

CBCA Book Discussion Group – Books Read in 2014



***The vanishing moment* by Margaret Wild**

Age: 15+ *The vanishing moment* is Margaret Wild's third YA novel. Written in the third person, the harrowing stories of Arrow, the somnambulist, Marika, the weeping sculptor, and Bob, the troubled magician are told in turn in this magic realism tale. The characters meet in the fictional NSW town of Shelley Beach where the chance to exchange their lives for a different version is explored. Ethical questions are raised and by the end of the novel the reader is left with the feeling that we should be careful what we wish for and that it might be preferable to come to terms with the lives we have.



***Picture me gone* by Meg Rosoff**

Age: 11+ *Picture me gone* is part coming-of-age, part mystery and part travelogue road trip. 12 year old Mila and her father Gil travel from London to New York and embark on a quest to find Gil's friend Matthew who has disappeared abandoning his wife, baby and dog. Mila uses her empathy and keen powers of observation which at times border on the psychic to try to solve the puzzle of Matthew's disappearance. Along the way complex human relationships are revealed and Mila begins a possible romance with Jake, the son of Matthew's former girlfriend. This is a suspenseful novel about the relationship between love and loss. *Picture me gone* won the Publishers Weekly Best Children's Books award for 2013.



***The first third* by Will Kostakis**

Age: 14+ *The first third* draws on Will Kostakis' Greek heritage and is a story of family, mateship, love, loss and food. Seventeen year old Billy, who is trying to complete Year 12, is given a 'bucket list' by his sick grandmother to 'fix his family' before she passes away. With the support of his mate Sticks Billy tries to find his mother a husband, engage with his angry younger brother Peter and bring his older brother Simon back to Sydney by finding him a girlfriend. Along the way Billy has a disastrous first kiss and tries his hand at stand-up comedy. The title comes from Yiayia's saying that life is made up of three parts: in the first third, you're embarrassed by your family; in the second, you make a family of your own and in the last third you embarrass the family you've made. *The first third* was shortlisted in the 2014 CBCA Book of the Year Awards: Older Readers.



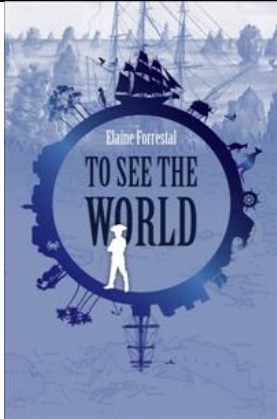
***The sky so heavy* by Claire Zorn**

Age: 14+ *The sky so heavy* is a dystopian novel set in the Blue Mountains of Sydney and is Claire Zorn's first published novel. After nuclear missiles are detonated on the other side of the world Fin and his younger brother, Max, wake up to a nuclear winter. With missing parents, no power and dwindling food supplies they join forces with Lucy and Arnold from Fin's school and head for the city. The story is fast-paced and readers are left with some hope at the end and the feeling that a sequel may be in the offing. *The sky so heavy* was CBCA Book of the Year Awards: Older Readers Honour Book 2014.



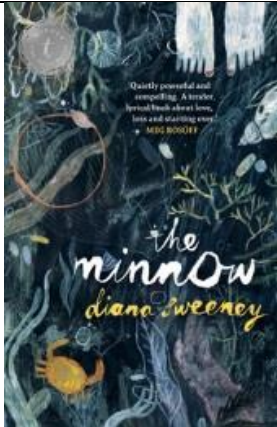
***Fairytales for wilde girls* by Allyse Near**

Age: 15+ *Fairytales for wilde girls* is a gothic fairytale set in contemporary England. Sixteen-year-old Isola Wilde lives on the edge of Vivien's Wood with her manic-depressive mother and increasingly distant father and has a sixth sense that enables her to see things other people can't. When Isola sees a dead girl in a birdcage in the woods who then appears threateningly at her window, she seeks to uncover the truth behind the girl's demise and thereby save her own life and that of the woods. In a book about what is real and what is not real, Isola has her real-life friends and her seven magical brother-princes. Near describes the story as a pulp-fairytale and places it in the genre of magical realism. *Fairytales for wilde girls* was CBCA Book of the Year: Older Readers Honour Book, 2014.



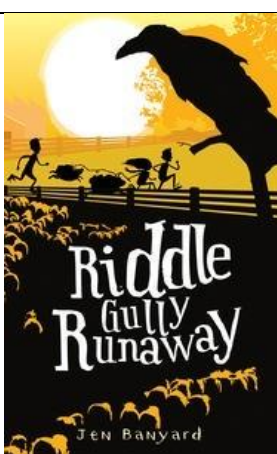
***To see the world* by Elaine Forrester**

Age: 9+ *To see the world* is an historical novel about Rose de Freycinet's journey along the coast of Australia and through South East Asia and South America from 1817 to 1820 on the Uranie. The French Commander, Louis de Freycinet, is on a quest to measure the equator and has brought his wife, Rose, on board illegally. Based on Rose's diary and letters and narrated by Jose a Mauritian boy whom she teaches to read and write the novel fictionalises life on board ship including encounters with pirates and cannibals and a shipwreck. Images from the National Library of Australia begin each chapter providing an insight into the period.



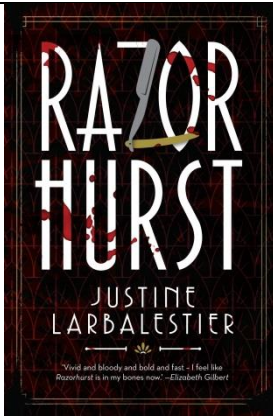
***The minnow* by Diana Sweeney**

Age: 15+ *The minnow* is a coming-of-age novel that follows 15-year-old Tom (real name Holly) a year after she loses her parents and sister in a flood. Tom, now pregnant by a much older man, finds refuge with her friend Jonah and is supported by her nana and other members of the small coastal community who are also coping with the aftermath of the flood. Tom finds solace in her love of words, often reflecting on Nana's sayings and taking her dictionary and thesaurus with her wherever she goes. In coming to terms with her loss, Tom talks to the ghost of her dead grandfather. She is drawn to water and also talks to a variety of fish including The Minnow, her unborn baby. *The minnow* won The Text Prize for Young Adult and Children's Writing, 2013.



***Riddle Gully runaway* by Jen Banyard**

Age: 9+ *Riddle Gully runaway* is a humorous adventure story set in country Australian. Following a spate of robberies in Riddle Gully, reporter-in-training Pollo di Nozi writes a newspaper article wrongly implicating the Mayor's nephew Benson Bragg. When Benson unexpectedly leaves town, feisty Pollo, her cautious friend Will and sheepish side-kick Sean Connery embark on a quest to find Benson and make things right. With adults otherwise engaged, Pollo and Will are free to follow leads outside Riddle Gully resulting in some risky shenanigans in locations such as a playground cubby house and an abattoir. Underlying themes are self-acceptance, forgiveness and resilience. *Riddle Gully runaway* can be read as a follow up to *Mystery at Riddle Gully* or as a stand-alone book.



Razorhurst by Justine Labalestier

Age: 15+ *Razorhurst* is an historical crime novel set in the seedy Sydney suburb of Surrey Hills during 1932 when prohibition is in place and banned firearms are replaced by razors. The action takes place over 24 hours and centres on Dymphna, a prostitute, and Kelpie, a street kid. The murder of Dymphna's boyfriend, Jimmy Palmer disturbs the fragile peace between mob bosses Mr Davidson and Gloriana Nelson, a character based on a combination of real-life vice queens Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine. Ghosts, only apparent to Dymphna and Kelpie, provide contextual information and a supernatural element to the novel. *Razorhurst* is dedicated to authors Ruth Park and Kylie Tennant who lived in Surrey Hills as does Labalestier.



The year it all ended by Kirsty Murray

Age: 13+ *The year it all ended* begins on 11 November 1918, Armistice Day, the day World War One ends and Tiney Flynn turns seventeen. Tiney's family is of German ancestry making the war years even more difficult than they might have been. Tiney and her sisters feel that everything is about to change for the better and go to the city of Adelaide to celebrate. The tragic news that their brother has been killed in France devastates the family. When her four sisters leave home, one after the other, Tiney feels compelled to heal her family's grief by going to Europe in search of her brother's grave. She is confronted with the reality of war as she walks across battlefields and meets others in search of their war dead. *The year it all ended* is a coming-of-age story that reflects a time of change for young women and society in general in the aftermath of war.