



**Sacred stacks:
the higher purpose
of libraries and
librarianship**

Nancy Kalikow Maxwell
American Library Association,
2006
ISBN: 0838909175
RRP: \$38

Nancy Kalikow Maxwell is Jewish, a reference librarian, and a graduate in Catholic theology. She takes us on an inspirational journey through the sacred stacks of the library and shows us the greater purpose of libraries.

We are exposed to the notion that librarianship is a calling, serving some greater purpose. Generally speaking we consider the purpose of libraries to be in information literacy, the free flow of information, and the use of democracy; surprisingly this book brings our attention to another important function. It focuses on the library in the life of its users and how it affects users' souls and their quality of life. The library is painted in the light of a sacred, spiritual, and heavenly place that among many other things promotes community, transmits culture to future generations, organises chaos, and uplifts society.

Even atheists will find this book compelling. Any book that compares cataloguers to God will undoubtedly gain undivided attention. However, it is important for librarians to become their own advocates to highlight their importance, in order to curb the rumours that physical libraries are no longer needed and to inspire the next generation of librarians to be born.

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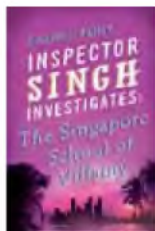
Lucy, The Lie Detector

Marianne Musgrove
Random House, 2010
ISBN: 9781741664553
RRP: \$14.95

Part of a chapter book series that deals with some of the life questions of childhood (in the first book, Lucy the Good, Lucy tries to work out what it means to be good), Lucy the Lie Detector explores the complicated nature of lies, white lies, and leaving out bits of the truth. There's a scratched car, a camel, an escaped guinea pig, a best friend, a worst enemy, and parents with white lies of their own! Lucy van Loon has to deal with the consequences of a fib that turns into a bigger and bigger lie when she scratches her father's car. Will her little brother forgive her? Is staying silent the same as telling a lie out loud? Why do grownups sometimes tell lies? Why are there so many rules? This is a funny story with an engaging and feisty Australian heroine, perfect for eight years and up.

Christine Tursky

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**Inspector Singh
Investigates: The
Singapore School of
Villainy**

Shamini Flint
Piatkus, 2010
ISBN: 9780749929770
RRP: \$22.99

Inspector Singh Investigates: The Singapore School of Villainy, is the third book by Shamini Flint starring the rotund, politically incorrect Inspector Singh.

An expat in a leading Singaporean law firm is murdered, opening a complicated can of worms that Inspector Singh needs to wade through in order to solve. The turban wearing, wheezing, overweight, yet lovable Inspector has to contend with a nagging wife who is always right, and a Superintendent who looks upon Singh as "a disgrace to the force". The book contains many intriguing twists and turns that leave the reader guessing and then double guessing, creating an engrossing novel.

A thoroughly enjoyable book with an ending that leaves you shocked to the core.

Karen Beasley

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Kindling

Darren Groth
Hachette Australia, 2010
ISBN: 9780733625022
RRP: \$24.99

This short novel certainly packs a punch! It begins with father Nate desperately searching for his ten year old autistic son, Kieran. We learn that Nate's wife, Felicity, was killed five years ago, saving Kieran from a raging house fire. Nate has given up a promising musical career to care for Kieran and help him make some sense of the world. While a bushfire threatens a neighbouring suburb, Nate is at a friend's house and blurts out a secret about Felicity's death. Kieran hears this and runs away. Now Nate must find his son.

The narrative is shared between Nate and Kieran, and these two voices help create both the urgency of the search and a deep understanding of how father and son think and feel.

The story is gripping and compelling on two levels. Firstly there is the suspenseful search as Nate struggles to find Kieran before it is too late. But on a deeper level, as Darren Groth himself puts it, "it is ... about nurturing the spark that resides within us all and fighting the flames that life sets in our path."

Jill Enks

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Rufus the Numbat

David Miller
Ford St Publishing, 2010
ISBN: 9781876462963
RRP: \$24.95

The back and inside covers of this book are beautifully illustrated depicting the habitat of the numbat. I was anticipating a book for young children that informed about this little-known, endangered Australian creature.

This was barely implied in the story of Rufus passing through a country town, causing havoc on his way to the bush.

There was an opportunity missed here to inform children of a marsupial that is not nocturnal, lives naturally in only two spots in Western Australia, has teeth like pegs, eats up to 20 000 termites a day, is threatened by the introduced fox and our domestic animals and is bred in captivity to be reintroduced to the wild.

Diane Hollingsworth

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**The Confessions of
Catherine de Medici**

C.W. Gortner
Hodder & Stoughton, 2010
ISBN: 9780340962961
RRP: \$32.99

Catherine de Medici is a formidable figure in 16th century history and a rich source of material for CW Gortner's fictional autobiography *The Confessions of Catherine De Medici*. Following her turbulent life as a young child growing up in Florence through to her marriage to the future king of France, and then beyond as a regent and domineering mother to 3 French kings, the novel displays her immersion from a pawn of powerful men into a vital force in European politics. Living through the thick of religious upheaval and resulting wars, Catherine's life provides no shortage of intrigue and excitement, but leaves Gortner with a lot of ground to cover. Luckily, this means that *Confessions's* 400 pages breeze past quickly, leaving virtually no lulls in the narrative.

While the format of the book allows Gortner's Catherine to rationalise her motives and actions, at times Gortner tempers Catherine's role in these difficult situations, instead of allowing her to own the tough decisions that she is forced to make.

Gortner has obviously done his research, however *Confessions* falls into the trap of 'sexing up' history, with an unlikely love interest thrown into the narrative. It is one of a few detours from fact, all of which the author outlines in his end notes. For the most part the book offers readers an entertaining look into another powerful female political figure of the 16th century.

Megan Cuthbert

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The Crime of Huey Dunstan

James McNeish
Text Publishing, 2010
ISBN: 9781921656446
RRP: \$32.95

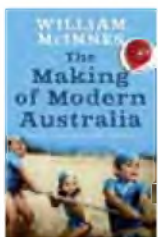
The first few pages of James McNeish's latest novel failed to impress me. The pace was slow, the plot was hardly original – yet somehow, by the time I closed the book, I had become deeply invested in the story. *The Crime of Huey Dunstan* is insidiously powerful. While moral ambiguity in the courtroom is a well-worn feature of the modern crime novel, McNeish manages to delve to the heart of the human issue.

Our narrator, Professor Chesney, is a blind psychologist asked to present expert evidence in a murder trial regarding the accused, Huey Dunstan. Huey, with his cheerful and polite disposition, is no ordinary killer. His apparent lack of motivation for the brutal murder of an old man is central to the novel. Driven by unexpected sympathy for Huey, Ches quickly becomes absorbed in the moral issues surrounding Huey's trial.

This book presents a provoking exploration of compassion's place in a criminal trial. What initially seems an outrageous defence for a murderer becomes a necessity to divert the cold indifference of the legal process. McNeish places the reader in the jury box, and requests an individual response to the question of Huey's guilt.

Fiona Keks

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The Making of Modern Australia

William McInnes
Hachette Australia 2010
ISBN: 9780733624940
RRP: \$35.00

William McInnes has put together a pleasantly nostalgic read about the social history of Australia since World War II. It largely follows the script of a television series of the same name, which is currently being screened on the ABC.

The tale weaves gently from childhood in the largely white Australia of the 1950s, through the arrival of post-war immigrants to boost the labour pool, and a brief glance at the experiences of the stolen generation and the British children interned in orphanages after the war. It covers teenage rebellion, rock and roll, war and religion, and the obsession with home ownership and real estate to this day.

It paints a slightly rose coloured vision of the past, but airs some important issues in a non confrontational and inoffensive way – ignorance, racism, domestic violence, and pressures in perhaps a less enlightened time, before simplified divorce and sex education.

Personal snapshots are used to good

effect, giving the stories context and humour. There's something for everyone in the *Making of Modern Australia*.

Adrienne Walker

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The Splendour Falls

Rosemary Clement-Moore
Random house, 2010
ISBN 9781864718782
RRP \$17.95

Clement-Moore presents us with an engaging YA romantic drama set in Alabama in

America's Deep South, where history has left such a deep imprint you can still see its petticoat tails out of the corner of your eye. The protagonist Sylvie arrives from a shattered past in New York to rebuild in what for her is a foreign land, at the historic ancestral home. As she falls in with first one then another young man who hold differing but equally powerful attraction for her, romantic tension vies with mystery as the strange goings on in and around her historic ancestral home build towards a mysterious and magical conclusion.

The start is very slow, with Sylvie still at home in New York. It is a shame that the spectre of Sylvie's shrink looms larger and more intimidating than the spectres of the past; the American middle class way of life is foreign to those not fond of commercial television in this country. I started out feeling the best parts of the book were the spaces between the words, but once the artifice is left behind for a more earthy reality, things improve immensely and the reader is drawn in to the story.

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The Untrained Environmentalist

John Fenton
Allen & Unwin, 2010
ISBN: 9781742370194
RRP: \$35.00

The Untrained Environmentalist is the personal tale of how one young farmer

in the south-west of Victoria took a barren property in the 1950s and over the course of fifty years turned it into a productive farming landscape.

While other farmers were clearing trees and draining waterholes to make pasture for livestock, Fenton started planting trees and planning dams, to create shade and water for livestock, make use of a viable timber product, as well as actively regenerate the natural habitat for wildlife and birds. He proved along the way how caring for the environment actually leads to better crops and stock.

Fenton is an honest narrator. He admits failures, mistakes, misjudgments, and just how much hard work was involved. He openly criticises the

government and farming mindset of the time. He also gives due thanks to those who helped him along the way. Today Lanark is a landmark example of how important the land and the use we make of it is for everyone, especially our future.

Fenton reminisces with ease making this a pleasurable read. I'll certainly be giving my Dad a copy of this book for Fathers' Day.

Cathy Johnston

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Wave Length

AJ Betts
Fremantle Press, 2010
ISBN: 9781921696305
RRP: \$17.95

Oliver is a muddle headed teenager, truly self-absorbed like teenagers can be. But he is so nice about it.

Oliver accepts that his parents are to live apart and never asks why, even though he adores his father. He is concerned about his younger sister's foibles and envious of his younger brother's bravado. He is upset by his mother's home catering business interrupting his sleep and study. Oliver even wears items of lost property without protest.

This character seems more like a stereotype of a repressed English chap (stiff upper lip intact) than an Aussie teenager living in Perth. In fact, some of the language used is distinctly English: hols for holidays, tosser for w***er, todger for penis. It isn't until almost the end of the book that Oliver exclaims "cool" and "sick" and drops the F-bomb. Now that's more like an Aussie teen.

Hurrah old chap! Oliver learns that life is long, and is to be lived with passion. Life doesn't end if Oliver doesn't attain 80% in his exams to pursue a career that pays handsomely, has some handy perks, but that he doesn't really care about.

I struggled with this book. It was only when Oliver meets some eccentric and feisty oldies that it sparked my interest. These characters were beautifully drawn and taught Oliver a lesson or two about life, love, and passion.

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