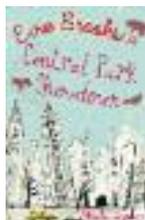


Convincing novels



Central Park Showdown

Written by Sheila Agnew
O'Brien (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-1847175595

This is the second book about Evie Brooks and how, after her mother died, she left Ireland to live with her bachelor uncle in New York. Evie is settling down, making friends and getting to know her new home city, when her life is thrown into turmoil once again. Her previously unknown natural father appears on the scene and starts a bid to gain legal custody of Evie, his thirteen year old daughter. Evie loves living with her Uncle Scott, a vet working with the Central Park Zoo. She loves the animals, her uncle's chaotic lifestyle and her new friends. There is a hint of her first romance in the air and she still has to sort out her uncle's love life. She doesn't want anything to change so she and Scott take on the legal system that is trying to separate them. This is a very funny book. It certainly has emotional and bitter-sweet moments, but the antics of the animals mean that laughs are never far away. Evie is a tough but totally lovable character and she tells her story with honesty and humour.

Jan Lennon

Amina

Written by J. L. Powers
Allen & Unwin £5.99 ISBN: 978-1743312490

Amina's story begins in 2011 when she and her family are *existing* in the remains of their damaged home. Two decades of civil war have ravaged Somalia, depleting its citizens and bringing hardship to those who remain.

Amina's father, an artist, is arrested because his paintings represent his political views about the government of the country. Later, Amina's brother is captured by members of al-Shabaab. With only meagre resources, Amina, her pregnant mother and her grandmother remain in the home. The young girl, herself an artist, makes her art from rubble, daubing her messages of belief and hope on the ruined walls of the city and leaving her trademark Somali star on her pieces. Her street art becomes her means of making sense of her experiences and of sharing her hope for a better future. Themes of family, friendship, survival and trust are strong threads that weave through the narrative. Second in a series of six novels, *Through My Eyes*, about children living in contemporary war zones, this richly informative story, with helpful glossary, is written with an authenticity that will captivate teenage readers.

Catriona Nicholson



Winter's Bullet

Written by William Osborne
Chicken House (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-1909489769

Set in Amsterdam in January 1945, the Second World War is nearly over but life in Holland is very harsh.

There is no food, it is bitterly cold and the Gestapo are making life intolerable. Tygo, known as 'the ferret', is forced by the Nazis to work for them looking for valuables and jewellery in abandoned Dutch houses. Members of the Resistance despise him and he is under constant threat of execution from both sides. Then Tygo meets a girl hiding in a chimney and his life becomes even more complicated. The Germans are on the brink of creating total devastation in the world with a nuclear bomb and Tygo now has the knowledge to either save himself or risk everything to end the war. This is a work of fiction although there are certain elements in the story that are true. It is generally believed that the Nazis had some nuclear capability by the end of the war and some of the

Gestapo names were real. It is a thrilling adventure story about wartime, very intense and very realistic.

Ingrid Fox



Loyal Creatures

Written by Morris Gleitzman
Puffin (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0141355009

The suffering of animals at the Western Front in World War One is well appreciated largely due to the popularity of the book, stage production, and film of *War Horse*. In this moving story Morris Gleitzman provides a new dimension by focusing on the war in the Middle East and the role of the Australian Light Horse regiments. Frankie and his Dad join the army and are sent from their home in New South Wales, Australia, to Egypt. Frankie's horse Daisy is accepted too, but his Dad's horse is too old to serve. Dad gets posted on to Gallipoli and does not return. Frankie and Daisy's war exploits are told in a crisp and direct style. No words are wasted as the story reveals the harsh reality of army life in the desert – the desperate search for water, the shocking violence of combat, and the strong bond between the boy and his horse. Short sentences and chapters make this story particularly accessible, yet the emotional ties between comrades and animals come over well. The dialogue flows brilliantly, with Aussie phrases which lend both authenticity and impact. Frankie comes across as a tough soldier whose first loyalty is to Daisy and the final outcome is both moving and convincing.

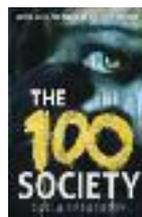
Liz Dubber

Drowned Maiden's Hair

Written by Laura Amy Schlitz
Walker £7.99 ISBN: 978-1406354164

The Superintendent of the Barbary Asylum for Female Orphans considers eleven year old Maud Flynn to be too impertinent and badly behaved to be put forward for adoption, so she, and indeed Maud herself, is very surprised when the wealthy Hawthorne sisters decide she is the child they are looking for. A life of luxury seems to await this plain, difficult child, but it transpires that the Hawthorne sisters are not looking for a daughter at all. They need a small accomplice as these three elderly women conduct bogus séances and thus make money out of grieving parents and sad wealthy widows. Maud has a deep need to be loved and she is thrilled by her expensive new clothes and sumptuous surroundings so she is content to play her role in the latest deception for a while. Then potentially catastrophic events change her life yet again. All the characters are rich and complex, but Maud is particularly fascinating. She is intelligent, brave and surprisingly caring toward the Hawthorne's deaf-mute maid. The details of late 19th century American life and the interest in spiritualism are entertaining as well as informative and the plot moves along at a cracking pace.

Jan Lennon



The 100 Society

Written by Carla Spradbury
Hodder (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-1444920086

A tense thriller set in a prestigious school – Clifton Academy. Belonging to the 100 Society becomes an obsession for Grace whereby she has to tag 100 locations around the city. She involves five friends who risk expulsion from school if caught, but this is the least of their worries as someone is stalking them. Threatening messages and 'Grim Reaper' tags are left on

the doors to their rooms and their computers are hacked. What started as a game for Grace to emulate previous illegal graffiti artists becomes a dangerous and deadly quest. The stakes are higher than Grace would ever have believed possible. The tension in this book is present from the first page and thereafter continues to be a real page-turner. It is well written with very believable characters and an amazing ending.

Ingrid Fox



Keep the Faith

Written by Candy Harper
Simon & Schuster (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0857078254

Faith is an A-lister, the kind of person many girls aspire to be. She is bright, confident, witty, part of a close circle of girlfriends, with an admiring boy or two as well.

However, she is also self-obsessed, controlling and a bully, but readers, just like Faith's friends, will be so seduced by her charm that they are willing to overlook these faults. Here is her diary. It is a very funny book, full of one-liners and moments of recognition for anyone who has lived among the unique and entertaining breed that is the teenage girl. Faith's typical day includes a series of battles with out-of-touch teachers and long-suffering parents, a spot of meddling in the lives of her friends and an ongoing vendetta involving arch-enemy, Vicky (aka Icky) Blundell. There are moments of tenderness and caring for others, some self-deprecating sideswipes and a tongue-in-cheek acceptance by Faith that she isn't always right. But mostly, the book sweeps you along on a wave of biting humour with occasional slapstick moments. It sets out unashamedly to entertain, so leave any attempt to analyse or reflect on the human condition at the door.

Yvonne Coppard

Night Runner

Written by Tim Bowler
OUP (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192794147

The story is told through the eyes of fifteen year-old Zinny, which he feels is "not a proper name for a fifteen year-old boy". Zinny certainly does not lead a normal life, and his world is falling apart with his Mum having an affair and his Dad a useless alcoholic. Zinny finds school life difficult as his teachers have given up on him because he is constantly walking out of his classes. And then there are those shadowy figures, watching him! Who are they? One night, his Mum decides to find out, and is shot and wounded in the street. Zinny is forced to flee from his home, and take shelter on the streets. We witness and feel his terror, panic and growing hopelessness, as the figures close in on him. His entire world is collapsing. All Zinny has left in his life is his family and he must do whatever he can to protect it. *Night Runner* is wonderfully written, fast-paced, terrifying, exhilarating, and very moving.

Allister Jordan



A Song for Ella Grey

Written by David Almond
Hodder (eB) £12.99 ISBN: 978-1444919547

David Almond is a powerful storyteller and I was completely swept away by his latest poetic prose. This stunning retelling of the myth of Orpheus has Ella Grey as his Eurydice. She is a beautiful girl who was adopted into a Newcastle family but doesn't quite fit in. She falls in love when she hears him making music on his lyre – by phone – at a beach party she was prevented from attending. Infused with lyricism, the story continues and the two meet: she, a bright, sensitive schoolgirl and him, a purple-coated teenage traveller, Orpheus personified in present day Northumberland! Young people will find the story fills them with joy and longing, but, when a snake bites Ella's foot as she races over the sand dunes to meet him again, the mood *and* the pages turn black.

Jenny Blanch



Trial by Fire

Written by Josephine Angelini
Macmillan (eB) £7.99 ISBN: 978-1447260820

Josephine Angelini, author of the popular *Starcrossed* trilogy, has brought the Salem Witch Trials into the 21st century for *Trial by Fire*, the first book in her new *Worldwalker* trilogy. With her many life threatening allergies, Lily Proctor finds life in modern day Salem difficult and often cruel. After a particularly humiliating allergic reaction in front of her schoolmates, Lily just wants to disappear. She wakes the next morning in an alternate Salem; one where witches rule the world, and the most powerful and cruel witch is Lillian Proctor, Lily's other self. *Trial by Fire* is a gripping read from start to finish. Josephine Angelini has created a dangerous and secretive world. Lily is a great character, initially physically weak, but gradually growing stronger, with a fierce and principled spirit. Readers will enjoy her growing relationships with the inhabitants of her new world, as they struggle to trust her motives. The plot is an interesting one; magic vs. science, but in Lily's new world science is seen as the enemy. It raises some interesting questions, including are our modern comforts really worth the environmental damage they cause? The book ends with a shocking cliff-hanger which will leave readers wanting more.

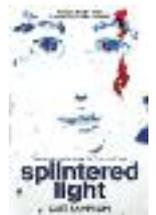
Jane Hall

Splintered Light

Written by Cate Sampson
Simon & Schuster (eB) £7.99 ISBN: 978-1471115837

This is a gripping read in which the stories of three characters are cleverly interwoven into a tense thriller. An opening violent episode lies at the heart of the plot. Twelve years later, an appeal trial results in the release of convicted double murderer, Deryk Cheever, with complicated consequences. The story is told in turn by two characters: Charlie, the son of Deryk and his murdered wife, and Linden, a young offender and brother of the criminal, Victor, a drug dealer who has so far avoided arrest. The third key character, Leah, daughter of the other murder victim, is central to both Linden's and Charlie's stories. The abrupt style, and the use of the present tense, conveys tension and urgency. The crisp dialogue rings true, while the language is at times, inevitably gritty and strong. The action is set in London, moving to a dramatic and convincing climax on the Lancashire coast. The central characters are extremely well developed, and the supporting characters of Charlie's auntie, Leah's father, and Linden's brother come over as well-rounded personalities, making important contributions to the story. This is a very well-crafted novel and a real page-turner.

Liz Dubber



Three Summers

Written by Judith Clarke
Allen & Unwin £6.99 ISBN: 978-1743361573

This is a powerful, beautifully paced story set over three generations. In small town Barinji, Australia in 1959, girls like Ruth don't even think about university and a career. Their path to marriage and children is well marked. But Ruth's grandmother, Margaret May, is determined that Ruth will escape. She has been awarded a full scholarship to Sydney University – unthinkable for a Barinji girl. Nothing and no-one must stop Ruth taking the Sydney train at the end of the summer. But the acid disapproval that confronts Ruth on all sides of the community corrodes her confidence. Can Ruth really leave behind the only place and people she has ever known and start again, alone? The suffocating heat, both physical and metaphorical, of the small, tight-knit community is vividly evoked in a novel of clarity, depth and understanding. Ruth's dilemma will strike a chord with teenagers who are on the brink of stepping forward into an unknown adult life and separating themselves from childhood forever.

Yvonne Coppard