

The Stella Prize for younger readers

The bulk of this Stella Prize Schools Program kit provides teaching notes on each of the 2013 and 2014 Stella Prize shortlisted books. As these books are mostly not suitable for students below Year 10, we have compiled here a separate reading list for Years 7 to 10, along with some general reading questions and classroom activities to encourage wider reading of Australian women writers at younger secondary levels too.

Alongside some well-known recent books, we have suggested books of different styles – picture books, verse and graphic novels, and so on. There is an additional list for reluctant readers. As in the rest of the kit, books have been grouped under the themes of IDENTITY, PLACE and HISTORY. See the introductory notes in the relevant section of the main teaching kit for general questions around these three themes. And, of course, there are lots more great books by Australian women for this age range out there too!

BOOKLIST FOR YOUNGER READERS

Year 7 – Identity

***Red* by Libby Gleeson (Allen & Unwin)**

A genre-crossing mystery about a girl struggling to regain her memories and solve a crime in the wake of a natural disaster.

***Pureheart* by Cassandra Golds (Penguin)**

Deirdre and Gal journey through an enchanted house, and their own past, to try to break a curse and reclaim their identity.

***The Three Loves of Persimmon* by Cassandra Golds (Penguin)**

A gaslamp novel about love and destiny.

***Moonlight and Ashes* by Sophie Masson (Random House)**

In this story of Selena, the tale of Cinderella is retold to enhance the magic behind the fairytale and grant Selena control over her own destiny.

***Surface Tension* by Meg McKinlay (Walker)**

A story about secrets and forgotten towns, and finding a place where you belong.

***The Four Seasons of Lucy McKenzie* by Kirsty Murray (Allen & Unwin)**

A time-slip adventure about the true meaning of friendship.

***Tensy Farlow and the Home for Mislaid Children* by Jen Storer (Puffin)**

An orphan with no guardian angel who eventually finds much more than a home.

***A Ghost in My Suitcase* by Gabrielle Wang (Puffin)**

Celeste travels to China to visit her grandmother, where she discovers her family history and inherits a powerful gift.

Year 7 – Place

***Cicada Summer* by Kate Constable (Allen & Unwin)**

A time-slip tale about family, home and belonging.

Year 7 – History

Nanberry: Black Brother White

by Jackie French (Angus & Robertson)

The true story of Nanberry, a young Aboriginal boy adopted by Surgeon John White and raised to act as an interpreter between Aboriginal people and European settlers.

Year 8 – Identity***Girl Saves Boy* by Steph Bowe (Text)**

Being terminally ill is not going to stop Sacha Thomas from falling in love and having an amazing adventure.

***Cinnamon Rain* by Emma Cameron (Walker)**

Verse novel about friendship, family and falling in love.

***Whisper* by Chrissie Keighery (Hardie Grant Egmont)**

A teenager deals with not only her loss of hearing but a new identity as a deaf person.

***Killing Darcy* by Melissa Lucashenko (UQP)**

Darcy Mango is looking for his mob, his past, and himself.

(Melissa Lucashenko is the author of *Mullumbimby*, which was longlisted for the 2014 Stella Prize)

***A Small Free Kiss in the Dark* by Glenda Millard (Allen & Unwin)**

Trying to survive amid the rubble of war, a group of young misfits band together and, against all expectations, find hope and love.

***The Rosie Black Chronicles series* by Lara Morgan (Walker)**

Rosie Black lives in a world destroyed by climate change, where people are divided into haves and have-nots. She is drawn into a mystery that will change the shape of her future.

***Vulture's Gate* by Kirsty Murray (Allen & Unwin)**

A dystopian novel set in a desolate future world where girls are being trapped and farmed.

***Only Ever Always* by Penni Russon (Allen & Unwin)**

Claire feels irrevocably broken, until she finds a way to escape into a dream world inhabited by Clara, who has plenty of experience in dealing with broken.

Year 8 – Place***Crow Country* by Kate Constable (Allen & Unwin)**

A time-slip adventure in which Sadie tries to right old wrongs involving her own family and an Aboriginal sacred site.

***Thyla* by Kate Gordon (Random House)**

Thyla is the story of Tasmania: a story of darkness, convicts, devils and tigers.

Year 8 – History***New Guinea Moon* by Kate Constable (Allen & Unwin)**

Set on the cusp of independence in New Guinea, this is the coming-of-age story of Julie as she falls in love and finds her own kind of independence.

***The Children of the King* by Sonya Hartnett (Penguin)**

A kind of ghost story that blends history with storytelling as two children, from different times and places, connect in a ruined building.

***India Dark* by Kirsty Murray (Allen & Unwin)**

Based on the true story of a group of young Australian performers, travelling through Asia and India, who initiate a groundbreaking court case.

***The Forgotten Pearl* by Belinda Murrell (Random House)**

The Forgotten Pearl recounts the events of World War II through the eyes of teenager Poppy, who flees her crumbling Darwin home to start a new life in Sydney.

Year 9 – Identity***Noah's Law* by Randa Abdel-Fattah (Pan Macmillan)**

A light-hearted legal thriller about a rebellious teenager's summer working at a law firm.

***Shift* by Em Bailey (Hardie Grant Egmont)**

A slightly supernatural tale of unhealthy friendships and the importance of self-acceptance.

***All This Could End* by Steph Bowe (Text)**

Nina would love to be a normal teenager – if only she could convince her family to leave their life of crime.

***Will* by Maria Boyd (Random House)**

Everybody can see that Will's in trouble, except Will, and things are going to get worse before they get better.

***Chasing Charlie Duskin* by Cath Crowley
(Pan Macmillan)**

Charlie Duskin is running from her mistakes, but as she runs she's chasing dreams and hoping things will get better.

***This Is Shyness* by Leanne Hall (Text)**

Wildgirl is being someone else for a night. Wolfboy is just trying to get by. In a town where the sun doesn't rise, it only takes one night to fall in love.

***I'll Tell You Mine* by Pip Harry (UQP)**

Kate Elliot hides beneath her Goth appearance, but when she gets sent to boarding school, claustrophobic friendships bring out her secrets – and her potential.

***The Whole of My World* by Nicole Hayes
(Random House)**

Shelley's twin brother is dead. She's dealing with it in the only way she knows how, trying to lose herself in football. But nothing is simple anymore, not even footy.

***Cry Blue Murder* by Kim Kane
& Marion Roberts (UQP)**

A chilling dual narrative about online identity and a suburban murderer.

***Life in Outer Space* by Melissa Keil
(Hardie Grant Egmont)**

Sam is a geek just trying to get through high school, but Camilla is determined to make Year 12 much more exciting than that.

***The Tribe series* by Ambelin Kwaymullina
(Walker)**

A four-book dystopian series about a tribe of rebels, hunted and experimented on because their abilities make them 'illegal'.

***Fury* by Shirley Marr (Black Dog)**

Eliza Boans might be confessing to a murder but readers will question her guilt to the very end.

***Fairytales for Wilde Girls* by Allyse Near
(Random House)**

The coming-of-age fairytale of Isola Wilde, who can see things that others can't.

***My Big Birkett* by Lisa Shanahan
(Allen & Unwin)**

A coming-of-age story about life, love and chucking a birkett.

***Loving Richard* by Feynman Penny Tangey
(UQP)**

Catherine is dealing with all the things normal teenagers deal with, but she's doing it by writing to the dead scientist Richard Feynman.

***Shadows from the Requiem series* by Paula
Weston (Text)**

Gaby thinks she remembers the accident her brother died in – she has nightmares about it – but she's about to find out that the memory is false, and that the reality is much crazier.

***Love-shy* by Lili Wilkinson (Allen & Unwin)**

A high-school journalist searching for stories finds a love-shy student online. He's the perfect project, even if he doesn't realise it.

***The Zigzag Effect* by Lili Wilkinson
(Allen & Unwin)**

When Sage takes a holiday job as a magician's assistant to pay for her photography lessons, she gets more magic than she bargained for.

Year 9 – Place

***Rise of the Fallen* by Teagan Chilcott
(Magabala)**

The first in a YA paranormal romance series by the winner of the 2012 black&write! Indigenous Writing Fellowships.

***Grace Beside Me* by Sue McPherson
(Magabala)**

Small-town life is explored with warmth and humour through the eyes of Fuzzy Mac in this award-winning book.

***Days Like This* by Alison Stewart (Penguin)**

In this dystopian thriller, Lily is a prisoner held hostage by her parents and wondering what her own fate will be following the disappearance of her brother.

***The Sky So Heavy* by Claire Zorn (UQP)**

One day, everything is normal; the next, Fin is fighting to make sense of a world devastated by nuclear fallout.

Year 9 – History***Preloved* by Shirley Marr (Walker)**

Amy doesn't believe her mother's ghost stories, until one of the ghosts follows her home.

Year 10 – Identity***Zac and Mia* by AJ Betts (Text)**

A funny, raw and sometimes grotty story about love, cancer and living as hard as you can for as long as you've got.

***Pig Boy* by JC Burke (Random House)**

Damon Styles has been wronged and is out for revenge. But when he takes a job with the Pigman so that he can learn to shoot, he's in for more education than he anticipated.

***The Story of Tom Brennan* by JC Burke (Random House)**

Tom Brennan's life is pretty simple, until his brother is arrested and his whole world explodes.

***Every Thing Left Unsaid* by Jessica Davidson (Pan Macmillan)**

Tai and Juliet have been friends forever, and it seems like they might finally have a chance to get together. But then Tai gets sick, and it's not the kind of sick you come back from.

***Night Beach* by Kirsty Eager (Penguin)**

A novel about obsession and possession. Abbie is in love with Kane, but Kane has returned from holiday with the devil on his back.

***Head of the River* by Pip Harry (UQP)**

Siblings Leni and Christian are on track to make their Olympian parents proud. But school sports are high pressure and when life gets complicated, everything can go wrong.

***The Accident* by Kate Hendrick (Text)**

An intriguing novel in which three seemingly unconnected narratives tell the before, during and after of a devastating car crash.

***Notes from the Teenage Underground* by Simmone Howell (Pan Macmillan)**

Gem, Mira and Lou have gone Underground. But even the avant-garde and anti-social need their friends sometimes.

***Girl Defective* by Simmone Howell (Pan Macmillan)**

A detective story about family, love and the things that fall through the cracks.

***Cooper Bartholomew Is Dead* by Rebecca James (Allen & Unwin)**

Cooper Bartholomew is dead. His girlfriend Libby is devastated, and she's not convinced his death was an accident.

***Kill the Music* by Nansi Kunze (Random House)**

An indie thriller about a rock-star teenager and a plot to kill the music – literally.

***Losing It* by Julia Lawrinson (Penguin)**

Four friends make a pact to 'Lose It'. They'd like to be sober, they'd like it to be with Mr Right. The only thing that's certain is that it'll be awkward.

***Burn Bright* by Marianne de Pierres (Random House)**

Book One of the *Night Creatures* trilogy. A science-fiction novel set in the intoxicating and mysterious world of Ixion.

***Cracked* by Clare Strahan (Allen & Unwin)**

A coming-of-age story about trying to make sense of the world when it feels like it's cracking into a million pieces.

***Friday Brown* by Vicki Wakefield (Text)**

Running away from the past and her family curse, Friday Brown finds a new sort of belonging with a group of homeless misfits.

***Beatle Meets Destiny* by Gabrielle Williams (Penguin)**

When John Lennon (Beatle) meets Destiny McCartney, he falls instantly in love. The only problem is he already has a girlfriend.

***Six Impossible Things* by Fiona Wood (Pan Macmillan)**

Dan Cereill is watching as his life falls apart before his eyes. He's going to get through it, one day at a time, if he can just do six impossible things.

Year 10 – Place***Stolen* by Lucy Christopher (Chicken House)**

In a letter to her captor, Gemma relates her experience of being kidnapped and taken to a remote shack in the middle of the Australian outback by a man who expects her to love him.

***Graffiti Moon* by Cath Crowley (Pan Macmillan)**

It's the last night of high school, and it's going to be a big one. A story about love, hope, and making a place that's your own.

***Black Glass* by Meg Mundell (Scribe)**

A futuristic dystopian novel about two young teenage sisters trying to find one another and survive as 'undocs' in the City.

***As Stars Fall* by Christie Nieman (Pan Macmillan)**

An exploration of growing up, identity and home in the aftermath of a bushfire.

***Clara in Washington* by Penny Tangey (UQP)**

Clara is taking an end-of-school holiday in Washington. It's her chance to become someone else, but that person might not be quite who she imagined.

***Wildlife* by Fiona Wood (Pan Macmillan)**

Lou from *Six Impossible Things* is grieving and the last thing she needs is to be trapped in the middle of nowhere for a term of outdoor education with the accidentally famous Sybilla and a bunch of girls who she'll never fit in with.

Year 10 – History***Steal My Sunshine* by Emily Gale (Random House)**

In the middle of a Melbourne heatwave, Hannah listens as her grandmother shares the heartbreak of having been a 'wayward girl'.

Reluctant Readers – Identity***Tjarany Roughtail* by Gracie Greene & Joe Tramacchi, with illustrations by Lucille Gill (Magabala)**

An illustrated book about the cultural history of the Kukatja people and the mysteries of the Dreamtime. Told in Kukatja and English.

***The Great Gatsby* by Nicki Greenberg (Allen & Unwin)**

F Scott Fitzgerald's jazz-age classic *The Great Gatsby* becomes a vivid and delightful graphic novel.

***Hamlet* by Nicki Greenberg (Allen & Unwin)**
A graphic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.**Reluctant Readers – Place*****The Papunya School Book of Country and History* by the Papunya School (Allen & Unwin)**

An Aboriginal picture book celebrating the history of the Western Desert communities.

***One Small Island* by Alison Lester & Coral Tulloch (Penguin)**

A visual history of Macquarie Island, a World Heritage site, and an exploration of sustainability.

Reluctant Readers – History***Maralinga, the Anangu Story* by Christobel Mattingley, with Yalata and Oak Valley communities (Allen & Unwin)**

An illustrated history of Maralinga told from the Indigenous perspective.

READING QUESTIONS

The following general questions can be applied to any book. They are intended as a starting point for discussions with younger readers about what and how they read.

- ◆ Who is the author?
- ◆ How well do you know the author?
- ◆ Do they go by their full name?
- ◆ What sort of cover does the book have?
- ◆ How do the cover and author's name influence your decision to pick up the book?
- ◆ Is it a genre book?
- ◆ What are the key themes in the book?
- ◆ What do you generally look for in a book?
- ◆ What makes you pick up a particular book?
- ◆ What makes you reluctant to pick up a particular book?
- ◆ How real are the characters?
- ◆ Are there more male or female characters?

- ◆ How are men portrayed in the book?
- ◆ How are women portrayed in the book?
- ◆ How do the characters treat each other?
- ◆ Are their attitudes influenced by their gender?
Are they influenced by the gender of the person they are talking to?
- ◆ What gender roles are represented in the books?
Are they portrayed realistically?
- ◆ Are the female characters given the opportunity to think for themselves?
- ◆ Does the author challenge gender stereotypes?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

The following can be used as stand-alone activities or in conjunction with the study of any of the books recommended above.

1. Brainstorm your favourite authors. Then compare the percentages of men and women on this list and discuss this. Do the same with characters. (This takes some of the key points from the questions and turns them into longer, more thoughtful activities and discussions.)

2. As a class, cast a critical glance over your reading habits. Divide into two groups, with each group choosing a pile of books (not the most popular, recognisable ones). One group should photocopy the covers of the books, blanking out the title and author. The other should write out the blurbs, again not including the title or author.

Each group should then share their covers/blurbs with the remainder of the class, asking them to vote on the books they would choose to read, and the books they wouldn't. Discuss what has prompted your choices. Why have you said no to particular books?

- ◆ If you have said yes/no based on the cover, does your opinion change once you read the blurb?
- ◆ If you have said yes/no based on the blurb, does your opinion change once you have seen the cover?
- ◆ Does your opinion change once you know the author?

- ◆ What influences your reading choices most strongly?

3. Know your authors: as a group brainstorming activity, make a list of the authors that immediately come to mind (this should be done fast, with no researching or looking at shelves). Make another list of the characters that first come to mind (again, no looking at books or shelves).

- ◆ What percentage of the characters you have named are women?
- ◆ What percentage of the authors you have named are women?
- ◆ Is there any inequality in the most memorable authors or characters based on gender?
- ◆ Is there inequality in the authors based on location? (For example, have you got more American authors or characters by American authors than Australian ones on your lists?)

4. What's in a name? Some female authors whose books feature male protagonists choose to use their initials rather than their first name. For example: JK Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series, and JC Burke, author of *The Story of Tom Brennan*. Some say this choice is often made because the authors believe that boys are less likely to read a book if it's written by a female author.

- ◆ What do you think about this?
- ◆ For what other reasons might an author go by their initials?
- ◆ Have you read any books written by an author who goes by just initials? Do you think your feelings about the book would have been different if the author used their full name?
- ◆ If you were to publish a book, do you think you would use your full name on the cover or just your initials? Or maybe a pseudonym? Explain your choice.