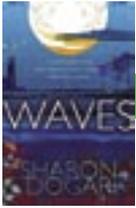


Reads4Teens



Waves

Written by Sharon Dogar
Chicken House £10.99
ISBN: 978-1905294244

This very intense first novel takes on death, despair and final reconciliation as Hal, its fifteen-year-old narrator, struggles to find out why his beautiful but domineering sister Charley is now lying in an irreversible coma following an inexplicable swimming accident. Charley still makes herself heard, either as a voice in Hal's imagination or else as a spirit still determined to communicate. Haunting, well-written and deeply into adolescent psychological turmoil, this novel provides a gripping reading experience for readers in the right mood for it.

Nicholas Tucker

The Hunchback of Notre-Dame

Written by Victor Hugo
Translated by Jan Needle
Illustrated by David Hughes
Walker Books £12.99
ISBN: 978-1844286584



The Hunchback of Notre-Dame is one of the most famous literary creations, and the book 'is one of those novels most people think they know, but I suspect they don't'. So says the author about his new translation of Victor Hugo's classic tale of medieval obsession. Jan Needle's prose feels fresh and modern and is sure to reach new audiences, as it brings Hugo into the twenty-first century. David Hughes provides the illustrations – a bizarre mixture of black and white photographs, slides, cartoon sketches, maps, stencils, and a shimmering silver jacket. The whole effect is mesmerising, as if one were looking at a 'medieval newspaper'. It will appeal to young adults making their first foray into Romantic literature.

Richard Monte



The Lottery

Written by Beth Goobie
Faber £6.99
ISBN: 978-0571228645

Sally Hansen is a fun-loving teenager with good friends, but everything changes when she becomes the winner, or rather the 'victim' of her school's annual lottery. This is a detested ritual held by Shadow Council, a predatory group of students who secretly rule the school. Sally has to obey their commands to humiliate and scare targeted students; in return she is ignored by the whole school. But Sally is a 'special' victim, deliberately picked in revenge against her older brother, Dusty, and her orders become increasingly sinister and vindictive. Sworn

to secrecy, frightened and isolated, Sally is also bottling up a personal terror; of witnessing her father's suicide when she was a little girl and for which she blames herself. Her feelings explode in a terrifying crisis, but ultimately it is her situation as lottery victim that makes her realise that she is not responsible for her father's death; and this, in turn, gives her the strength to confront Shadow and come to terms with herself. It is a well-written, thrilling read and Sally is a believable character with real feelings and her emotional crisis is sensitively handled.

Sarah Hill

Finding Violet Park

Written by Jenny Valentine
HarperCollins £10.99
ISBN: 978-0007214457



Lucas finds Violet Park's ashes in an urn, left behind in a taxi and now sitting oddly on a shelf in a minicab office. Sixteen-year-old Lucas can't get the image out of his head, and as there are too many unknowns in his life already he decides to claim the urn and track down its owner. Jenny Valentine makes this unlikely scenario completely convincing through the muddled, exasperating adolescent who spends much time musing on whether his dad is dead or alive, rather than sorting out his own chaotic lifestyle. As Lucas unravels the mystery of who Violet was, he realises that he must talk honestly with his grandparents, be completely frank with his mother and sister, and be open and truthful to himself. As a result of these investigations he acquires a bittersweet maturity, and a fitting way to part with Violet Park. Memorable and well paced, this is a book to help young people grow in spite of adversity.

Tina Massey



Twin Freaks

Written by Paul Magrs
Simon & Schuster £6.99
ISBN: 978-1416926702

Paul Magrs is no stranger to controversy following his 2002 publication *Strange Boy*. I suspect this book, too, will provoke much discussion. Eunice is beautiful and graceful, but has the 'voice of a warthog'. Her sister, Helen, is a little person with the voice of an angel. Their mother is desperate for the girls to achieve celebrity status so they follow TV talent show auditions across the country. Star quality continues to elude them until their mother's boyfriend comes up with an act where they work together. Satirical and uncomfortable reading at times, Helen is the only character who won my sympathy. Reflecting the Reality TV era in which we all live, it may provide some entertainment.

Jane Hall



Dirty Work

Written by Julia Bell
Macmillan Picador £9.99
ISBN: 978-0330415217

Hope is the spoiled, bored daughter of very wealthy parents. Oksama, known as Natasha,

has been lured from her home in Russia, sold to a trafficker and forced into prostitution. The lives of the two girls collide when Hope tries to help Natasha escape: soon they are both at the mercy of the violent men who control this wretched business. Each girl tells her own side of the story. Natasha, particularly, catches at the reader's heart, knowing as we do that so many young girls are victims of the dirty squalid deals that go on between traffickers. It is a gripping read for the young adult market, one of the few books this year that I have not wanted to put down once I started. Maybe it isn't a very cheery story but Julia Bell knows her stuff and the tense, spare style keeps you involved right until the end.

Yvonne Coppard

Hunting Season

Written by Dean Vincent Carter
Bodley Head £10.99
ISBN: 978-0370329123



Two comments on the back cover make big claims for this book: 'The next Stephen King' and, even more remarkably, 'Better than Stephen King'. I wouldn't go as far as that, but there's no doubt that this savage, shocking, tension-filled story bears many of King's hallmarks. Gerontius Moore has no parents. They were killed when their car was struck by a massive leaping animal: when its out-of-control progress was checked, the creature appeared again – a werewolf, or rather a wulver, because it walked on two legs. What happened then was unspeakable, though Gerontius was mercifully unconscious at the time. The scene shifts to the present day. Cain and Mason work for Slaughter, a building contractor and crook. But something is wrong: Slaughter intends their deaths and has brought the werewolf, or his human alter ego, to England, as his hit man. Gerontius is unwittingly caught up in the hunt and this begins a process in which the author screws up the suspense almost to breaking point. Definitely, though not exclusively, for boys, this is the sort of book which can get unwilling kids reading and give them a challenging experience which could open a whole literary tradition to them.

Dennis Hamley



Useless

Written by Tanya Landman
Barrington Stoke £5.99
ISBN: 978-1842994597

A strong story, designed to capture the interest of the most reluctant reader, Rob idealises his dad and finds it impossible to accept his stepfather. However, as Rob finds out, his memories of his father are not the same as the reality. This series – *gr8reads* – maintains constantly high standards of storytelling.

Enid Stephenson



GemX

Written by Nicky Singer
Oxford University Press £5.99
ISBN: 978-0192742018

Maxo Evangele Strang is a GemX engineered for physical perfection, so when he thinks he finds an incipient wrinkle on his face he fears it presages personal disaster. He lives in the Heights, the Enhanced Section of the Polis at the top of a rigidly layered society ruled by the malevolent Leaderene. Outside are the Dreg estates. In Dreg Estate 4 lives the Lorrell family: Perle, mother dying of cancer, daughter Gala and sons Phylo, known as Stretch, and Daz, trying hard to be an artist. Even as he fears his perfection (engineered by his scientist father Strang) is eroding, Maxo happens to see Gala on a surveillance TV screen, loves her at once and resolves to enter the Dreg Estates to find her. From this situation a gripping, superbly written narrative of struggle and aspiration, faced by a monolithic Establishment and involving real moral choice, develops. Compelling and absorbing, this story underlines what a versatile, remarkable writer is Nicky Singer.

Dennis Hamley

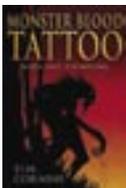
The Spellgrinder's Apprentice

Written by N.M.Browne
Bloomsbury £6.99
ISBN: 978-0747579253



Spellstones are the magical force used to bind and oppress the island where Tommo and Akenna live. Tommo is an apprentice spellgrinder, responsible for harnessing the magic of the stones; but the stone-grinding has such devastating effects on their bodies that, ultimately, all spellgrinders forfeit their lives. Arkenna's existence with her violently abusive father is just as miserable. Thrown together by circumstance, the pair form an alliance, each unaware of the hidden powers they both have. Their skills will be needed, however, in the traditional battle of good against evil that is the stuff of such stories. The plot is dark, gritty and compelling and the characters draw you in to a story that keeps you wondering how it will all turn out in the end.

Yvonne Coppard



Monster Blood: Tattoo Foundling

Written by D.M. Cornish
David Fickling Books £8.99
ISBN: 978-0385611480

This is the first book in what promises to be an inventive, absorbing and exciting fantasy. Rossamund is a foundling in Madame Opera's establishment. Tormented because of his girl's name he waits impatiently to be chosen for his calling. He favours becoming a Vinegaroon, a sailor on the evil-smelling seas, but is chosen instead to be a lamplighter, a future about which he is not happy. Nonetheless he dresses well for the journey to join the Lamplighters – the doubtful, though potentially ennobling, calling – but is tricked on to the wrong cromster, low in the water and with a mysterious foul-smelling cargo,

captained by the villainous Rivermaster Poundinch. This is a strange world, infested by monsters who often merge into semi-humans. The story is backed up by a remarkable glossary and guide, which invites comparison with Tolkien, and beautifully detailed maps.

Dennis Hamley



Red Tears

Written by Joanna Kenrick
Faber £6.99
ISBN: 978-0571234837

"I open the box. Inside it is soft and steel. Tissues and blades." This is the intensely moving account of fifteen-year-old Emily who starts secretly self-harming as a way of releasing her anxiety about her GCSE's. She is a clever, sensible girl, but puts too much pressure on herself to do well and as the exams approach, her tension and self-hatred increase, relationships with her family and friends deteriorate, she cuts very badly and ends up in hospital. When the others find out, they can't cope; her mother blames Emily for the effect on the family, she is ostracised by her so-called 'friends' and suspended from school. The end is realistic, but positive; through counselling, Emily acknowledges that although she is likely to self-harm again in future, she feels more able to cope. There are flashes of humour though, particularly in the relationship between Emily and her younger brother, whose innocent comment that if she keeps on cutting herself she will run out of space, finally makes her realise that she must stop. Meticulously researched, candidly, yet sensitively written with totally convincing characters the book is packed with issues and real concerns facing many teenage girls. A remarkably powerful, often uncomfortable read, but one which is ultimately uplifting.

Sarah Hill

All Rivers Flow to the Sea

Written by Alison McGhee
Walker Books £5.99
ISBN: 978-1844282517



Rose Lathgam, seventeen, was in her sister Ivy's car when they were hit by an out-of-control truck driven by a young man. Rose escapes unharmed: Ivy is now in hospital, in a coma and on a life-support machine. Rose is living a half-life, unable to accept the fact that Ivy is as good as dead; sure she will wake up she spends part of every day sitting beside her. Mother, working all day righting tipped bottles at the brewery, obsessively making pot holders and paper cranes at home – avoidance strategies to escape reality – refuses to visit Ivy. Rose is on her own. She is herself in a sort of walking coma, heedless of what happens to her, incidentally and unknowingly hurting people on the way. At first she refuses help but gradually accepts it and the story chronicles the interior process; the acceptance of the inevitable must come from within herself. This is a superbly and sensitively written book. The psychological process is finely dramatised and the characterisation utterly convincing. A fine read.

Dennis Hamley



Incantation

Written by Alice Hoffman
Egmont £5.99
ISBN: 978-1405227391

Estrella and Catalina used to be inseparable. But Andres, the boy Catalina plans to marry, starts to favour Estrella. And Catalina starts to plot. And to wonder why Estrella's family have always done things slightly differently. This fine novel is set in the Spain of the 1500s where the Spanish Inquisition is all powerful, betrayals commonplace, people suddenly disappear and books (then people) are burnt. Estrella finds out that she and her family are Marranos – Spanish Jews living double lives as Catholics in order to survive. Her world is turned upside down and pretty much destroyed. But she survives and keeps the faith.

Enid Stephenson

Being

Written by Kevin Brooks
Penguin £9.99
ISBN: 978-0141381442



Here's a gruesome book to set before a teenager. Robert, a sixteen-year-old boy, comes round in the middle of a routine operation to discover he has a plastic gut and silver filaments where his stomach should be and that his life appears to be in danger from some mysterious, menacing villains round his bedside. If Robert has read any hard-boiled, American style thrillers he will recognise by the laconic dialogue; the short, explosive sentences; the little batteries of questions to which no answers are given; and, the remorseless build-up of tension; that he will soon be on the run from one scene of relentless violence to another. And when he finds out that the chief villain, Ryan is: 'A hard man. A big man. ... Big as a shiny, black wall.' he knows he is in urgent need of a spiky-haired, peroxide blonde, with a sculpted face, studs and rings who happens to be an expert in producing fake I.D. Splendid, apart from one thing, we know that Ryan will track him down, and that young Robert will, with his bare hands, take sadistic revenge on the man. Those people who get a kick from going to a gym and climbing on an exercise bike will recognise the style of the book. It cranks up the pace, sets the pulse racing, provides no time to draw breath, and, when you dismount at the end, you are in the same place you were when you started. No wiser, but better informed about self-mutilation, gunshot wounds, pistol whipping, casual sex, cold blooded killings and vicious beatings.

I find myself asking questions: why would anyone want to read it?: what is it telling the reader about other people?: does the creation of a robotic, sub-human hero free up the author to by-pass questions of responsibility and judgement?: or does it tell us to what lengths a publisher will go to con teenagers into buying their product? If you do buy it, recognise it for what it is – 'vacancy-reading', helpful when you have nothing better to do. In terms of nourishment it's what you might call a Big Mac paperback.

Jack Ousbey