

Keeping in touch term 3, 2007

Epistolary novels – tales told through letters – have been a narrative device for centuries, very popular in the 18th century. Now the form has extended to include emails, TXT, IM, chat rooms, notes... the possibilities are endless. Fictional diaries have become a popular way to introduce history to children.

Contributors to this list are: Kerry Aluf, Carol Ardern, Sanya Baker, Helen Beckingsale, Crissi Blair, Tina Collins, Annie Coppell, Lorraine Orman, Angela Soutar, Rosemary Tisdall. Guest reviewer: Lizzie Blair-Finlay, 12-years-old

Picture books for under 6s

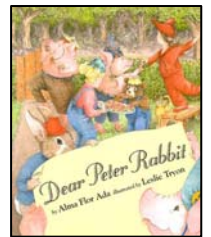
Dear Peter Rabbit and Yours Truly, Goldilocks

Alma Flor Ada, illus Leslie Tryon

Hb ISBN 0689318502 and 0689816081

Atheneum 1994 and 1998

Goldilocks and Baby Bear are best friends, and through their correspondence, become friends with Pig One, Pig Two and Pig Three, Little Red Riding Hood and Peter Rabbit. However wolves Fer O'Cious and Wolfy Lupus don't fair too well. These letters are fun for 4+ familiar with the tales. AC



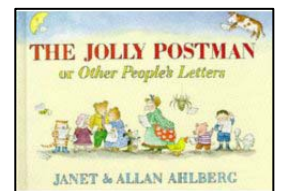
The Jolly Postman, or Other People's Letters

Janet and Allan Ahlberg

Heinemann 1986

Hb ISBN 0434925152

A delightful book where the Jolly Postman delivers letters to fairytale characters. Opposite the illustrated pages of text are addressed envelopes which contain clever letters, postcards, brochures and cards. The envelopes and detailed illustrations include lots of fairytale icons and characters for clever eyes to spy. A companion edition, *The Jolly Christmas Postman*, was published in 1991 (Heinemann, ISBN 0434925322). Great fun for 5+. CA



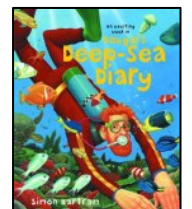
Dougal's Deep-Sea Diary

Simon Bartram

Templar Publishing 2004/2005

Hb ISBN 1840115084; ISBN 1840115092

Dougal leaves a very boring job to become a deep-sea diver. Follow his adventures and discovery of treasure – and Atlantis. Have fun looking for the different sorts of fish – and spotting all the things Dougal misses. 4+. AC



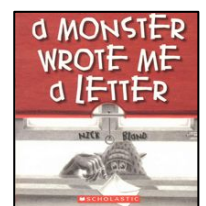
A Monster Wrote Me a Letter

Nick Bland

Scholastic 2005

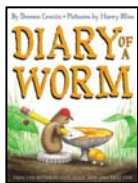
ISBN 1865046116

Written in verse, this story is told from two sides. Monster sends a letter to his cousin Fred, who lives under the boy's bed, about coming to visit. The boy finds the letter and thinks it is for him, so he replies and then they both get ready for the monster's visit. The monster ends up living beneath his bed and the boy is never frightened anymore. 3+. TC



Diary of a Worm

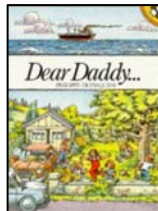
Doreen Cornin, illus Harry Bliss
Joanna Cotler Books (imprint of
HarperCollins) 2003
ISBN 006000150X



A young worm diaries its life. It's a very funny look at a worm's life and its role in the earth, including the dangers of hopscotch, and the limitations of doing the hokey pokey when you're a worm. The end papers are great fun, too. Followed by Worm's friend's story, *Diary of a Spider*. 4+. AC

Dear Daddy

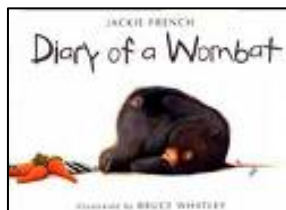
Philippe Dupasquier
Andersen Press 2002 (originally published
1985)
ISBN 1842701657



Young Sophie writes to her father as through the seasons he travels the world working as a seaman on a large freighter. While the text simply portrays Sophie's longing for her father, Dupasquier uses two panels of illustration throughout to show the contrast between the father's year at sea, visiting ports, loading cargo, battling storms and Sophie's life at home with mother and baby brother. A delightful picturebook for young children to explore. 3+. KA

Diary of a Wombat

Jackie French, illus Bruce
Whatley
HarperCollins Australia 2002
Hb ISBN 0207199957



Fabulously funny! Welcome to wombat life as the wombat trains her new human neighbours into being the perfect pets. They (eventually) learn to feed her the perfect food, on demand, and (unintentionally) provide her with scratching posts and holes. The minimal text is

perfectly complemented by Whatley's illustrations *Monday: Morning: Slept; Afternoon: Slept; Evening: Ate grass. Scratched; Night: Ate grass*. Great to read aloud for ages 3+. AC

Letter to Father Christmas

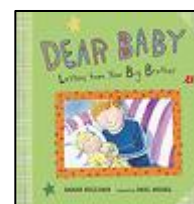
Rose Impey, illus Sue Porter
Orchard 2001
ISBN 1841210080

This UK picture book, set in the countryside, presents the cute, but real, dilemma for under-7s of how to communicate with Father Christmas when you're not skilled at letter writing and without seeming to be greedy. There are lots of gentle lessons and the text is extended, being more suitable to be read aloud by adults. It has a very nice message about generosity to others. AS

Dear Baby, Letters from Your Big Brother

Sarah Sullivan, illus Paul Meisel
Walker 2006
Hb ISBN 0744593697

A series of letters and mementos from an older brother aged about six, to his baby sister. He moves from uncertainty about how she might affect his life, to disgruntled, mildly jealous, loving and, finally, proud. His friend and neighbour, Rishi, goes through the same process a few months later. The letters, drawings and photos are collected together for the baby's first birthday present so the layout resembles a diary or journal. The book veers more towards how adults would hope these family issues should be resolved and remembered but would be useful for under 7s going through this process, and is a good example of how a journal/scrapbook could be put together for slightly older children. AS



Junior fiction (ages 7-10)

The Truth about Toffee

Janet Slater Bottin, designed by Alice Bell
Scholastic NZ 2003
ISBN 1869435508



A series of letters from Skye, a disabled riding enthusiast, to her Nan about saving her favourite riding school pony from 'retirement' and the pet food factory. The letters alternate between typed and handwritten, and follow a back and forward conversation with her Nan. They report Skye's and her classmates' progress on raising awareness and saving Toffee. The design of the book adds an enormous amount to the appeal it will have to (mainly) girls. AS

Utterly Me, Clarice Bean

Lauren Child
Orchard Books 2002
ISBN 1841219185

This was the first illustrated novella Child wrote about her widely adored picture book character, Clarice Bean. And it didn't disappoint her 'tweenage' fans one iota. Here Clarice is utterly hooked on a series of preposterous books about a girl detective named Ruby Redfort. Thus, when Clarice's teacher presents the class with a book project competition, she naturally jumps at the chance of sharing her enthusiasm with utterly everyone. Her teacher, however, has other ideas. Highly recommended for 8+. SB



Wenny Has Wings

Janet Lee Carey
Faber & Faber 2005
ISBN 0571223532



Will writes to his sister, Wenny, who died in the traffic accident which almost killed Will, too. Through his letters Will expresses his grief, his anger, and the changes happening around him as the family struggles to carry on. 9+. AC

Papa's Island

Melanie Drewery, illus Fifi Colston
Reed 2006
ISBN 978 1869485948

A touching story of an Italian man and his family during his internment on Somes/Matiu Island in Wellington Harbour during World War Two. The family keep in touch with letters and parcels. There is very good historical detail in the illustrations and the attitudes of the characters. Useful historical background at the end extends the book's use to children older than the usual picture book age. AS

Dear Max

Sally Grindley, illus Tony Ross
Simon & Schuster 2006 (first published Orchard 2004)
ISBN 1416903925

Max is nearly ten when he writes to his favourite author, D.J. Lucas. Thus begins a correspondence between the two as they agonise over their writing, and Max worries about the bully in school and his continuing hospital appointments. There's a sequel, *Bravo Max*. 8+. AC



The Music of Dolphins

Karen Hesse
Scholastic 1996
Hb ISBN 0590897977

A feral child is discovered on an island off Florida, and is taken to a research unit at a Boston university. Mila's experiences are recorded in journal form with effective use of font size to show the development of her language skills and growing understanding of what it means to be human. Later Mila's recollections of her life with the dolphins are recorded using italics. The language is wonderfully evocative. A fascinating story, with a satisfying conclusion, for 9+. CA

Harry and the Anzac Poppy

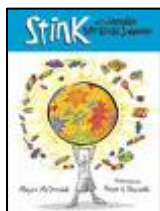
John Lockyer, illus Raewyn Whaley
Reed 1997
ISBN 1869489594

Young Harry discovers many truths about the WWI experience. These are presented through a series of letters from the front from his great-grandfather, an old photograph, and by talking with his grandmother. Very effective and affecting, no matter how many times one has read it. Picture book for 9+. AS

Stink and the Incredible Super-Galactic Jawbreaker

Megan McDonald, illus Peter H. Reynolds
Candlewick Press 2006
ISBN 978 0763621582

This amusing little story of Judy Moody's younger brother Stink, and his amazing scheme for extracting free treats from companies using his letter-writing skills, will hit the spot for your 6-9 year-olds.



Stink's cheeky letters and cartoon illustrations of proverbs (or 'idioms' in US usage) pepper this delightful little book. SB

Private and Confidential

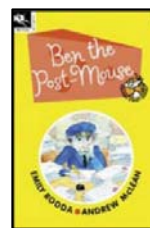
Marion Ripley, illus Colin Backhouse
Frances Lincoln 2003
Hb ISBN 0711220972

Laura and Malcolm are penpals. Their correspondence has a gap, until Laura receives a letter from Malcolm's sister explaining that Malcolm has had to have an eye operation and will never have full sight. Laura borrows a braille machine – and Malcolm writes back in Braille. Included is an alphabet card to translate the letter. Picture book for 7+. AC

Ben the Post-Mouse (Squeak Street Series, number 10)

Emily Rodda, illus Andrew McLean
Working Title Press 2006
ISBN 1876288574

Ben is the post-mouse for the area and is sad that he never gets any letters of his own. So he decides to put an ad in the paper for a Pen Pal. His plan backfires when he receives hundreds of letters. But his friends are there to help him out. For newly confident readers. AC



Jessie Jenkins' Diary: Written on Board the Sailing Ship Lord Auckland on a Voyage from England to New Zealand 1841-2

Kathryn Rountree, illus Gary Hebley
Longman Paul 1989
ISBN 0582877997

A simple text with large print and black & white illustrations reminiscent of those in Dickens's classics. Suitable for 8-10 yr olds, this book provides a very realistic interpretation of a working-class child's experience at sea – bad food, bad conditions, bad weather, sea sickness, deaths, illness, boredom and, surprisingly, school lessons, despite the difficult living conditions. There are few treats and pleasures over the approximately 18-week journey and Wellington looks like paradise at the end of it! AS

The Gardener

Sarah Stewart, illus David Small
Farrar Strauss Giroux 1997
Hb ISBN 0374325170

Lydia Grace goes to live with her Uncle in the city when her dad loses his job. The series of letters she writes home tell of her settling in and how she grows lots of plants and flowers to make the place beautiful. She is determined to make her uncle smile!

A Caldecott Honor Book, this picture book is delightful. Lydia Grace's positive energy comes through so beautifully and inspires one to become a gardener! Picture book for 6+. RT

Charlotte's Web Page

Alan Trussell-Cullen, illus Lauren McAdam
Shortland Publications 1999
ISBN 0769904343

12 year-old Charlotte Weisner is devastated when her parents announce that the family will be shifting from their home in Boston to New Zealand for six months and at first she resents all the differences she notices in her new home. But when one of her nerdy brother Nat's new friends offers to help her use her new computer to keep in touch with her friends back home, Charlotte's life begins a whole new chapter. SB

Little Wolf's Diary of Daring Deeds

Ian Whybrow, illus Tony Ross
Collins 1996
Hb ISBN 0001856677

Sequel to *Little Wolf's Book of Badness*. Little Wolf and his cousin Yeller are off on another adventure, which Little Wolf tells his parents all about through letters home. Lots of fun for readers gaining in reading confidence. AC

Intermediate fiction (ages 10-12)

My Story series

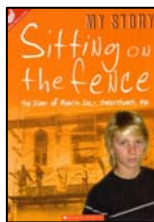
Various authors

Scholastic

There are a number of stories in this series which focus on true events in New Zealand history and are told in diary format. Most are suitable for upper primary school with the occasional one more suited to intermediate/secondary. They really help to bring these aspects of New Zealand history to life. Events covered so far include:

The Wahine Disaster (*Abandon Ship* by Shirley Corlett); the Tangiwai disaster (*Journey to Tangiwai* by David Hill); the Napier earthquake (*Earthquake* by Janine MvVeagh); the Tarawera eruption (*Fire in the Sky* by Shirley Corlett); building the Milford Road (*Below the Mountains* by Jean Bennett); shipwreck on Disappointment Island (*Castaway* by Bill O'Brien); American soldiers in Warkworth during WWII (*A Long Way from Home* by Lorraine Orman); the 1981 Springbok tour (*Sitting on the Fence* by Bill Nagelkerke); Māori slavery (*A New Song in the Land* by Fleur Beale), plus many others.

Each book has a selection of photographs at the back to provide further detail to the compelling story told by the diary writer. RT



The King of Large

June Colbert

Lothian 2004

ISBN 0734406150

Appealing diary written by 11-year-old Robbie, who weighs in at 85 kilos. He cracks jokes about his size, but underneath he's hurting. An overly severe diet results in Robbie sneaking into McDonalds for junk food. Eventually a child obesity specialist prescribes exercise at the gym and a solid diet of healthier food – which is successful. Very topical in today's society! Best for senior primary ages and intermediate. LO



Catherine, Called Birdy

Karen Cushman

Macmillan 1995

ISBN 0330397796

It's 1290 and 13-year-old Catherine, called Birdy, diaries a year in her life. It's a year of fairs, masses, and political upheaval. Not to mention the threat of an arranged marriage. Birdy is headstrong and opinionated – and it's funny. The first diary entry sets the tone well: *I am commanded to write an account of my days: I am bit by fleas and plagued by family. That is all there is to say.* Newbery Honor Book. 10+. AC

Helicopter Man

Elizabeth Fensham

Bloomsbury Children's Books 2005

ISBN 0747575495

Young Pete is on the run with his father hiding in an old garden shed. Pete hasn't been to school for a long time, his father keeps them on the move. Life has been so different since Mum left them and died and Pete combats boredom and loneliness by keeping a journal. Helicopters



overhead signal that 'they' are getting close so it's time to move again. Who 'they' are is not clear to Pete, but once 'captured', his father is able to receive hospital care. Pete must start a new life with foster parents as he tries to understand his father's schizophrenia. 11+. KA

Young Nick's Head (also published as *Stowaway*)

Karen Hesse

Simon & Schuster 2001

ISBN 0689835086, ISBN-13 978 0689835087

A thrilling story from the age of exploration. 11-year-old Nick Young has run away from the cruel Plymouth butcher to whom he was apprenticed and, with the help of some of the crew, stowed away on board a small ship called *Endeavour*. Nick has no idea of the voyage's importance, but once discovered he is determined to earn the acceptance of his stern captain, James Cook. Nick finds a place for himself assisting the ship's surgeon and through his eyes we see the patterns of life on an 18th century ship of exploration – the developing sciences of botany and biology, the harsh discipline required to survive the conditions and the thrills and dangers of encountering the unknown, which, in this case, includes our part of the world. A particularly fascinating book for New Zealand readers aged 11+. SB

Remote Man

Elizabeth Honey

Allen & Unwin 2000

ISBN 186448957X

A group of children having complicated adventures around the world keep in touch by emails, faxes and chat rooms. A very lively book with illustrations by the author. 11+. AS



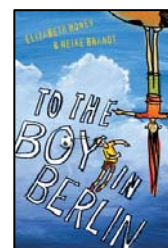
To the Boy in Berlin

Elizabeth Honey and Heike Brandt, illus by Elizabeth Honey

Allen & Unwin 2007

ISBN 9781741750041

When Henni leaves a note in a box of old German books at remote Cauldron Bay, NSW, she is not expecting it to lead to an amusing and supportive email correspondence with Leo from Berlin. As their friendship grows, Henni solves the mystery around Leopold Schmidt and his family's sudden disappearance from the bay in 1916, while Leo has concerns for a friend caught up in immigration red tape. Entertaining to read but also highlighting serious issues in Australian history and present day Germany. 11+. KA



Penny Pollard's Letters and Penny Pollard's Diary

Robin Klein, illus Ann James

Hodder Headline 2004

Available in many editions

The **Diary** details the school and family life of Penny, a rebel in many ways, who finds a soul-mate in an 81-year-old lady. She learns a lot from her about the past and there is a lot of detail on horses, then and now. It's an engaging book, accompanied by black and white photographs, ostensibly from the past and present of Penny's town. Despite the title, there is no obvious diary layout.

Some **Letters** are sent when Penny visits an aunt while her mum has a baby. They are very funny and suggest an awareness beyond her approximately 10 years. There are also letters in different formats from friends, including an entertaining boy who is not at first a friend. AS

Kazunomiya: Prisoner of Heaven [Royal Diaries]

Kathryn Lasky
Scholastic 2004
Hb ISBN 0439164850

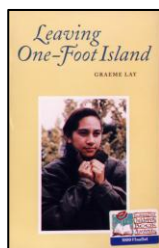


12-year-old Princess Kazunomiya, half sister of the Emperor of Japan, falls in love with Prince Arisugawa, to whom she has been promised to marry for the past eight years. But everything changes and she must marry someone else to increase the political power of the family. The plot is basic but is a good introduction to another culture featuring ceremonies like teeth blackening and hair washing rituals. At the end of this book there is true information in the form of an historical note, family tree, photographs and glossary of Japanese words. 9+. TC

While **The Royal Diaries** are based on real royal figures and actual historical events, some situations and people in the books are fictional, created by the authors. There are 20 different titles currently available.

Leaving One-Foot Island

Graeme Lay
Mallinson Rendel 1998
ISBN 0908783337



The diary of Tuaine, who comes to New Zealand from the Cook Islands to study, gives an insight into the problems faced by young people faced with adapting to a new culture. In less than two months Tuaine is on her way back to Aitutaki having discovered that New Zealand is not always the land of wealth and opportunity her family imagine it to be. 11+ HB

Letters to Lesley

Janice Marriott
Omnibus 1989
ISBN 1862911304

12-year-old Henry is a Wellington boy with a very poor opinion of females in general and his mother in particular. Ever since his father left, Henry's mother has suffered from 'enthusiasms', which either in their arrival or their sudden dispatch (or both) involve Henry in embarrassment and humiliation. Furthermore, they almost always interfere with his New Year's Resolutions (NYRs) to: 1. *Have peace and quiet*, 2. *Get rich*, and 3. *Marry my mum off so she's not my responsibility so much*. When Henry's teacher sets him up with a motherless pen pal in Auckland, the two of them hatch up a scheme to solve all of their problems – with some very surprising results. 10+. SB

Do Not Read This Book

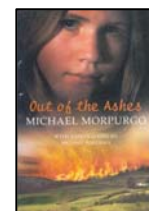
Pat Moon
Orchard 2000
ISBN 1841214353

Finch Olive Penny is nearly 12. She's about to start high school and her mum has just come home with a new boyfriend – who Finch hates. Finch includes a lie about the boyfriend in her diary, and leaves it for her mother to read. However, the effects of her action are much wider than she anticipates – her mother also has lots of secrets that are eventually revealed. A warm-hearted, entertaining story with a good child focus. LO

Out of the Ashes

Michael Morpurgo, illus Michael Foreman
MacMillan 2001
ISBN 0330400177

Becky starts her diary on New Year's Day, 2001. Living on a small Devon farm, her entries cover the devastating time when foot and mouth disease ravaged the English countryside. As they lose all their livestock, even Becky's beloved Little Josh, a lamb that she helped birth, Becky and her mother must also deal with her father's grief and deepening depression. Morpurgo writes with great sensitivity and with the hope of new beginnings. 9+. KA



Secret Letters 0-10

Susie Morgenstern
Viking/Penguin 1998
Hb ISBN 0670880078

At the beginning of this delightful tale Ernest, ten, is living with his elderly grandmother and housekeeper. He has never known his parents and gloominess, tedious routine, loneliness and old fashioned dictates rule his life. His grandmother treasures a letter written in code by her father during WWI, which is brought out every Sunday and puzzled over. A new girl at school, Victoria, appoints herself Ernest's social organiser and introduces him to the real world of friends, fun, TV, telephones and outings. She has 13 brothers who provide him with an instant family. Ernest receives his first letter and writes to his long lost father. The reply is a letter for every day of his life with his father finally realising he can handle meeting his son at last. And the mystery code of the old letter is solved too. Good for 8+, independent reading at 9+. Set in France. AS



Daddy Long-legs

Jean Webster
Puffin Classics 1995
ISBN 0140374558

Jerusha Abbot has grown up in an orphanage and is sent to college by an anonymous benefactor. The only condition is that she writes to him outlining her progress. This is a fascinating and very readable account of life in early 20th century America and Jerusha is a likeable and believable character. This book is also available on-line on sites such as www.gutenberg.org. 11+. HB

Senior fiction (ages 12+)

The Diary of Pelly-D

L.J. Adlington
Hodder Headline 2005
ISBN 0340882131

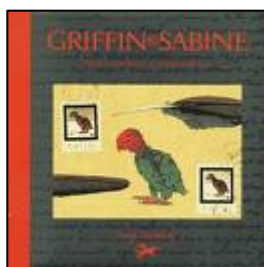
A futuristic story set on a planet that has been colonised by Earth. Tony V is a demolition worker who discovers a diary written 'before the war' by a teenage girl. The diary chronicles the progress from a democratic society to a racist, elitist, repressive one. It's obvious that Pelly-D is killed at the end, along with the members of her gene family. Parallels with the Holocaust. Best for mature intermediate ages and teens. LO

Griffin & Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence

Nick Bantock
Macmillan 1992
Hb ISBN 033351866X

Also available: *Sabine's Notebook* and *The Golden Mean*.

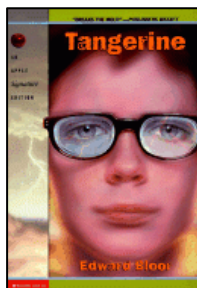
Picture books for seniors and adults. A romantic and rather surreal correspondence between stamp illustrator, Sabine – on an island in the South Pacific, and postcard designer Griffin, in London. The series of books is literally the correspondence between the two, with irresistible envelopes containing letters, postcards designed by Griffin – and who can resist reading someone else's mail? The story reveals a mysterious and spooky connection between the two, with luscious artwork that makes the series quite addictive. CB



Tangerine

Edward Bloor
Harcourt Brace 1997
ISBN 059043277X

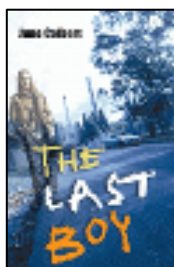
Paul Fisher is legally blind, but has limited eyesight. He battles to achieve status as a goalie in the local school soccer team. Subplots in this absorbing story cover girlfriends, peer relationships, parental care, sibling rivalry, bullying and crime. An intriguing setting in Florida includes electrical storms, muck fires and sinkholes. LO



The Last Boy

June Colbert
Lothian 2006
ISBN 0734408730

Some time in the future, Ben runs away from home and hides in the family's bomb shelter. A month later he emerges to find that virus-carrying bombs have wiped out civilisation as we know it. For a few months Ben survives on his own, wondering if he's the last human on earth. But eventually he is allowed to join a group of young survivors – which turns out to be controlled by a gang of youthful criminals. Will Ben manage to find some decent people to live with? Tough themes are included, so this is best for mature intermediate ages. LO



The Wanderer

Sharon Creech
Macmillan 2000
ISBN 0330392921

The chapters of this book alternate between Sophie's journal and Cody's logbook, written as the two cousins cross the Atlantic aboard *The Wanderer*. Sophie has been adopted into the family and is aboard with her uncles and two male cousins. Also as well describing the preparations for, and the events of their stormy voyage – both literally and figuratively – the journey also resolves many of Sophie's fears and insecurities. CA

I Can't Tell You

Hillary Frank
Graphia 2004
ISBN 061849491X

Jake has a fight with his college roommate Sean and decides that, since talking gets him in trouble, he'll only communicate through writing. For mature teens, due to the subject matter. AC

A Fast and Brutal Wing

Kathleen Jeffrie Johnson
Roaring Brook Press 2004
Hb ISBN 1596430133

After Halloween, and the death of a famous author, Niki, her brother Emmet and their friend Doug discuss, using various formats, the events of the night. Is what they remember the truth? Or are they mentally ill? Disturbing, puzzling, confusing – one of those books you either love or hate. AC

Yo! dot uk

Jonathan Meyers
Picadilly Press 2001
ISBN 1853406732

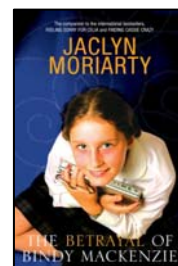
Following on from *Yo! Diary* and *Yo! Diary 2*, this is a humorous look at life at the new community centre's cybercafe through the diary entries of six highly individual teenagers. The different takes on the same situations is utterly entertaining. Culminating in a talent show at the end of the school holidays each teen brings a special something to the big night. 14+. KA



The Betrayal of Bindy Mackenzie (also published as *Becoming Bindy Mackenzie*)

Jaclyn Moriarty
Macmillan 2006
ISBN 978 0330422383

Bindy is in Year 11 and pretty much perfect – really smart but no-one really seems to like her, probably because she's so perfect. She sees herself as separate from the other students. The book is a whole lot of different things from her life put together including diary entries, personal stationery, resolutions from the heart, Bindy's philosophical musings, awards she has received (there are a lot of them). She's known for being a fast typist and she records other people's conversations. At school they start new class called Friendship and Development (FAD). The teacher gives her a special assignment to tell her life story. Her life starts to fall apart;



she starts failing classes, not handing in homework etc and it turns out that someone is trying to kill her. This is a brilliant book. I thought using the diary and stationery was a great way to tell the story instead of it just being told in an ordinary way. Also read *Finding Cassie Crazy*. Lizzie Blair-Finlay (12 years)

Feeling Sorry for Celia

Jaclyn Moriarty
Pan Macmillan 2000
ISBN 0330362100

A humorous look at the life of an Australian teenage girl told entirely in letters, including various imaginary societies which make sardonic comment on Elizabeth's life and a series of fridge notes from her mother who attempts to guide and prompt her in absentia. As an English project Elizabeth must write to Christina, whom she has never met but who soon becomes someone who she trusts and confides in. Through their correspondence we learn that Elizabeth's friend Celia has run away to join the circus, and follow Elizabeth's romantic dreams and aspirations. An immensely enjoyable read for 12+. HB

Straight Walking

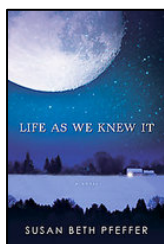
Julia Owen
Scholastic 2004
ISBN 1869435958

Lissy tells her story through letters to her absent dad who has to be better than the reality of living with her solo mum, and pregnant sister. Through her letters, we see her adjustment to yet another new school where she makes it on to the athletics team and experience her disillusion when the money she has earned for a school trip is stolen by her sister's boyfriend. When she finally runs away to find her grandfather she is forced to face reality and admit that a life with her father is not going to happen. Lissy's story gives an insight into the circumstances which are reality for many New Zealand teenagers and her story has an upbeat ending with hope for the future. 13+ HB

Life As We Knew It

Susan Beth Pfeffer
Harcourt 2006
Hbk ISBN 978 0152058265

Chilling and very credible story about what happens when a meteor hits the moon and knocks it off its axis. The effect on earth's tides creates tsunamis, earthquakes and massive volcanic eruptions. Coastlines are inundated, millions die. Miranda records the slow disintegration of society as families hole up in their houses with limited food supplies and no electricity, and try to survive through a long, freezing winter caused by ash in the sky. A riveting and thought-provoking read for teenagers. LO



My Now or Never Diary by Kelly Ann

Elizabeth Rettig
Corgi Childrens 2006
ISBN 978 0552553346

The very, very funny and believable record of a Scottish 16-year-old girl's experiences with boys and family; in

other words, 'chick lit for teens' but moderated by a sensible adult mind. Recommended for all girls 14-years and up both for a good laugh and to learn the 'dos and don'ts' of relationships with friends of both sexes. An absence of lecturing makes this book so much fun and is mixed with a well-judged level of angst. It's a sequel to *My Desperate Love Diary* by Kelly Ann. AS.

Cathy's Book

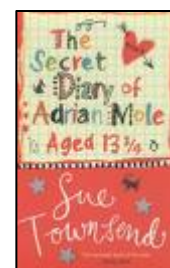
Sean Stewart & Jordan Weisman
Bloomsbury 2007
Hb ISBN 978 0762426560

An interactive read, with websites and ephemera to keep teens entertained. This is Cathy's diary, left to her friend Emma, which details Cathy's life, her thoughts and doodles as she ponders her relationship, and wonders what is going on. There's mystery and romance – and the interactivity should appeal to a generation of role playing game fans. If borrowed from the library, the bag of 'evidence' will probably not be there (for practical reasons). 14+. AC

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¾

Sue Townsend
Penguin 2002 (new edition)
ISBN 0141010835

Although somewhat dated (first published 1982), there are still some good laughs to be had in this diary of an adolescent English boy who fancies himself an intellectual and likes to share his poetry with unsuspecting readers. This straight-up record of Adrian's angst about his body, his relationships with girls and his parents' disintegrating marriage should still provide squirms of recognition for today's early teens. SB



Sorcery & Cecelia, or, The Enchanted Chocolate Pot: Being the correspondence of two Young Ladies of Quality regarding various Magical Scandals in London and the Country

Patricia C. Wrede & Caroline Stevermer
Harcourt 2003
Hb ISBN 0152046151

An elegantly exciting and magical romance set in Regency times. The story unfolds through the letters between two young cousins, Cecelia in the Essex countryside, and Kate contemplating her first season in London. Mysterious, magical and dangerous happenings keep the intrepid twosome busy. Why are all the young men captivated by ordinary Dorothea? Who tried to poison Kate? Should she have anything to do with the unlikable Marquis? Can Cecy sneak a magic book from Sir Hilary's library? 14+. KA

There are two more books about Cecelia and Kate. *The Grand Tour, or, The purloined coronation regalia: Being a revelation of matters of Highest Confidentiality and Greatest Importance, including extracts from the intimate diary of a Noblewoman and the sworn testimony of a Lady of Quality* (2004)

The Mislaid Magician, or, Ten Years After: Being the Private Correspondence between two Prominent Families regarding a scandal touching the Highest Levels of Government and the Security of the Realm (2006)

Non-fiction

Airmail from... series

Michael Cox, illus Rhian Nest James
Hippo (an imprint of Scholastic) 2000
Titles include: *Old Delhi: Where Elephants Go to School*; *Amazonia: Where Tree Frogs Go Moo*; *Okotoks: Where Moose Go Shopping*; *Sydney: Where Biscuits Go Surfing*; and *Ban Pong: Where Beetles Taste Great!* This is a very approachable series of beginner geography books written in pen-pal letterform. 7-10. SB

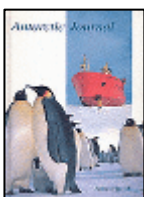


Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl

Edited by Otto H. Frank & Miriam Pressler, trans Susan Massotty, illus Harry Brockway
Puffin 2002
ISBN 0141315199
Anne Frank kept a diary as her family and four others hid in the annexe of an Amsterdam warehouse during the years 1942-1944 until their betrayal to the Nazis. She began editing and rewriting her diary in the last months of hiding, after listening to a radio broadcast that the Dutch government in exile would be publishing eyewitness accounts of the German occupation. After the war her father, Otto Frank, the annexe's sole survivor, edited her work and her diary was first published in 1947. This expanded definitive edition contains some of Anne's more personal entries. 12+. KA

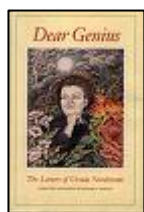
Antarctic Journal

James Hasick
Martin International/Era Publications 1993
Hb ISBN 1863740554
Hasick led an expedition to Antarctica in 1991-92 and helped make a TV documentary. The large print text presents excerpts from his journal of the 12 months they were there, involving mostly practical and personal/social details. Text is nicely spaced with photographs and duplicates and mock-ups of letters, telexes, and faxes; a map, and memorabilia in large envelopes. The book was designed by Steve Woolman, who works with Gary Crew. Especially notable is the time it took for a letter to arrive. Other ways of communicating are mentioned such as the use of satellite phones, radios and radio transmitters attached to penguins. 9+. AS



Dear Genius: The Letters of Ursula Nordstrom

Collected & edited by Leonard Marcus
HarperCollins 1998
ISBN 0060236256
As editor of such children's classics as *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Charlotte's Web* and *Goodnight Moon*, Ursula Nordstrom, long-time editor at HarperCollins, is a very important character in our literary history. She maintained detailed correspondence with her many treasured authors and much of it is revealed here, providing insight into the personalities behind the familiar names and the events of the time. Ursula's own character is also revealed as someone bright and witty, honest yet able to cheer her sometimes reluctant or temperamental



authors and illustrators on to achieve the best they could and produce some of the best children's books, many that would go on to be timeless classics. A treat for adult children's literature fans. CB

Dear Miss Breed
Joanne Oppenheim
Scholastic 2006
ISBN 0439569923

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan in 1941, the American government feared that Americans of Japanese descent would be disloyal to the United States and aid Japan in further attacks on their new country. As a result, they ordered the forcible relocation of all people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast of the US to camps in the interior of the country run by the military. In April 1942 evacuation notices were posted giving Japanese Americans one week to sell or leave their homes, businesses and belongings. Clara Breed, a San Diego public librarian, was appalled that American citizens could be treated in this way and made every effort to keep in touch with the children she knew who were sent away. This fascinating book is a collection of the letters they sent her, interviews with 'her children' describing how precious a link she was for them during their imprisonment and reproductions of the articles and letters she wrote in her attempts to defend them to officials and a suspicious public. An inspiring story for young people aged 12+. SB



The Freedom Writers Diary: how a teacher and 150 teens used writing to change themselves and the world around them

The Freedom Writers with Erin Gruwell; foreword by Zlata Filipovic
Doubleday 1999
ISBN 978 0385494229

The story has been told before – the story of a brand-new teacher left with the 'no hoper' kids, who inspires them to move beyond their situations and dream. Shocked that none of her students had heard of the Holocaust, teacher Erin Gruwell links it with the gang wars they live amongst. Through her passion and enthusiasm she had them read *The Diary of a Young Girl* [Anne Frank] and *Zlata's Diary*. They met Zlata and a woman who helped hide the Franks. Inspired they kept their own diaries, detailing the violence, the racism, and abuse within their communities and homes. This book contains extracts from these diaries. For teens and adults. AC

Dear Daniel, Letters from Antarctica

Sara Wheeler
Macdonald Young Books/Wayland 1997
Hb ISBN 0750021446
Wheeler, a travel writer, spent seven months in Antarctica and this book is a collection of her letters while there to her godson Daniel back in the UK. Along with one of her letters, each double page spread in this book contains informative, well organised, boxed text and lots of photos. This breaks up the information into manageable amounts. This is an attractive and worthwhile book for 10+. AS