MAGPIES VOLUME THIRTY-TWO

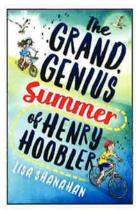
his annoying little sister to a space station 56 000 light-years away from Earth, where they will be working on a secret project while their kids attend school. On this 'Galactic Science Hub', the top two scientists from more than 200 different planets live and work, and their children make friends with all sorts of bizarre alien creatures. Kelvin's attempts to keep up the pretence that he is a genius leads him to embark on a bungled homework escapade and he and his new friends end up in a show-down with the evil scientist Erik Failenheimer and his plans for domination of the universe.

Sci-Fi Junior High is abundantly illustrated with black-and-white drawings, and the text is frequently interspersed with comic-style segments. The varying fonts, the short chapters, the lively dialogue and the funny and plentiful illustrations will make this novel appealing to reluctant readers. It's a fast, imaginative and amusing read. Recommended for upper primary to middle school. Jane Smith

The Grand Genius Summer of Henry Hoobler (2017)

Lisa Shanahan, Allen & Unwin, 205pp. 978 1 76029 301 7 **\$14.99** Pb Shananari nas urawi nami beautifully: his reticence, prevarica-

Sitting between his fifteen year-old brother, Patch, and his much younger sister Lulu, in her booster seat, Henry is troubled with dark thoughts about the coming family holiday at the beach. His head is full of spiders and sharks, snakes and stingrays, but one thing above all fills him with dread:



his new silver bike on the back of the car, the one without trainer wheels. Shanahan has captured poor Henry's fears beautifully. Mum and Dad try to iolly him along with stories of their holidays at the beach, but when Mum hints that she has had similar fears, these are dismissed by Dad, keen to relate the good times of his youth. Once at the beach the family meets their friends, some of whom tease Henry about his bike, but a girl on a silver dragster whizzes past, displaying a courage that Henry admires. A multi lavered story unfolds with Henry's fears and lack of courage highlighted while readers will him to get on top of his anxiety and find a way to ride his bike with panache.

tion, worries about things that may

upset him and of course, trying out

his new bike. His meeting with Cassie

sees him lying about his bike, and her

straightforwardness niggles at the lie

he has told, but in the end her cour-

age rubs off and with his older broth-

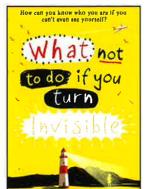
er's help he takes the plunge, making

What Not To Do If You Turn Invisible (2017) Shanahan has drawn Henry's character

Fran Knight

Ross Welford, HarperCollins, 405pp. 978 0 00 815635 0 **\$14.99** Pb

12 year-old Ethel has really bad pimples. She tries everything to get rid of them. A combination of 'Dr Chang His Skin So Clear' medicine and a dodgy sunbed give her a result she isn't expecting. She becomes invisible. Although terrified at first, Ethel has a



this the best holiday ever. This is a gentle story about overcoming fears, about meeting new people, about the random teasing that happens within families and friends that can cause anxiety, but above all it is about family and having fun together, even with a teenager in the back seat. Shanahan is able to inhabit each character with a dose of reality, making each recognisable and endearing, prompting the reader to read to the end to see what happens to this group of people and in particular Henry Hoobler.

courageous heart and a great sense of humour. She learns how to control the condition and starts enjoying herself. But she must be careful. To be totally invisible Ethel has to be naked. This leads to several embarrassing, hilarious, nail-biting adventures.

always felt she was a bit of a cypher. Now she really is invisible she starts uncovering certain secrets about her birth. Ethel is not who she thought she was. Her name isn't even Ethel. Other people aren't who they appear to be: The school bullies Jarrow and Jesmond are thoughtful and responsible at home; Ethel's classmate Elliot Boyd isn't a fat smelly loud-mouth from London—he's a sensitive boy who dreams of activating the light in the local disused lighthouse. On page 314 disaster strikes. Ethel finds she can't reverse the process and it looks as if she might stay invisible

Brought up by her grandmother to be

quiet, helpful and obedient, Ethel

The book is not really a fantasy. The world Ethel lives in is real, with mobile technology, old people suffering dementia and rock stars unable to cope with fame. Ethel's invisibility becomes a metaphor for what is seen and what is hidden.

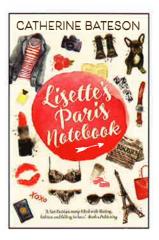
The gradual exposure of the secrets is beautifully done and the ending is extremely satisfying. This is a fabulous story, sensitively written. I can't recommend it highly enough to all school and public librarians. It's also very funny. Patricia Halsall

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not true. I have my own problems, but they're not for you to fix. Just like I'm not here to fix you being deaf ... If you think you need to take care of me that's on you, not me.'

The characters are memorable, the prose has an easy colloquial swing to it and once-mute Steffi eventually comes out with some good, clear, nononsense wisdom about life and love. On a practical note, unobtrusive and efficient ways have been found of indicating when sign language is being

Katharine England



Lisette's Paris Notebook (2017) Catherine Bateson, Allen & Unwin, 304pp. 978 1 76029 363 5 \$16.99 Pb

Lisette's Paris Notebook is a coming of age book with its main characters the eighteen year-old Australian Lisette, her clairvoyant landlady, Madame Christophe, the undeniably hot Anders (her fellow student) and Hugo, the likeable British antique dealer-not forgetting, of course, Paris itself. They are a wonderful cast of characters, throwing an interesting light on personalities, characteristics, and expectations.

Catherine Bateson has been writing poetry and fiction for young adults as well as younger readers for decades and has received many awards and commendations. This new young adult novel is light-hearted, funny and often self-deprecating but, at the same time, highlights many of the very real plights and concerns about growing up and finding one's way-in Australia as well as in Paris

Lisette has been brought up by her seamstress mother (in the house of Estrogen) in a close, loving relationship in Melbourne and is now starting her dream (or is it her mother's dream?) of living in Paris for her gap year, learning the language as well as art history. She has a quirky sense of style and wants to be seen as an individual, as well as needing to fit in seamlessly.

Her landlady enrols her in a French language class where she meets the hot German, Anders, Goldie and the American, MacKenzie, The interplay between the characters allows the author to highlight many of the differences between France and Australia—and the rest of the world. as well as between the people of these places.

Lisette's 'notebook', from the title.

takes the form of an opening paragraph in each chapter where, in a diary entry, she briefly muses over what is happening in her life, her beliefs and ideas. Not only does she have to learn the language and her own sense of style, but she has to wend her way through her relationships—with her mother, in-absentia, with Anders, with Hugo and with her girl friends. There are many very funny observations and situations described and the author doesn't stray into areas that would preclude the young teenage reader, the likely audience for this new book. Carmel Ballinger



The Blue Cat (2017) Ursula Dubosarsky, 176pp.

At a slow pace matching that of the enervating pace of hot summer days Dubosarsky carries the reader on a journey from child to adolescent via a meandering stream of observations from the narrator—a young girl with an inquiring mind and an eve for what is happening around her. In hands other than Dubosarsky's it could be flat but here the words, utilitarian in themselves, are placed with great care in seemingly everyday usage while catching the voice and view point of a child of the time. It is not the everyday Columba is used to: January 1 1942, is momentous: her father following government orders has put the clock back by an hour and all summer long, the clock would lie. At the same time a few

streets away ... a small boy and his father emerge from the back seat of a car and in the middle of the road a sleek cat lay stretched out, absorbing the sunshine.

Thus are the main protagonists assembled in a three page prologue. It is Columba who will narrate the story of that summer as news from Europe is dark, men enlist to go overseas; their city hosts numerous American soldiers, and a strange young boy and his father move into the neighbour-

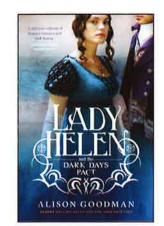
It is a period of waiting and watching and Dubosarsky perfectly catches the ordinariness of a life heightened by war but at the same time continuing in the mundane; a life heightened by gossip, niggling changes and over all the pall of conflict and death. Photographs, regulations, advertisements and memorabilia of the time are placed throughout the book breaking the text while adding verisimilitude to the story. At the same time a thread of other-worldliness is stitched into the narrative, gathering pace as does the war, culminating in a beautifully realised leap into another place and time as, quided by the Blue Cat, Columba witnesses the horror from which her friend had escaped. Gaps are left for the reader to fill in, word images stay in the mind: The classroom was very old and the chalk dust, caught in the light through the window panes, floated suspended in the air like a glittering mist and characters come to life... here's the school do-gooder; she was tugging on one of her plaits with one hand as she copied down sums with the other, probably thinking of how she would soon be adding up all the pennies and threepences and even shillings ready to save

Upper-Primary readers would enjoy the story; an older audience will also appreciate Dubosarsky's word-smithing and command of language. Rayma Turton

Lady Helen and the Dark Days Pact (2017)

Alison Goodman, Angus & Robertson, 456pp, 978 0 7322 9610 0 \$29.99 Pb 978 1 74309795 3 e-Book

Lady Helen Wrexhall continues her training (see Lady Helen and the Dark Days Club) in the fashionable Regency resort of Brighton. Her enhanced mental and physical abilities as a Reclaimer have gained her membership of the secretive Dark Days Club that protects mankind against the Deceivers, who feed upon



human energy by skimming a tiny amount from many people ... using an obscene grey feeder tentacle. Her training is incomplete so her mentor, the dangerously attractive Lord Carlston, proposes to remedy this urgently, as he fears a new Grand Deceiver, with the power to unite all Deceivers, has entered England. As her first task Helen is sent to bargain with a disgraced Terrene, Lowry (Terrenes help Reclaimers discharge the lethal energy they have absorbed from a Deceiver). He has obtained a register of all the Deceivers in England. At stake is the safety of all mankind, but is Lowry's price too high for Helen? Written in the same vein as the first in the series, but aimed at a slightly older audience, the action plays out against a well-described background of Regency England with all its prejudices against homosexuals, other races and powerful women. Regency Brighton's dark underbelly is vividly described, quite a contrast with the genteel Brighton of the beau monde. The inclusion of actual historical characters, events and settings lends a credibility to the narrative. The competition between the Duke of Selburn and Lord Carlston for Helen's affections adds a frisson to their encounters; their rivalry is the stuff of historical romances. Helen's growing attraction to Lord Carlston has set her thoughts on an impure path, so the novel fits into the fantasy/romance genre. With new and diverting characters, bloody confrontations and an undercurrent of repressed sexuality, this seguel is a period romp for mature readers. As Helen's friend Delia says, it is all Very Helen Purdie

Extending **Readers**

Books with mature themes for children and young adults with established reading skills. Content and concepts should be made clear from the review. Lindicates an Australian book, and a New Zealand Book.



A Quiet Kind of Thunder (2017) Sara Barnard, Pan Macmillan, 307pp. 978 1 5098 1098 7 \$16.99 Pb 978 1 76055 151 3 e-book

NEW BOOKS **NEW BOOKS** NEW BOOKS

For some, falling in love is like the kind of thunder, felt deep and lasting, led to her learning some basic sign no flash in the pan.

Steffi Bons is an introvert with severe social anxiety and moderate panic disorder, a combination which has led to selective mutism; she can talk, but her friendship, first love and tenderly disorders prevent her from doing so with anyone other than very close friends and family. She has decided that this year—her first in the sixth form at her English school—will be the year when she will talk at school, but her exuberant and protective best friend Tem has left to do sports science at college and things haven't got off to a very good start when the head of year introduces her to a new boy

who is profoundly deaf.

zing of lightning, for others it's a quiet Steffi's communication problems have language, so she and easy-going Rhys are able to converse in a mixture of sign, writing and messaging, and a tentative beginning blossoms into experimental sex. Tem is having her own romantic adventures at college and Steffi and Rhvs decide on a celebratory adventure together—a trip north to Edinburgh that they will keep geoning confidence in Rhys, on deafsecret from their protective families and over-excitable Tem.

When the trip goes pear-shaped Steffi must work through her panic and cope in unfamiliar and confronting circumstances; meanwhile Tem, her long-time I stop him, one hand up. 'No. That's

protector and advisor, uncharacteristically needs her support and she is not available. Her parents' (she has four) reaction to the botched secret trip surprises Steffi, but more important are the issues of trust, responsibility and communication that have to be confronted and worked through by the three friends.

The book is interesting and informative on the disorders that complicate Steffi's life, on the effects of her burawareness and the common lack of it, and particularly on the often unevenly shared obligations and limited responsibilities of friendship. You need someone who can look after you, he begins.

A Shadow's Breath (2017) Nicole Haves, Penguin Australia,

336pp. 978 0 143 78109 7 \$19.99 Pb 978 0 143 78108 0 e-Book

From the author of the 2015 Children's Peace Literature award winning One