japanese cooking at its best: thoughtful, nourishing and full of joy.

Out now

HARPERCOLLINS



THE WANTED AND THE UNWANTED
A.M. STAFFORD
‘A shocking, scholarly read that lays bare the harsh history of Australia.’
BRI LEE AND JACLYN CRUPI, *News & Reviews*

‘AM Stafford teases out the hospital’s dark past in vivid detail.’
The Guardian

‘With her exhaustive archival research, wry eye and elegant writing, Stafford reveals shocking details of a shameful recent past in Wyndham – replete with all its ghosts and living memories of inhumanity to local Aboriginal people – that carries a profound national resonance for today’s Australia.’
PAUL DALEY, author of *Jesustown* and *The Leap*

Melbourne University Publishing

when people stop waiting for perfect solutions. *Wild Hope* shows us that the future is not broken; a better one is already being built.

Gardening

The Productive Garden Companion: A Complete Guide to Growing for Abundance and Beauty in Any Space
Natasha Morgan

Murdoch. HB. \$65
Available 15 September



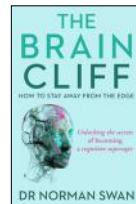
The Productive Garden Companion is a practical and reassuring modern gardening book that meets gardeners wherever they are. Landscape architect and lifelong gardener Natasha Morgan shows how thoughtful design, seasonal rhythms and purposeful planting can transform any space. Part narrative, part landscape design bible, it traces Natasha’s personal relationship with gardening and invites readers to see their own gardens as sources of productivity and creativity, as well as connection and healing.

Health

The Brain Cliff: How to Stay Away from the Edge

Dr Norman Swan
Hachette. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability

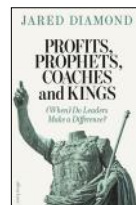


What many of us fear as we age is not being as quick of mind, not remembering as well as we used to and we worry there’s nothing we can do and that we are falling helplessly into an abyss which leads to dementia. Dr Norman Swan shows us that we’ve been thinking about brain ageing the wrong way. It doesn’t need to be about decline and deficit. It’s about how to help our brains adapt, become resilient and maintain cognitive function, and it’s much more than what we eat, how we exercise or our genes.

History

Profits, Prophets, Coaches and Kings: (When) Do Leaders Make a Difference?

Jared Diamond
Allen Lane. PB. \$39.99
Available 1 September



We often read history as the biographies of ‘great men’ who shaped the world. But are leaders really that influential? Exploring leadership across four difference spheres: history, business, sport and religion, Jared Diamond asks under which conditions is a leader most likely to make a difference and why? Drawing on the life and career of iconic leaders, Diamond shows us how

leadership effectiveness is determined by a range of complex interrelated factors, from resources to geography, culture to technology.

Shanghai: The Story of China’s Most Dynamic City
Michael Dillon

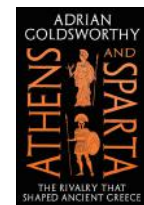
Yale. HB. \$51.95
Available 12 September



Home to 25 million people, Shanghai is the most populous and wealthiest city in China. A meeting point between China and the world, it has become the beating heart of Chinese capitalism, a place of initiative, confidence, and forward thinking. It is also full of stark contradictions, suffused with extreme wealth and poverty, luxury living, and a highly organised criminal underworld. *Shanghai* is an extensive new history of a fascinating city, revealing its vital place in Chinese history and politics across the ages.

Athens and Sparta: The Rivalry that Shaped Ancient Greece
Adrian Goldsworthy

Apollo. PB. \$36.99
Available 1 September



Athens and Sparta were the two big players in Ancient Greece. United, they helped lead the Greeks in defeating the great Persian invasion. Divided, they spread conflict and destruction throughout the eastern Mediterranean. They were not simply rivals for power, but polar opposites in culture and ideology. Drawing on ancient sources and modern discoveries, and boasting a wide-ranging cast of characters, *Athens and Sparta* tells a remarkable story of the drama and extremity of human behaviour.

Redwood: The Untold Story of the Cold War’s Most Extraordinary Spy
Ben Macintyre

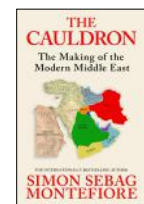
Viking. PB. \$36.99
Available 15 September



The year is 1981. Tehran is in violent turmoil in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. The Soviets are planning to overthrow the Ayatollah’s fledgling Islamist regime. If they do so, one response from America – unknown to the public – would be to use nuclear weapons. This is the story of how, at the height of the Cold War, one mysterious double agent, known to MI6 as ‘Redwood’, revealed the Kremlin’s secret plot and prevented Armageddon.

The Cauldron: The Making of the Modern Middle East
Simon Sebag Montefiore

W&N. HB. \$55
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



In *The Cauldron*, Simon Sebag Montefiore delivers a fresh and unique history of the Middle East in all its diversity, from 1900 up to the present day – and tomorrow. Taking the reader on a spectacular

journey from the Ottoman sultanate to the Trump presidency, from Morocco to Iran, this is a dazzling panorama of faith and fanaticism, creativity and tolerance, dictatorship and democracy brought to life by an extraordinary cast of kings, warriors, poets, terrorists and peacemakers.

Interior Design

How to Start an Art Collection: Inspiration and Advice for Art Lovers and First-time Art Buyers
Georgia Spray & Elena Bazu (photog.)
T&H. HB. \$69.99
Available 1 September



From Partnership Editions founder Georgia Spray, this guide reframes art collecting as something open, personal and evolving. Centred on the idea of emergence – emerging artists, emerging collectors and an emerging sense of self – it shows how collecting art can become a powerful form of self-expression. Set against the backdrop of artists’ studios and real homes, the book demystifies the art world and provides clear, practical guidance on discovering your taste, buying with confidence and living with art.

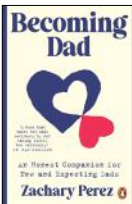
Parenting

Ten Things I Wish You Knew About Raising Boys
Dr Billy Garvey
Penguin. PB. \$36.99
Available 22 September



We all want our sons to grow into kind, capable and emotionally healthy men. But many parents are concerned for them: about anxiety, anger, withdrawal and the pressures of growing up in a world full of confusing messages about masculinity. Developmental paediatrician Dr Billy Garvey wants to reassure anyone with a boy in their life that there are many ways we can support them throughout childhood. By understanding our boys’ behaviour, we can respond with confidence, boundaries and connection.

Becoming Dad: An Honest Companion for New and Expecting Dads
Zachary Perez
Penguin. PB. \$29.99
Available now

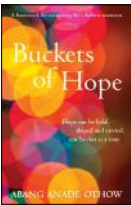


Written in real time during the first chaotic weeks of his son’s life, Zachary Perez captures what becoming a father actually feels like: the love, the panic, the tenderness, the identity shift and the overwhelming sense that no one really prepares you for any of it. From naming debates and nappy disasters to late-night arguments and

moments of breathtaking connection, he turns the blur of new parenthood into something moving, relatable and laugh-out-loud funny.

Personal Development

Buckets of Hope: A Framework for Navigating Life’s Darkest Moments
Abang Anade Othow
ABC. PB. \$35.99
Available 1 September



Separated from her family in Sudan as a child, Abang Anade Othow endured loss, displacement and trauma. But one day a memory of her family’s brightly coloured buckets sparked a visualisation technique which became her guide in darkness. Built around five symbolic buckets each represents joy, growth, survival, resilience and adaptability. From refugee camps to a new life in Australia, Abang’s story is a testament to the power of hope and imagination. More than a memoir this book is a practical guide to overcoming adversity and creating a life of purpose.

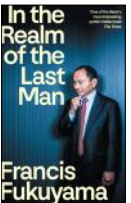
Better Man: Reclaiming Masculinity for Good
Ben Vasiliou
S&S. PB. \$36.99
Available 1 September



Many men are struggling, or in crisis. Society is shocked by male violence and depression and some of the loudest voices in the space are spouting hate. Drawing on two decades of work with boys and men, and his own personal experiences, Ben Vasiliou, CEO of The Man Cave, has written a practical guide on how to promote healthy masculinity. He shares real-life examples, tips and tools and shows how his work has helped men grow into emotionally aware, healthier people who are thriving, not just surviving.

Politics

In the Realm of the Last Man
Francis Fukuyama
Profile. PB. \$36.99
Available 8 September



In 1989, one year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Francis Fukuyama delivered a conference paper that would go on to become one of the most celebrated, and controversial, works of political theory of our time. By 2009, he had broken with his neoconservative mentors. But why did he change his mind? In this powerful memoir, Fukuyama analyses his life alongside the political shifts of the last 30 years. A portrait of one of the 21st century’s most important thinkers and an urgent study of contemporary politics.

The Machine and the Microchip: Inside the Secret War for Global High-tech Supremacy
Cagan Koc & Diederik Baazil
Scribe. PB. \$36.99
Available 1 September



A new Cold War is being fought over the world’s most powerful technology – semiconductors – tiny chips which power everything from iPhones to AI. At the heart of the war is Dutch company ASML, the only company with machines able to produce them. US-led export controls have cut China off from the technology but with Taiwan at the beating heart of chip production and tensions in the Taiwan Strait rising the US, Taiwan, ASML and their allies are preparing for a confrontation. Whoever wins may well control the future.

We Are Not Machines: The Fight for the Future of Work
Sarah O’Connor
Allen Lane. HB. \$49.99
Available 1 September



When Sarah O’Connor investigated what was happening on the front lines of technological change, she found people who weren’t losing their jobs to machines felt their work was becoming lonelier, less creative, less human. But she also found hopeful stories of jobs being made better, safer and more enjoyable. Exploring questions of power, design, institutions and ideas, O’Connor’s reporting shows that the way technology changes the world of work is not pre-determined but must be contested and shaped by us all.

Don’t Say Palestine: How the Media Manufactured Consent for Genocide
Assal Rad
Atlantic. PB. \$34.99
Available 8 September



If you’re not writing the truth about crimes against humanity, you’re culpable in them. A searing indictment of Western media *Don’t Say Palestine* lays bare how a so-called free press, long tasked with speaking truth to power, instead became a vital part of the machinery that enabled the genocide in Palestine. Assal Rad offers both a moral reckoning and an urgent call to action, and when these years are studied, this will be the book people turn to when looking to rebuild their faith in the media.

Stolen Revolution: Betrayal and Hope in Modern Iran
Bozorgmehr Sharafedin & Yeganeh Torbati
Viking. PB. \$39.99
Available now



Fuelled by Iranians’ dreams of social justice and political freedom, the 1979 revolution swept aside the shah’s ailing, repressive monarchy. But in its place the revolution’s leader Ayatollah Khomeini built a

system that served his Islamic fundamentalist faction and worsened every failing and brutality that had existed under the shah. Bozorgmehr Sharafedin and Yeganeh Torbati tell the entwined stories of six Iranians, providing a powerful new lens on Iran’s recent history in all its bitter twists and stubborn hope.

Photography

Definitive Dupain
Avryl Whitnall & State Library of New South Wales
T&H. HB. Was \$79.99
\$69.99
Available 1 September

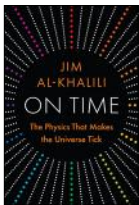


A landmark monograph on one of Australia’s most influential photographers, *Definitive Dupain* brings together iconic and previously unseen

works from the extraordinary archive of Max Dupain. Drawing on more than 250,000 negatives held at the State Library of New South Wales, this book presents around 150 photographs spanning Dupain’s career from the 1920s to the 1990s. It includes his most celebrated images alongside studio work, architectural studies, commercial commissions and intimate personal photographs.

Science

On Time: The Physics That Makes the Universe Tick
Jim Al-Khalili
Princeton. PB. \$39.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



While we have come a long way toward deciphering the laws of the universe, many physicists still regard time to be one of the greatest unsolved mysteries. This mind-altering book provides answers to the questions about time that philosophers and scientists have been asking for millennia, examining them across the three central pillars of physics – quantum mechanics, general relativity, and thermodynamics. *On Time* will forever change the way you think about the passage of time and your place within it.

On the Equality of All Things: Physics and Philosophy
Carlo Rovelli & Simon Carnell (trans.)
Allen Lane. HB. Was \$45
\$39.99
Available 15 September

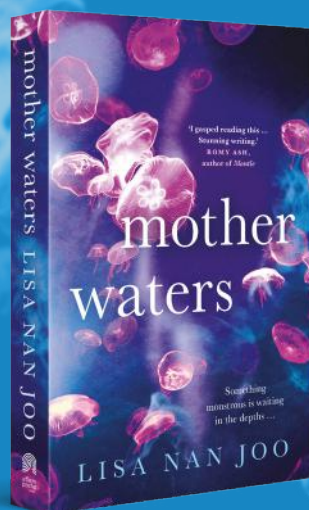


What can we really know about the world around us? Or is there beauty in daring not to know? With clarity and lightness, Carlo Rovelli takes us on a journey of enlightenment, to the speculative frontiers of



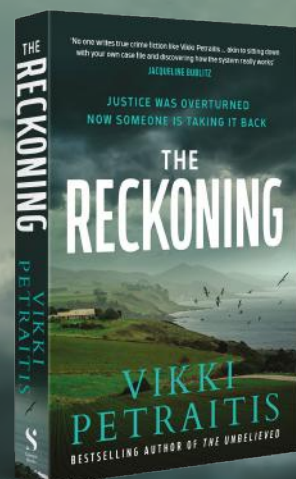
'Good Witch is a potent brew: history, incantation, remembrance and an invocation to rise and resist.'

EMILY MAGUIRE, AUTHOR OF *RAPTURE*



'I gasped reading this ...
Stunning writing.'

ROMY ASH, AUTHOR OF *MANTLE*



'No one writes true crime fiction like Vikki Petraitis ... akin to sitting down with your own case file and discovering how the system really works.'

JACQUELINE BUBLITZ, AUTHOR OF *BEFORE YOU KNEW MY NAME*

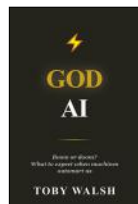
modern physics and the boundaries of thought. There is no fear in testing their limits, he suggests – not least because there may be no final ground to reach. Reality, he reveals, is shaped by a continuous play of reflections. From this emerges his visionary insight: the equality of all things.

God AI: Boom or Doom? What to Expect When Machines Outsmart Us

Toby Walsh

La Trobe. PB. \$36.99

Available 1 September



Is it game over for humanity? In this vital new book, Professor Toby Walsh explores the existential risks posed by our accelerating efforts to realise an AI-powered future. While AI models are leading to the development of wondrous technologies such as potentially life-saving drugs, they are also disrupting the lives of millions by rapidly reshaping our relationships with work and with one another. But there are also clear risks that powerful AI threatens our very existence as a species.

Read an extract from *God AI* on page 14.

Visual Arts

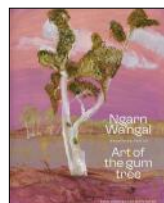
Ngarn Wa'ngal: Art of the Gum Tree

Alisa Bunbury & Sophie Gerhard (eds)

Miegunyah. HB. Was \$69.99

\$59.99

Available 15 September



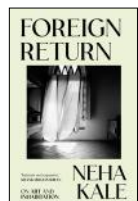
Dedicated to the eucalypt and the art it inspires, *Ngarn Wa'ngal* traces the gum tree through art history and contemporary practice, engaging with Indigenous sovereignty, Australian identity, nationalism, climate change, land management and the impact of these trees globally. A range of contributors, including artists, Aboriginal Elders, art historians, ecologists, poets and writers, share their responses to this iconic Australian symbol and chart the gum tree's ever-evolving significance.

Foreign Return: On Art and Inhabitation

Neha Kale

NewSouth. PB. \$34.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



R Neha Kale's *Foreign Return* is an elegant and incisive meditation on the unstable architecture of home. Blending memoir with art criticism, Kale traces her story from India to suburban Perth with depth and rigour. Abroad is neither paradise nor exile, and home is neither destination or possession; it is a shifting psychological and political terrain, haunted by memory, colonial inheritance and the uneasy fact of living on stolen land.

Kale reaches across cultures, periods and forms, beading the text meticulously

with rich observations on a vast array of artists. Dayanita Singh's photographs, Ana Mendieta's explorations of displacement, Tracey Emin's intimate provocations, Brett Whiteley's visions of Australian place and Danie Mellor's interrogations of history become more than illustrations, they are ways of thinking, of processing. Kale writes with an art critic's precision and a memoirist's sensitivity, moving between the intimate texture of recollection and the larger questions of ownership, belonging and cultural memory.

The notion of the 'foreign return' becomes more than a description of a traveller coming home; it becomes a state of mind, an identity shaped by movement and by the impossibility of entirely belonging to just one place.

Foreign Return ultimately argues that home need not be a fixed inheritance but a practice of attention, imagination and reorientation. In an age of fractured identities and precarious belonging, Kale offers an inclusive and resonant language for belonging. This is a lucid, humane and quietly radical book. It leaves us with the unsettling but liberating possibility that home is not where we arrive, but how we learn to see, remember and live with one another again.

Zoë Croggon is the visual arts buyer at Readings Carlton

You Have a New Memory (Perimeter Editions x State Library Victoria)

Kate Rhodes & Rory Hyde (eds)

Perimeter & SLV. PB. \$55

Available now



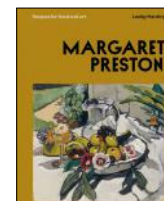
Libraries act as a kind of collective mind, much like information is retained and filed away in zones of a sleeping brain. But this synthesised brain suffers from similar fallacies to its biological counterpart; items are misplaced, misnomered, or missed entirely. Published alongside an exhibition at State Library Victoria, *You Have a New Memory* explores the creative possibilities of memory loss in the library with images that ask us to reexamine how a library remembers, and how our own thoughts interact with the memories of others.

Margaret Preston National Gallery of Victoria, Beckett Rozentals & Michael Gentle (eds)

T&H. HB. Was \$79.99

\$69.99

Available 1 September



As one of the most influential Australian artists of the early 20th century, Margaret Preston transformed the visual language of the nation through a practice that was both technically innovative and visually unforgettable. This landmark publication brings together key works and new scholarship in an in-depth survey of Preston's career. It sheds new light on her artistic networks, her complex relationship with First Nations visual culture, and her enduring influence on Australian art and design. **R**

Kids & Young Adult

Board Books

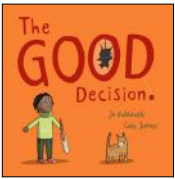
Little Bug (Little Wonders, Big Adventures, Book 2)
Heidi McKinnon
Little Hare. BB. \$19.99
Available 1 September



This board book invites young readers and their grown-ups on a big adventure, led by a loveable little hero who faces big emotions with resilience and humour. With rhyming text and cosy illustrations, these stories have just enough drama to satisfy babies and toddlers without being too scary, and plenty of snuggles and sunshine at the end!

Picture Books

The Good Decision
Jo Dabrowski & Cate James (illus.)
Affirm. HB. \$24.99
Available 1 September



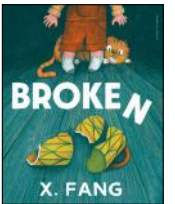
From the moment Albert wakes up, it's clear that today is not his day. Every decision he makes turns into yet another bad one. After a day jam-packed with disasters, Albert somehow manages to make one brilliant decision, and no one is more surprised than Albert himself. Nothing can possibly go wrong now, can it?

Ginger & Fred
Seetha Dodd & Elizabeth Stewart (illus.)
Wild Dog. HB. \$24.99
Available 1 September



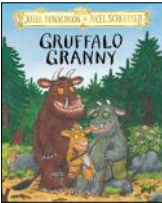
In the town of Furrington, dogs twirl with dogs, and cats whirl with cats. That's the way it's always been. In fact, it's the law. So what happens when dancefloor rebels Ginger the cat and Fred the Dalmatian turn up with a new style of dance?

Broken
X. Fang
Pushkin. HB. \$29.99
Available 22 September



When Mei Mei accidentally breaks her ama's favourite cup, she's convinced it's the end of the world! What if Ama gets angry? What if she yells? What if she kicks Mei Mei out of her house? So, Mei Mei decides not to say anything. But when her ama's cat gets blamed, the guilt is too much, and Mei Mei can't stop the truth from rushing out.

Gruffalo Granny
Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler (illus.)
Pan Mac. HB. Was \$26.99
\$21.99
Available 15 September



The Gruffalo said to his daughter one day, 'Your Gruffalo Granny is coming to stay'. Return to the deep, dark wood with the first new Gruffalo story in over 20 years and meet Gruffalo Granny as she visits the Gruffalo family. This exciting Gruffalo adventure features the return of much-loved characters and is destined to become a classic.

To celebrate the release of *Gruffalo Granny*, we are offering 3 for 2 on a select range of Julia Donaldson's previous titles. See News on page 3 for more details.

The Everywhere Train
Deborah Frenkel & Danny Snell (illus.)
Bright Light. HB. \$24.99
Available 1 September

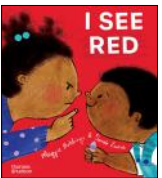


The Everywhere Train is the beautiful story of young Scout and her grandfather, Pop. On Fridays, they go adventuring on the train together and watch the world go by. When Pop is no longer able to travel and moves into an aged-care home, Scout is worried that he won't get to experience adventures anymore and he will become bored seeing the same view every day. They set up a train station in his room and use their memories and imagination to continue to adventure far and wide together.

This is an important book for young people. It creates opportunities for conversations about ageing and change, which will be particularly useful if their grandparents or other loved ones might be moving to an aged-care home. The closeness between Scout and her Pop is very evident in the wonderful illustrations and warmth of the writing. Deborah Frenkel and Danny Snell previously published *The Truck Cat*, a favourite among Readings customers and staff. Both are very similar in style – fun yet poignant, with brilliant but simple illustrations. Look out for the pigeons! Perfect for ages 3+.

Melanie Barton is from Readings Carlton

I See Red
Maggie Hutchings & Sarah Zwick (illus.)
T&H. HB. Was \$26.99
\$21.99
Available 1 September



From the author and illustrator team that gave us last year's perfect summer picture book *Here Come the Cousins*, their new picture book, *I See Red*, is about something we can all relate to: feeling mad! In this book, exuberant

siblings come to blows over crayon use and breakages. Mum listens and prescribes quiet time, and after a bit of alone time – drawing, sulking and thinking – the older sibling recalls that there are actually some great things about their younger sibling.

Sarah Zwick's illustrations perfectly capture the full range of feelings in this sweet domestic drama and the scribbly crayon endpaper design is a cool cherry on top!

From calm through to anger and on to forgiveness, *I See Red* is an excellent depiction of a familiar emotional arc. It's also an endearing portrayal of a sibling relationship: frequently annoying each other, but always underpinned by love! For ages 2+.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

The Bestest Brown
Briony Stewart
Lothian. HB. \$24.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



The Bestest Brown is a brilliantly simple and fun picture book that explores colour. The little girl in this sweet picture book sets out for the day to create a brand-new colour. What do red and blue mixed together make? What about if you add black? She finds that they all lead back to a marvellous shade of brown.

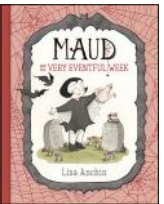
Whimsical and colourful illustrations bring the rhyming story together as the colour creating comes to life. I can see this book as a great little conversation starter to teach children how colours combine to make other colours. It is also a great one for helping children to learn the colours.

Briony Stewart, a CBCA award-winning author, has written and illustrated many books for Australian children including the perennial favourite *Gymnastica Fantastica*. *The Bestest Brown* would be a welcome addition to any little child's library of picture books and particularly great for ages 2+.

Melanie Barton is from Readings Carlton

Junior Grade

Maud and the Very Eventful Week
Lisa Anchin
Candlewick. HB. \$24.99
Available 1 September



Who would have known on Monday that the week ahead would be such a busy one? It all starts when Maud finds a teapot that is obviously haunted (and very hungry). EEEK!

This charming story follows Maud, an adorable little vampire, through a week of ever-so-gently-spooky adventures which include a mega-toothy discovery and successful yard sale.

Middle Grade

Web of Spies (S.I.G.M.A., Book 1)
Tim Ayliffe
Affirm. PB. \$16.99
Available 1 September



Ollie is training for his school cross-country race in Sydney's Centennial Park when he accidentally happens upon the scene of a murder. Later, Ollie recognises the dead man in a photo he finds in his dad's office. Suddenly, it seems like the death in the park might be somehow linked to his father's disappearance 10 months ago.

Ollie and his friends, Ella and George, soon find themselves carefully scrutinising drone footage, tailing cars with dark windows while riding e-bikes around Sydney, and trying to find answers to all the questions that the police and their parents are either unable – or refusing! – to answer.

Tim Ayliffe is the author of several crime novels and *Web of Spies* is the first book in his brand-new series for younger readers, *S.I.G.M.A.* The contemporary Sydney setting, strong characters and a plot that keeps readers guessing makes this fast-paced spy thriller an excellent read. Highly recommended for ages 10+.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Protector of Beyond (Protector of Beyond, Book 1)
Shara Curlett
Penguin. PB. \$18.99
Available 1 September



Elder Triss has a spark. Literally. With a new power she could never have imagined, Elder is sent to a mysterious land known as 'Beyond' to learn to use her spark and fight to protect the realm. But first, she must pass the trials and earn herself a spot in the Academy of Protectors – and not everyone is on her side. With new friends to help her and more than a few new enemies too, Elder's first adventure in Beyond is a rollicking good time. It's packed with amazing characters, incredible magical creatures and secrets to discover – but will she be able to make it through?

Protector of Beyond is a wonderful new fantasy adventure that kids will love. It's full to the brim with great things to enjoy about the genre, such as the mighty Fiercers – creatures that Elder and her friends meet and bond with – as well as an interesting world to become immersed in. The story has strong themes of courage and perseverance, even when it's hard, and the power of friends who love and support you through thick and thin. It's a whirlwind from the start with a satisfying conclusion, but with plenty of mysteries left to uncover in the next book in the series!

Great for fans of the *Keeper of the Lost Cities* and *Nevermoor* series aged 9+.

Amy Wright is from Readings Chadstone

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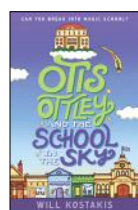
BLOOMSBURY

Otis Ottley and the School in the Sky

Will Kostakis

A&U. PB. \$17.99

Available 1 September



Otis Ottley is an ordinary boy who yearns to go to the magic school in the sky. While many kids dream of roaming the halls of the prestigious Manor School for Magic, casting spells and conjuring spectacles, Otis has a specific mission: to seek magical help remembering something extremely important. The odds are stacked against him, but Otis will break into magic school. Or he will break a few rules trying.

My Tiny Universe

Maryam Master

Pan Mac. PB. \$16.99

Available 1 September



R My *Tiny Universe* is a book that is topical, heartfelt and worth a read for any kid who is having trouble at school. The story follows Leif, a brilliant young boy who is struggling to connect with his peers after his family's recent move. Things start to change for Leif when he makes friends with Albie, but everything is not as it seems with Albie and the friendship between the two exposes the threat emerging technologies can pose to vulnerable children.

Set in a dystopic future not far away, Maryam Master's latest book manages to showcase the horrors climate change has in store for us while still telling a story that feels like it could take place in any school today. Master looks at environmental, biological and class implications of a climate disaster in a way that is nuanced, but also accessible to her younger audience. Throughout it all, she delivers a heartfelt message about the importance of human connection.

In a world in which we are already starting to see the negative effects of AI on lonely people, this book is not only relevant, but also vital for kids. With big ideas in a simple package, I think this is perfect for kids aged 7+.

Alicia Guiney is from Readings Kids

Lottie, Pog and the Runaway Ghost

Sally Rippin

Pan Mac. PB. \$18.99

Available 15 September



R Lottie Baker lives with her adorable but smelly dog, Pog, and her loving but distractible dad, Bill. Lottie often has to drag her dad away from his sculptures to remind him it's time for dinner, and he's not great at remembering to do laundry, but that doesn't matter – they have friends and neighbours who help out when they need it, and Lottie knows her dad loves her more than anything in the world.

Then Martha, a ghost girl with a fondness for rhyming cockney slang, moves into Lottie's bedroom because she's sick of haunting an empty cemetery. Martha decides that what Lottie needs is a mother, and so she becomes determined to reunite Lottie with her mum, a famous singer who travels the world performing for adoring fans. But Martha's grand plan is complicated when Bill brings home a girlfriend! Suddenly, Lottie's not

just dealing with a ghostly roommate, but also a lot of complex feelings about reconnecting with one parent who she barely sees and losing another, whose attention she doesn't want to share.

This book is Sally Rippin's love letter to blended families, and it's a beautiful reminder that love takes many forms. There's also great representation for neurodivergence, both in kids and adults, and it's treated with love and understanding, while acknowledging that it can be isolating for kids who pick up certain skills, such as reading, slowly. It will be a comforting read for any kids going through a change in their own family – whether that's a split or welcoming in a new parental figure – as well as a fun story about friendship and ghosts! Recommended for readers aged 8+.

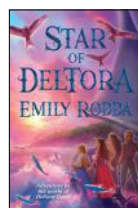
Bella Mackey is the digital content lead

Star of Deltora

Emily Rodda

A&U. HB. \$39.99

Available 1 September



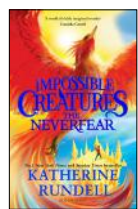
Britta's dream is to be a sea trader, like her father, but after the shameful end to his last voyage, her family is forced into hiding and his ship, the Star of Deltora, is seized by the power trader, Mab. Entering a contest, in disguise, to become Mab's apprentice, Britta must outwit her three fierce rivals. Soon dark and sinister forces draw the ship to the cursed Isle of Tier – the site of Britta's father's undoing. A new edition of a classic.

The Neverfear (Impossible Creatures, Book 3)

Katherine Rundell

Bloomsbury. PB. \$18.99

Available 1 September



It's the Midsummer Feast on the Islet of Glimt and reports of masked men burning villages are spreading throughout the Archipelago. When Christopher and Anya are ambushed and one of the people they love is kidnapped, they set sail on the *Neverfear*, with Ratwin the ratatoska and Jacques the Jaculus dragon, to save them. Together, they must recover three precious treasures, face fearsome giants, win a daring race and outwit deadly enemies.

Kids Graphic Narrative

Terrible Tails: The Last Sipper

Adin Milo

Berbay. PB. \$22.99

Available 1 September



In the kingdom of Austerra, things are amiss. Supplies have vanished. Traders are disappearing. Dark magic is brewing. In this laugh-out-loud fantasy graphic novel, three ragtag adventurers – Vom, Elf and Bruce – join forces on a mission to save the day. Accompanied by retro-inspired illustrations, this fast and funny book is packed with visual humour that kids and adults alike will love.

Ember and the Grand Metamorphosis (Ember, Book 2)

Jason Pammment

A&U. PB. \$19.99

Available 1 September



Ember and his class set off across the Island of Lost Creatures to witness a once-in-a-lifetime natural spectacle when their teacher falls mysteriously ill. Now it's up to Ember to lead the expedition. What starts out as an exciting excursion turns into a life-changing challenge filled with strange creatures, perilous pitfalls and danger around every corner. Does Ember have what it takes to guide his friends to safety?

Kids Nonfiction

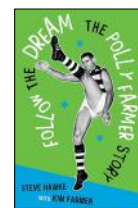
Follow the Dream:

The Polly Farmer Story

Steve Hawke with Kim Farmer

Magabala. PB. \$17.99

Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Before Gary Ablett, Tony Lockett and Lance Franklin, there was footballing legend Graham 'Polly' Farmer, who revolutionised Australian rules football. This biography follows his rise from North Fremantle to a record-breaking 19-year career spanning 356 games. It also celebrates his enduring legacy in the Polly Farmer Foundation, created to empower and enrich the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across Australia.

Scream (If You Wanna Go Faster!!!): The History and Science of Amusement Parks

Peter Morris & Roozeboos (illus.)

Cicada. HB. \$34.99

Available now



Step right up for an all-access pass to the past, present, and pulse-pounding mechanics of the fairground! This book uncovers the rich history and science behind theme parks – from the Charter fairs of medieval England to the opening of Disneyland. With clear explanations and amazing illustrations from Roozeboos meet the inventors and dreamers who applied the forces of physics to create heart-stopping thrills.

Young Adult

White Mountain (Black River, Book 2)

Ruby Jean Cottle

S&S. PB. \$29.99

Available 1 September



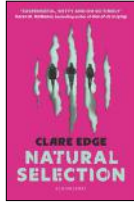
It's Halloween in Black River, four months since the teenagers of White Mountain learned the truth about their bloodlust. Opi Silver is struggling, no longer happy and carefree, but

her sister seems to have it under control. Meanwhile Eli Blake won't leave Opi alone, saying he's trying to help her. As the police investigate the secrets Opi and her friends are desperate to keep, a deadly threat waits in the forest and Opi is in greater danger than she realises.

Natural Selection

Clare Edge

Bloomsbury. PB. \$19.99
Available 1 September



When three friends in a small rural town realise they've all been the victim of the same guy, they plan a revenge prank in the woods. But things take a distinctly dark turn with an accident, a snowstorm and the appearance of a grizzly bear. Now the girls share a terrible secret. And when bear attacks on local men begin to multiply, the girls start to wonder, truly, who is more dangerous?

Tom Burne Has Left the Chat

Seán Farrelly

Faber Child. PB. \$19.99
Available 15 September



When micro-influencer Tom Burne takes his own life, he leaves behind his phone, its password and a cryptic message. Seventeen-year-old Jamie doesn't intend to take the phone, but becomes

certain it was meant for him. Fuelled by his loneliness and grief after the passing of his father, Jamie investigates the phone's digital fragments and is drawn into Tom's dark world. But with his mother planning to move overseas, can Jamie uncover the truth and clear Tom's name before it is too late?

The Waiting Place

Megan Jacobson

Lothian. PB. \$19.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



Emily Woodward has only ever known life in her small, highly controlled religious community. She was never meant to question Prophet Nigel's teachings, because girls aren't supposed to

think for themselves. They are certainly never meant to fall in love with outsiders, let alone have a baby before marriage, like her ostracised older sister has done. Emily knows there's no point to envisioning a life bigger for herself.

But when Emily dies in a car crash alongside her father and sister, she suddenly finds herself in a waiting room surrounded by the souls of the dead – they are being processed by angels to see if they made it into heaven or hell. Emily, in the Good Line, sees her sister in the Bad Line, and is determined to save her. She escapes, alongside Jackson, her long-term crush, and Xanthe, her long-term nemesis. As they navigate the afterlife, they become what they were too afraid to be in life.

Megan Jacobson's *The Waiting Place* is an innovative and entertaining novel about judging people for what they do, not what they say, and about reaching your full potential. Jacobson brings out the joy of the macabre, capturing all the zest, ambition and vitality that a spirit of

carpe diem should. Emily's interactions with different people and burgeoning trust in her own gut instincts highlights the goodness in humanity, and how we determine right from wrong. As Emily learns, the most rebellious thing you can do is follow your dreams, despite how many people tell you not to. For ages 14+.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Our Dark Unravelling

Margot McGovern

Penguin. PB. \$24.99
Available 8 September



Set in an elite boarding school known as Milford House, the latest novel by Margot McGovern is a slow-burn supernatural thriller that builds to a powerful climax.

The story features dual narratives from roommates George, a long-term resident of the school, and Lyssa, the scholarship girl who is madly in love with a piano-playing bad boy. Jude Sinclair is the handsome, moneyed great-grandson of the school's founder – he's led a charmed life up until now. When he dies in a random shooting accident, our protagonists' troubles are only just beginning in this otherworldly tale.

After all the students return from holiday break, Lyssa goes to meet Jude at their secret place, a cabin hidden in the woods known as the Witch Hut. But he never turns up. At the same time, George sees him in the doorway of their room and tells him to get lost. Instead, Jude persists in sending them both the same message: 'Let Me In'.

McGovern was inspired by the myth of Bluebeard and retellings such as Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Like the protagonists of those stories, these two young women are being manipulated by a handsome, charismatic male.

McGovern is a beautiful writer and not only her strong-willed characters, but also her depictions of the landscape and the tempestuous weather, are stunningly rendered. Thriller and horror fans, as well as lovers of Gothic literature, will be engrossed by this cautionary tale for readers aged 13+.

Angela Crocombe is The Readings Prize and The Readings Foundation coordinator

Five Voices

Tamara Moss

A&U. PB. \$24.99
Available 1 September



Tamara Moss arrived on my radar this year when I read *The Escape Game*, a YA murder mystery Moss co-wrote with an author I adore, Marissa Meyer. I was lucky enough to

interview them both for The Readings Podcast back in April, when Moss mentioned her upcoming novel, *Five Voices*. She said a piece of her soul went into the book and so it went straight to the top of my TBR.

Five Voices is a popular podcast on which five Perth teens – Rosie, William, Simone, Zac, and Ocean – play popular board games while simultaneously debating hot topics. The five are anonymous to their listeners, until they are doxxed and suddenly hate messages and death threats come rolling in. Then

William is murdered, leaving behind four clear suspects. Rosie was on the phone with William, who was seconds from revealing a secret about one of their co-hosts, but the call was cut short and minutes later, he fell to his death. Now Rosie must put all the pieces together to find out what happened that night, and which one of her closest friends is lying to her.

Told from switching points of view between Rosie, Simone, Zac and Ocean, with transcripts of their podcast recordings scattered in-between, the mystery slowly unravels. This is such an addictive read! Moss is a maestro (you'll get this reference when you read the book) of the murder mystery genre and I was second-guessing everything! I loved the diverse cast of characters, and their podcast is definitely something I would listen to! If you love murder mysteries, then this is a must-read. For ages 14+.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator

Bad Queer

Gayathiri Kamalakanthan & Chi Nwosu (illus.)

Faber Child. PB. \$22.99
Available now



Surya knows exactly who they are. Coming out as non-binary to their queer parents and best friend? A total non-event. Catching feelings for Blessing – the boy in drama club – is trickier. As their final year

of school unfolds and the two of them grow closer, Surya starts to wonder if Blessing really sees them, or just a version of them that doesn't exist. They'd ask their best friend for advice, but she's busy falling in love too.

But I Hate Him

Page Powers

Tempest. PB. \$19.99
Call your local Readings or check our website to confirm availability



As the heir to a worldwide tutoring company, Rory studies harder than anyone else and he never loses. Except to Luca, a handsome hockey player who effortlessly wins every academic competition.

After a public meltdown, Rory enters the country's most cutthroat academic camp to salvage his reputation. Then Luca shows up. But Rory has a plan: make Luca fall in love with him – and break his heart. As rivalry turns to romance, will Rory risk losing the competition, or losing Luca?

Pearl Beach

Beth Steiner

Pushkin. PB. \$19.99
Available 1 September



For Billie, summer has always meant Pearl Beach, her old Aunt Edith's seaside home, and the place she met her best friend, Andy. But this summer, everything is changing: Andy is drifting away and Edith comes to stay. As the summer unfolds, Edith shares her story as a Holocaust survivor with Billie, a tale of first love, betrayal and resilience, and the profound friendship that develops will change them both forever. **R**

Krzysztof Kieślowski

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