

Books for Christmas Giving term 4, 2006

Every year there is an almost overwhelming number of new children's and teens' books available. And every year we review a number of our favourites as recommendations for Christmas gift giving. Of particular note this year is the number of New Zealand books featuring on the list. There are reprints of old favourites, new offerings from popular authors, and first books from new talents.

Contributors to this list are: Kerry Aluf, Carol Ardern, Sanya Baker, Joanne Baynes, Helen Beckingsale, Crissi Blair, Anne Coppell, Lois Huston, Libby Limbrick, Ann Luxton, Wayne Mills, Lorraine Orman, Frances Plumpton, Angela Soutar and Rosemary Tisdall.

Picture Books for all ages

Kimmy Kids real life faces focus book

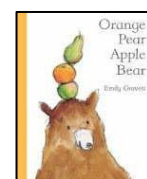
Kimberley Kent
Penguin 2006
Board book ISBN 0143520148



Simply perfect array of close-up photographs of babies and toddlers. Babies love to look at faces and these will capture their attention as they gaze into the appealing pages. Constructed as a concertina board book it can be tucked into the side of the cot or stand up on the floor next to the baby. A lovely book for a new baby to enjoy right from birth. CB

Orange pear apple bear

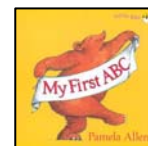
Emily Gravett
Macmillan 2006
Hb ISBN 1405050802



An absolute treasure, a very simple picture book with limited text and loose watercolour illustrations depicting a generous bodied, flowing bear delighting in his delicious fruit. His body echoes the shape and colour of the fruit, continued through the endpapers right down to the pear-shaped credits. Perfect to share with baby up. CB

My first ABC

Pamela Allen
Puffin Baby 2006
ISBN 0143501895; ISBN-13 978 0143501893



A great gift for babies, and pre-schoolers who will delight in seeing familiar characters from many of their favourite Pamela Allen stories cavorting across the pages of this fine-card alphabet book.

Clear font, upper and lower case letters, and one word complement the lively illustrations. Warmly recommended for 0-3 years. CA

Chocolate mousse for Greedy Goose

Julia Donaldson, ill. Nick Sharratt
Macmillan 2005
ISBN 140502190X



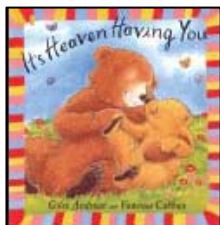
Macaroni and carrots are offered for dinner so of course all the animals want the chocolate mousse dessert.

Nick Sharratt's illustrations, with their strong colours and bold patterns, are wonderful. The clear outlines and expressive gestures of the animals reflect the text well. Fine card pages make this a sturdy book for the toddlers who will soon be predicting the action and joining in with the rhythmic rhyming storyline. Warmly recommended for 0-3. CA

It's heaven having you

Giles Andreae, ill. Vanessa Cabban
Orchard Books 2002/2005
ISBN 1846160987

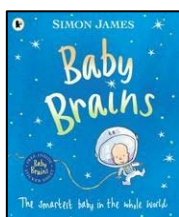
When Granny Bear tells Little Bear 'It's Heaven to see you!' he wants to know what Heaven is, so Granny proceeds to tell him. Granny tells him Heaven is not easy to explain because it is so many different things, including seeing the expression on Grandpa Bear's face while pushing Little Bear on the swing, walking together, and many other such moments shared in a loving family. This is another of Andreae's delightful rhyming stories for little ones that portray loving families, special shared moments and the important role of grandparents. Recommended for ages 1-6. AL



Baby Brains

Simon James
Walker Books 2004
ISBN 1844285227

Mr and Mrs Brain are expecting a baby, and to help the baby's development in utero Mrs Brain reads out loud to it every night, plays music and languages, and even turns up the television when the news comes on so the baby can hear. They want their baby to be very, very clever. Once their baby is born, they find out just how clever he is! A charming and funny story about a very smart baby who eventually learns to enjoy his babyhood. Recommended for ages 1-5. AL



Slinky Malinki's Christmas crackers

Lynley Dodd
Mallinson Rendel 2006
Hb ISBN 0958262616

This handsome hardback picture book will make the perfect Christmas present for the thousands of young Lynley Dodd fans out there.

The Christmas tree looks magnificent, with its trinkets and tinsel and baubles and bows – but you can imagine what happens when a slinky black beast comes sidling out from behind a chair.... What fun he has – you can imagine the resulting chaos! And what are the family going to do about the missing fairy from the top of the tree? Recommended for ages 2+. LO

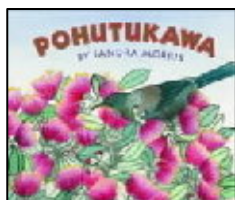


Pohutukawa

Sandra Morris
Reed 2000/2006
ISBN 1869488628

A welcome reprint of a New Zealand picture book with a conservation theme which looks at the various creatures who depend on the pohutukawa tree. The story builds on itself after the style of The House that Jack Built. This would be a good choice to send overseas.

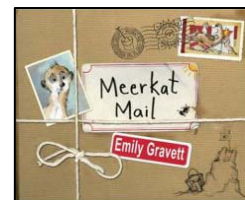
Suitable as a read aloud for 3+ and for early readers wanting a repetitive text. HB



Meerkat mail

Emily Gravett
Macmillan 2006
Hb ISBN 1405052155

Sunny lives with his enormous meerkat family in the Kalahari Desert, but sometimes he wants a little less company. He decides to go off and stay with some relatives. Along the way he visits other family, all the while followed by a shadowy figure. Lift-the-flap postcards keep Sunny's family up-to-date with his travels. Recommended for ages 4+. AC



Alphabet oops! The day Z went first

Althea Kontis, ill. Bob Kolar
Candlewick Press 2006
Hb ISBN 0763627283; ISBN-13 978 0763627287

Z is sick of being last in the alphabet. But starting at the other end doesn't fix things as some letters are still in the middle! A joyous jumble ensues with a subtle message of negotiation and compromise. This random alphabet is a riot of colour and clever comments, and will delight 4-7 year olds, and the folk who read it to them. CA

Under the spell of the moon

Editor Patricia Aldana
Allen & Unwin 2006
Hb ISBN 1741148952

Art for children from 32 of the world's greatest illustrators. A stunning book of poetry in many languages (all translated to English) and a wide variety of illustration and layout. Includes work by Alison Lester, Rosemary Wells, Phillipe Dumas, Peter Sis and Anthony Browne. First published in 2004 by Groundwood Books, Canada, IBBY receives 15% of every copy sold. An ideal gift for all ages 4+. KA

Harry and the dinosaurs go to school

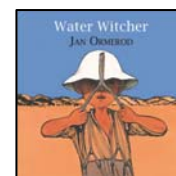
Ian Whybrow
Puffin 2006
ISBN 0141381213

It's time for Harry to start school, but there's an issue with his ever-present dinosaurs – they're all excited except for Stegosaurus, who is nervous. The bucket, with dinosaurs, is separated from Harry and he feels a bit worried and upset, until he finds another boy who looks even more worried. But with the help of his now found dinosaurs Harry brings him out of his shell. Recommended for ages 4+. AC

Water witcher

Jan Ormerod
Little Hare Books 2006
Hb ISBN 9781921049514

It is Depression time and Dougie lives on a farm in the harsh drought-stricken interior of Australia. When his Dad tells him about Grandad's water witching gift, Dougie decides to try finding water this way. Ormerod's use of strong earthy ochre and brilliant blue as the two dominant colours for this book accentuates the stark, arid Australian outback. Recommended for ages 4-8. KA



Uno's garden

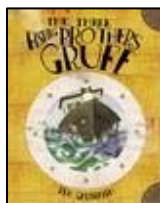
Graeme Base
Penguin/Viking 2006
Hb ISBN 0670041912
Hb ISBN-13 9780670041916

Graeme Base has created another very clever picture book that includes puzzles in the illustrations and carries his heart-felt message of the importance of conservation. As the plants and animals decrease, buildings double. Eventually a barren city is abandoned by all but Uno and Snortlepig. However, over generations Uno's family eventually achieve a perfect balance. Although there are clues on what to look for in the illustrations, the influence of the mathematical concepts and conservation issues makes this appropriate for a wide age group. This hard cover edition on quality paper would be a wonderful gift for 6-12 year olds. CA

The three fishing brothers Gruff

Ben Galbraith
Hodder Headline 2006
ISBN 0340893419

Ben Galbraith is a young illustrator from Gisborne and if this, his first picture book, is anything to go by, he has a bright future ahead of him, lighting up the New Zealand children's literature scene. Galbraith's illustrations combine computer graphics and painting to magical effect while cut-outs in the pages add an extra dimension to the visual storytelling. The story is loosely based on the Three Billy Goats Gruff and involves three fishing brothers whose greed and disdain for the environment finally reap their just reward. But for the reader it is the illustrations that will reward you more each time you open this lovely book. Recommended for ages 6+ SB



Round fish square bowl

Tom Skinner, ill. Mini Goss
New Frontier 2006
ISBN 1921042966; ISBN-13 9781921042966

A delightful picture book that celebrates individuality. It opens with 'Have you ever felt that you didn't quite fit in? A bit like a square peg in a round hole?' Fresh expressive illustrations complement clever captions that have the focus word of each phrase in an interesting font. Examples include – slow like a tortoise, mad as a hatter, and poor as a church mouse. The second half of the book then illustrates the positive of the opposite – the tortoise beat the hare, the madder the merrier, a mouse can be rich with family and friends. 6-8 year olds will enjoy this humorous way of expressing that being different is acceptable. CA

The short and incredibly happy life of Riley

Colin Thompson
Lothian 2005
Hb ISBN 0734408064

This is a sophisticated picture book with a message for any age group. Riley is a rat- simple things make him happy and this is contrasted with the demands and expectations most humans have of life. Despite the picture book format it may not appeal to, or be understood by very young children but it could be just the thing to give to an adult who loves children's books. Winner of the 2006 Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the year. Recommended for 6+. HB

Carpet of Dreams

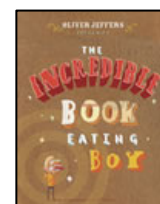
Tessa Duder, ill. Mark Wilson
HarperCollins Australia 2006
Hb ISBN 020719999X

A Turkish carpet found in hidden in a back room of Babanne's house becomes the source of magical dreams for Sara. Woven into the carpet are animals from exotic places in the world. Each night in her dreams Sara and Gul, the weaver of the carpet visit the animals. Each morning she finds out more about them from Babanne, her grandmother. A poignant story of a young girl's relationship with her grandmother, and of how she identifies with her family's past through the stories in the carpet. Tessa Duder is an acclaimed author of books for young adolescents. This is her first picture book. The exquisite evocative illustrations are the perfect complement to the text. It would be a wonderful gift for readers aged 7-10, and listeners of any age. LL

The incredible book eating boy

Oliver Jeffers
HarperCollins 2006
Hb ISBN 0007182279

Henry loved books so much that he devoured them – literally. Oliver Jeffers has cleverly placed his simply drawn figures against a background of paper and books capturing the humour of the story very effectively. A great addition to any sophisticated picture book collection. FP



Do not open this book!

Michaela Muntean, ill. Pascal Lemaitre
Scholastic Press 2006
Hb ISBN 0439698391

The author has a delightful playabout with words, how ideas are worked on and how stories are constructed. There is a pig who can't concentrate on his writing, what with the naughty reader opening the book and turning the pages when asked not to – and then there are all those scary and exciting words which escape when the page turning causes a breeze. The pig credits the readers with helping to construct the story after all (and gives lots of clues as to how they might do the same). At the end the pig goes to bed and dreams of winning a writing award, and I feel she should!! AS

The arrival

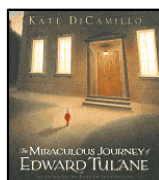
Shaun Tan
Lothian Books 2006
Hb ISBN 0734406940

This book was four years in the making and it shows, it's simply a book that you desire to own. The story of a new settler's arrival in a strange land will resonate with anyone who has ever immigrated or relocated to somewhere different. It feels like a journal as it captures (without text) an immigrant's arrival in a strange world (the where is not important) but one where he struggles to find his feet. At times he feels displaced, isolated, bereft of his family and confused by everything odd around him. The sepia-coloured illustrations capture the dissociation of the immigrant well. This is a book for anyone who has had to start anew. WM



The miraculous journey of Edward Tulane

Kate DiCamillo, ill. Bagram Ibatoulline
Candlewick Press 2006
Hb ISBN 0763625892



Edward Tulane begins life as a very glamorous 3' tall toy rabbit, complete with a full wardrobe of gorgeous clothes and a life of luxury to go with it. But that's just the beginning of the tale and there is trouble in store for Edward as he passes from one owner to another, and as he learns what it takes to become real, what it is to be really loved. Some of the people who claim him as their own lead pretty tough lives and there's not always a happy ending, but there is a resilience in the face of hard times and they are shown with a straightforward honesty. Kate DiCamillo has a knack for bringing the lives of simple people to us in an irresistible way and this is another treasure. Read aloud to 5+, read alone 10+. CB

Henrietta the great go-getter

Martine Murray
Allen & Unwin 2006
Hb ISBN 1741149290

A beautifully presented, small format hardcover book with zany line illustrations and clever production that uses shades of blue, brown and beige that adds interests to both text and illustration.

Henrietta, her little brother Albert, and her friend Olive use the bath for a boat and in their search to find help for the 'Rietta with Fading Spots', meet other unusual creatures. A great gift for a child who would enjoy the inventive vocabulary and rich language. For capable readers aged 7+. CA

The secret history of Tom Trueheart, boy adventurer

Ian Beck
Oxford University Press 2006
ISBN 0192792032

Take all your knowledge of fairytales and have your ideas thoroughly turned on their head in this exciting adventure! Tom is the youngest of the seven Trueheart brothers. All the others are employed as adventurers by The Story Bureau while Tom must stay at home with his mother. As the day of his twelfth birthday draws near (the day his training can begin), each of his brothers is given the beginning of a story and sent off to the 'Land of Stories' to complete the adventure. But none of the brothers return and Tom is sent to find them. Before long princesses, frogs, beanstalks and dwarves are mixed in an exciting adventure. Recommended for ages 8+. JB

Framed

Frank Cottrell Boyce
Pan Macmillan 2006
ISBN 033043425X

From the same author as *Millions* this is another heart-warming family story of mishaps, mayhem and misunderstandings. Dylan Hughes, our 9-year-old narrator, is becoming increasingly lonely as more and more families move away from his Welsh village to find work and opportunity elsewhere. Dylan helps out in his father's failing garage obsessively filling in the fuel log and keeping track of every vehicle that passes – including the mysterious convoy of trucks that

disappears up the mountain road to the mines one day. What are they doing and could they be the key to saving his family's business and keeping his parents together? Recommended for ages 8+. SB

The Roald Dahl treasury

Roald Dahl
Puffin Books 2003
ISBN 0141317337; ISBN-13 978 0141317335

This treasury contains a collection of Roald Dahl's writings covering fiction and non-fiction, prose and poetry from many of his very popular children's books, as well as some previously unpublished letters and poems. With an introduction 'About my father' by Ophelia Dahl, the treasury is divided into four sections entitled 'Animals', 'Magic', 'Family Friends and Foes', and 'Matters of Importance', allowing ready access to your favourite reads. Superbly illustrated by Quentin Blake. Though you will need to rest this book on a table or pillow for comfortable reading, this is a great gift for anyone who is a Roald Dahl fan.

Also recommended for Dahl fans is *Songs and verse*, a collection of poems from Dahl's novels. It was published by Jonathan Cape in 2005 (Hb ISBN 022407038X). AL

The room of 100 locks

Stu Duval
Reed Publishing 2006
ISBN 1869484010

A new book from storyteller Stu Duval, this is a series of short stories with no endings. They are mysteries – excellent for children who like to think. Each story is between 5 – 10 pages long and contain pirates and sultans, zookeepers and jewel thieves. Each story ends with a question, and readers need to discover the secret. Answers are found at the end of each story, upside down. Recommended for ages 8+. LH

Henry and the Flea; The real thing; Super Freak

Brian Falkner
Mallinson Rendel 2006
ISBN 1869506030; 1869506030;
1869506030

Brian's popular series of books are now reissued in a new format with new jackets. Set in the North Shore of Auckland, these books are real tastes of Kiwi life, featuring real Kiwi kids. They are perfect for boys who are just getting hooked into the reading habit. Recommended for ages 8+. AC



Mountains of fire

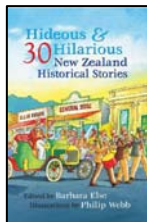
Linda McNabb
HarperCollins Publishers 2006
ISBN 1869506030

The first in the Dragon Charmer's series, Mountains of Fire is about Logan, who is the apprentice of an absent-minded wizard, and Alyxa, who is a dragon charmer. Their lives seem ordinary until a rebel dragon leader kidnaps one of the royal family, and Logan and Alyxa must journey to rescue the stolen prince. The book explores the idea of domination – humans charm dragons into obedience – and raises question about respect to all living creatures. A very thought provoking book. Recommended for ages 8+. LH

Hideous & hilarious: 30 New Zealand historical stories

Edited by Barbara Else, ill. Philip Webb
Random House NZ 2006
Hb ISBN 1869417895

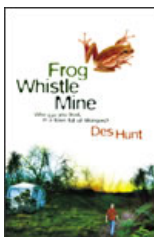
The latest in this popular anthology series, the book contains short stories for primary and intermediate ages. Stories range from humorous to dramatic, and cover subjects such as the goldrush days, the Tangiwai disaster, emigration to NZ, the whaling days, World War II, health camps, the New Zealand Wars. Several retellings of Maori stories and legends are included. There is a timeline and several pages of historical notes at the end. Recommended for ages 8+. LO



Frog Whistle Mine

Des Hunt
HarperCollins Publishers 2006
ISBN 1869505956

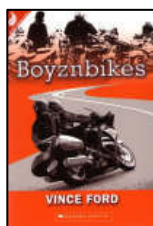
Twelve-year-old Tony arrives in Charleston, a gold-mining town on the West Coast, with his mother as she begins a new life working at the Tree Frog Lodge. Tony is tired of moving on from place to place, and hopes that maybe this time they can settle down. He quite likes the idea of sleeping in the old run down caravan he's been assigned as his room, and decides that maybe there will be some adventures to be had in this place he has learned has 'old mines, gold, missing bodies, ghosts'. Excitement begins immediately as his caravan is ransacked and he sees some suspicious movements in the bushes outside. Then begins a series of adventures and mishaps that keep Tony on his toes and wary of one particular neighbour. His friendship with Rose, the owners' granddaughter develops slowly, and together they try to find out the mysteries surrounding them. An exciting read for 9+. RT



Boyznbikes

Vince Ford
Scholastic 2006
ISBN 1869437411

Begins with a classic Vince Ford escapade, but moves quickly into a more serious story focusing on Callum's relationship with his father. Callum ends up going on a seemingly relaxed motorbike expedition with his father and two mates, but as they travel, secrets relating to the past are unfolded. Callum learns some surprising things about his family. Finishes with a heart-stopping motorbike ride across the country. Riveting reading for boys of about 10 to 14, and girls would enjoy it too. LO



Under the mountain

Maurice Gee
Penguin 1982/2006
ISBN 0143318497

A re-jacketed new edition of this classic New Zealand children's fantasy. Twins Theo and Rachel Matheson discover that they have the power to oppose the giant creatures living under Auckland's dormant volcanoes – intent upon destroying the planet. Recommended for ages 10-12. HB



Thor's tale

Janice Marriott
HarperCollins NZ 2006
ISBN 1869505727

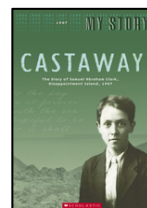
Subtitled "Endurance and adventure in the Southern Ocean", this thrilling story looks at the life of an 11-year-old Norwegian whaler's boy on a whaling station in South Georgia in 1914 – and also provides much fascinating detail about Shackleton's voyage of discovery in the *Endurance*. The descriptions of the whaling processes are graphic and at times horrifying – but intensely realistic. Recommended for boys aged about 10 to 14 - who like plenty of action to spice up their history. LO



Castaway: The diary of Samuel Abraham Clark, Disappointment Island, 1907 [My story]

Bill O'Brien
Scholastic 2006
ISBN 1869437500

There were 28 crew on board the barque *Dundonald* when it was shipwrecked on one of the southern Auckland Islands on 7 March 1907. Only 15 escaped to eke out a miserable existence on the bleak windswept islands whose sheer cliffs made escape to the nearby Auckland Island, where they knew that some supplies had been cached, almost impossible. Bill O'Brien has added a 13-year-old cabin boy to the crew, and it is Sam Clark who records their desperate days struggling for survival with little salvaged other than the clothes that they were wearing. Another excellent addition to the My Story series that will have particular appeal to Gary Paulsen fans. FP



The new policeman

Kate Thompson
Random House 2006
ISBN 0370328787

You and your family can kick up your heels with this lovely Irish tale. While surely for everyone, those with a musical bent will get the most out of this fantastical story of how the Irish got their music from the faeries. Every chapter begins with the music for a jig appropriate to the events being told, so dust off that fiddle and get playing!

You can listen to the tunes at www.katethompson.info/childrens_books.asp?id=7
Recommended for ages 10+. SB



Monster blood tattoo

D.M. Cornish
Omnibus Books 2006
Hb ISBN 1862916055

First book in an exciting fantasy series by Australian David Cornish. Rossamund, a boy foundling with a girl's name, is finally leaving the orphanage to take up an apprenticeship as a lamplighter. Taking the wrong boat on his way to his place of employ, Rossamund is soon deep in adventure and finding out, up close, all about the bloodcurdling monsters that prowl the countryside at night. Along his travels Rossamund meets up with the mysterious Europe, a famous monster hunter or lazhar, he loses his hat and befriends Sallow, a skold in training. Compelling reading for 11+. KA



I, Coriander

Sally Gardner

Orion 2006

ISBN 1842555049

If you are looking for a fairytale with a twist, or a historical novel with magic, look no further than this beautifully written charmer. Playing on traditional riffs, such as the sweet and happy girl left in the power of an evil step-mother, Gardner has created a work that delights with its freshness. Young Coriander tells her story in her own words, in a rhythm created by her need to replace her burnt down candle to continue to see what she's writing. Of dual human and fairy heritage, Coriander is able to travel between the 17th century England of her father's world and the fairyland of her mother's to fascinating effect. No wilting flower, she; her choices and her magic provide the agency for her own growth, as well as that of other characters around her. Highly recommended for readers aged 11+. SB

The book of everything

Guus Kuijer, trans. John Nieuwenhuizen

Allen & Unwin 2006

ISBN 978 1741147513

Thomas is nine and is writing *The book of everything*. It is 1951 in Amsterdam, where he lives with his parents and older sister. His father's word is law in the house, and his strict enforcement of his religious beliefs dominate the family's life and happiness. 'When I grow up, I'm going to be happy, Thomas thought, but didn't say out loud.' A beautifully written story about overcoming fear. Recommended for ages 11+. KA

Old Bones

Bill Nagelkerke

Scholastic 2006

ISBN 186943725X

Jamie is not at all thrilled with the move into a rambling old house, especially when he learns that his father's partner is pregnant. His room at the top of the house seems to be uncannily cold and he begins to suspect that it is haunted. As a counterpoint, Charlie in 1922 is combing the sandhills for treasure to add to the collection that he keeps way up in God's Eye under the roof of the old house. A very readable mystery of two unhappy boys each searching for an answer, their lives inextricably linked. Recommended for ages 11+. FP

Teenage fiction (ages 12+)

The Mask

Patricia Bernard

Scholastic 2005

ISBN 1865047902

While suspended from school Rob travels with his father from Australia to Venice, and is immediately plunged into a dangerous adventure. They are staying in a small hotel owned by relatives of his mother. Rob and his cousin Lucca must uncover the mysterious secret behind the threatening masked stranger. Compelling reading for 12+. KA

Finding Grace

Alyssa Brugman

Allen & Unwin 2001/2006

ISBN 9781741149326

I loved this book when I first read it and I'm delighted to see it reprinted with an attractive new cover. 18-year-old Rachel has just left school when she is offered a job as caregiver for a brain damaged woman. Her experiences in her first year at university, her relationship with Grace and her first boyfriend are recounted with compassion (for Grace) and humour (for her own life which has episodes which made me laugh out loud). A great read for teenage girls. HB



Looking For JJ

Anne Cassidy

Scholastic 2004

Hb ISBN 0439977126

Seventeen year-old Jennifer Jones (JJ) is attempting to establish a new identity after release from prison. She had murdered her childhood friend. Currently living with her social worker, complications arise when a newspaper threatens to blow her cover. Since the murder she has moved on and isn't the disturbed child that she once was. However, because society has given her a label, her life is fraught with both personal and social complications. WM

Aim high

David Hill

Mallinson Rendel 2006

ISBN 0958262624

Another adventure full of non-stop action from this popular writer. Neale is an archer – which requires a cool head. His temper prompts him into accepting a challenge from a boy at school who is a gun fanatic. But their expedition into the country turns nasty when torrential rain causes slips and floods. The boys end up fleeing for their lives. But then Kane is injured and Neale has to find his own way out of the bush to get help. Great reading for boys of about 12-15. LO



Shooting the moon

V.M. Jones

HarperCollins Publishers 2006

ISBN 1869506219

The sequel to *Juggling with mandarins*, this book continues to follow the life of Pip McLeod. His family has accept Pip's passion for climbing and life seems good. Accepted for the Highlands climbing squad, Pip is blind to the problems starting to beset his family. A dramatic turn of events has Pip facing choices he never thought he'd make, and Pip finally learns what truly is important. LH

Face it

Denis Martin

Penguin NZ 2006

ISBN 0143318403

This would be a good choice for those who have enjoyed John Marsden's Tomorrow series. A group of teens holidaying on an island in the Marlborough Sounds are joined by a group of armed terrorists.

An action-packed story as the teens try to stay one step ahead of the terrorists – and alive. HB



Man vs beast

Robert Muchamore
Hodder Children's Books 2006
ISBN 0340911697



The use of animals in laboratory experiments can polarise people. Some experiments can further man's knowledge and ability to help mankind and some can be seemingly meaningless. The Zebra Alliance is a group dedicated to fighting the use of animals in labs by using non-violent methods. However, not all members agree with their methods and decide to take the fight to a whole new level. Cherub agents Lauren, James and their friend Kyle are sent undercover to infiltrate a terrorist group campaigning against animal experimentation. But what can mere children do? At only 11, 14 and 17 years of age, these children can, and do, plenty! The latest in the Cherub series. JB

Tamar

Mal Peet
Walker 2005
ISBN 0744565707

A compelling read which won this year's Carnegie Medal. Tamar is both the code name for a young Dutch special agent, parachuted into the occupied Netherlands towards the end of World War II, and the name of a teenage girl who is bequeathed a box of mementoes by her grandfather. This box leads her to uncover the truth about her grandfather and her father who has abandoned her. The story moves between the grim realities of World War II in a Nazi-occupied country and Tamar's journey of discovery in the present day. An excellent book which will be enjoyed by older teens and adults. HB

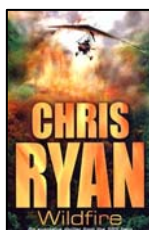
Criss cross

Lynne Rae Perkins
Greenwillow Books 2005
ISBN 0060092726

A Newbery Medal winner, *Criss cross* is a delicate portrait of a group of young people at a crossroads in their growing into themselves. Somewhat in the vein of Jan Mark's *Thunder and lightnings* or E. L. Konigsburg's *View from Saturday*, this is a gentle, character-centred story laced with humour and recognition. It would be a superb book for grandparents or parents to share with the young teens in their lives; to help them believe they are not on their own. Highly recommended. SB

Wildfire

Chris Ryan
Red Fox, 2006
ISBN 1862301662



Thirteen-year-old Ben is in Australia on holiday from his school in England. His mother, a world expert on environmental issues, is to present a paper on global warming at a weather conference, but events conspire to thwart their plans. When his mum gets caught up at the conference Ben is offered the opportunity of a microlight flight over Adelaide.

A raging bushfire, a kidnap and a terrible conspiracy mean that this flight becomes a fight for survival – for him, his companion Kelly and thousands of Australians. Some will survive, many will not. JB

The extraordinary and unusual adventures of Horatio Lyle

Catherine Webb
Atom 2006
ISBN 1904233783

Horatio Lyle has a passion for science and invention. It is this which brings him to the attention of the authorities. They need his help to solve the theft of an extraordinary plate. With the assistance of Tess, a 'reformed' (caught) pickpocket, Thomas, son of the man charge with protecting the plate, and Tate, his dog – Horatio sets off through Victorian London to confront a conspiracy of extraordinary and unusual proportions and participants. The sequel, *The obsidian dagger*, is also available. AC

Uglies; Pretties; Specials

Scott Westerfield
Simon & Schuster
2005 ISBN 0689865384; 2005 ISBN
0689865392; 2006 ISBN 1416939946



The Uglies trilogy follows the coming of age of Tally, an Ugly, who is about to turn 16, the age when Uglies undergo plastic surgery to become Pretties and move to New Pretty Town and a life of endless bubbleheaded fun. Tally is one of the rebels and lives to hoverboard and play sneaky tricks along with her new best friend Shay. Then Shay runs off to join the outlawed Smokies. Tally finds she has no choice, she must find her runaway friend or she can never become pretty. A thrill-packed sci-fi adventure that follows Tally as she transforms from Ugly to Pretty to Special. KA

The book thief

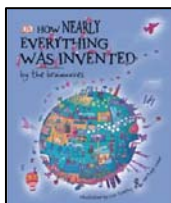
Markus Zusak
Picador 2005
ISBN 033036426X



This is a haunting and tender story of a young orphaned girl, Liesel, during WW2 in Germany, who takes comfort from books, the power and possibility of words and the worlds they make available to her in times of trouble, danger and near starvation. There is much love and caring (and even almost normal childhood adventures) amongst her foster family, friends and neighbours and the Jewish man they shelter in their basement. The narrator is Death who reports on his onerous tasks with sympathy and wry humour - a clever technique which provides omniscience and a sympathetic attempt to explain the German psyche of the time. Although the book is over 500 pages in length, I was captured by the author's skill and sensitivity and feel bereft at finishing it. The complexities of the issues make it a teen and adult read although some younger children would find the story line fascinating (and there is nothing 'unsuitable' apart from the realities of the Holocaust and war). Zusak is well recognised and a prizewinner, especially for *The Messenger* in Australia, and is still only 30 years old. I have started to read more of his earlier work after this impressive introduction. AS

How nearly everything was invented by the Brainwaves

Ill. Lisa Swerling and Ralph Lazar
Dorling Kindersley 2006
Hb ISBN 1405313293



This large-format hardcover book will delight children with enquiring minds who want to know everything all of the time. It takes a light-hearted approach but gets the facts correct and emphasises how one idea leads to another and effect of consequence. It is a treasury of many inventions including the lens, the combustion engine, the light bulb, the transistor... that will fascinate and stimulate. Boys especially will love to pore over this for hours. Highly recommended for ages 8+. CA

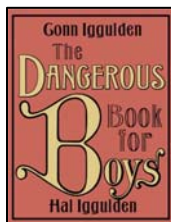
The Dahlmanac

Roald and Sophie Dahl, ill. Quentin Blake
Puffin 2006
ISBN 014132189X

A fabulous collection of facts, mostly collected by Dahl, organised into monthly entries. Quizzes and letters from Roald to home, with Blake's illustrations make this a wonderful present for Dahl fans of all ages. Recommended for ages 8+. AC

The dangerous book for boys

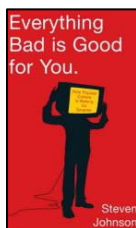
Conn and Hal Iggulden
HarperCollins, 2006
Hb ISBN 0007232748; ISBN 13
9780007232741



Designed to resemble an early 20th century *Boys Own Annual* this eccentric and eclectic collection of facts and activities looks like it should be full of tales of daring-do – and it is. Everything from the laws of cricket, the wonders of the Ancient World, the best paper plane ever, tripwires, kings and queens, how to tan a skin... the list is very long. Aimed at helping boys regain Sunday afternoons and get out from in front of the TV/PC and revel in the boyishness of old! Recommended for ages 8+. AC

Everything bad is good for you

Steven Johnson
Allen Lane/Penguin 2005
ISBN 0713998024



A witty and thought provoking proposition which possibly explains why IQ scores have been going up steadily since the 1950s. Johnson espouses that young people who have had large amounts of exposure to advanced interactive game playing and other technology, and the skills involved are not becoming more stupid [lazier perhaps] as we older people often think. This could be a good intergenerational discussion prompt, a starter for an English topic or speech or the teenager in your life might just say 'yes I knew this all along.' I found it strangely reassuring! AS

Pirates

John Matthews
HarperCollins 2006
Hb ISBN 0732284066



The glittering red eyes in the skull on the cover draw you in with promises of treasure and this lavishly illustrated collection of facts about pirates delivers. There's history, punishment, timeline, a glossary – great for pirate fans aged 8+. AC

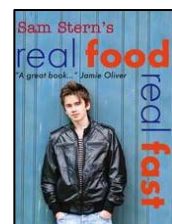
The art book for children

Editors of Phaidon Press
Phaidon 2005
ISBN 0714845116

Phaidon Press are well-known art publishers and they have come up with an interesting and enjoyable format with which to introduce children to the art tradition of the western world. Each of the 30 double-page spreads in the book focuses on one art work or artist, ranging in scope from Pieter Bruegel the Elder (with a painting from 1566-7) to Christo and Jeanne-Claude (with a wrapped Parisian bridge 1975-85 and wrapped Florida islands 1980-83). Not only is there interesting information about these works and the artists who created them but the editors have included some thought-provoking questions to engage the child audience. SB

Real food real fast

Sam Stern
Walker Books 2006
ISBN 140630249X



Sam Stern wrote his first cookbook – with the help of his mum – at the age of 15, and here's his second and it's a seriously good way to get teens (not to mention adults) into cooking. Sam provides a great role model, along with his family and friends who feature in the photographs and the text. They're seen shopping for the food, preparing it, having fun with the cooking process and then enjoying the mostly healthy food. A clever trick is the tabs dividing the book into timeslots according to how long it takes to put the meal together – from a five-minute sandwich to a 30-minute risotto. It's real food and you can hear the youthful Brit language throughout. Get this for your nearest teen and they'll be cooking up a storm in no time. CB

Take a kid outdoors

Colin Moore
New Holland Publishers 2006
ISBN 1869660439



A guide for parents on introducing children to the outdoor world – everything from the backyard to tramping trips in the mountains. The author was a Playcentre dad and has based the book on his own experiences and that of friends. It is practical and down-to-earth. Perfect for families wanting to explore New Zealand's outdoor environment at many levels. AC