



The Children's Peace Literature Award – 2013 Short-list

JUNIOR READERS

A Bus Called Heaven by Bob Graham (Walker Books) The abandoned bus which appears one morning in a city street brings the local community together. They push the bus called *Heaven* in to Stella's front garden and children and adults set about cleaning it up, painting it and donating things for the inside of the bus including Stella bringing her table football game. One morning a tow truck arrives and tows the truck away to a wrecking yard because the bus was obstructing some of the footpath. Stella challenges the owner of the wrecking yard to a game of table football and if she wins, the community will be allowed to keep the bus. This picture book in true Bob Graham style is a wonderful example of a community working together for the common good and the very creative and peaceful resolution to the conflict situation.

King Pig by Nick Bland (Scholastic) King Pig is full of his own self importance. He bosses everyone around and just doesn't understand why his subjects don't like him. He devises a clever plan that is bound to make everyone love him! Life is tricky and this delightful picture book illustrates how we need to treat each other with respect and consider the needs and feelings of others...even if you are a King! Sometimes this is not as easy as it seems but his subjects appreciate the effort that King Pig makes to resolve the problem of his bossy behaviour. The story and illustrations are clever and humorous and demonstrate that whilst we may not always succeed, the important thing is to try.

The Ghost of Miss Annabel Spoon by Aaron Blabey (Penguin) "The village of Twee, seven miles from the sea", has been haunted for many years by the unhappy ghost of Miss Annabel Spoon. None of the adults knows what to do until young Herbert Kettle takes it upon himself to ask her why she is so unhappy - it's because she is lonely and wants a friend which Herbert offers to be. Author/illustrator Aaron Blabey brings together a lively story, told in rollicking verse, and enhanced by eye-catching illustrations, which make *Annabel Spoon* a picture book to be enjoyed by older readers in the age group. PS Keep a watchful eye on Annabel's hair.

The Pros and Cons of Being a Frog by Sue deGennaro (Scholastic) Two young friends with very different approaches and interests in life collaborate over making frog costumes, but have a falling out when they lose patience with each other and the "frog" shouts. Later the two seek each other out, realizing that it is no fun without a friend, and resume their friendship. This picture book for young children reflects the value of making and keeping friends, even though there may be disagreements along the way. Being able to resolve conflict is a lifeskill that can be developed from an early age.

Violet Mackerel's Personal Space by Anna Branford and Sarah Davis, illustrator (Walker Books) Violet's older brother Dylan is very upset by the news that their mother plans to marry Vincent and that the enlarged family will need to move to a larger house. While Mum, Vincent, Violet and sister Nicola are busy organising the wedding, Dylan retreats to a tent in the back yard. In this gentle story for early readers, each of the three children is given the opportunity to work through their response to the forthcoming changes before the wedding takes place.

OLDER READERS

My Life as an Alphabet by Barry Jonsberg (Allen & Unwin) Twelve-year-old Candice Phee is a girl who "sings her own song and dances her own dance" – characteristics which cause some of her schoolmates to consider her 'weird' and others to call her Essen, short for Special Needs. She is incurably – often injudiciously – honest and tirelessly devoted to the happiness of others. A very bright but sometimes over literal student, Candice is particularly fond of her English teacher and when Miss Bamford sets an assignment that involves writing one autobiographical paragraph for each letter of the alphabet, Candice goes overboard and writes chapters rather than paragraphs. The 26 very funny, often touching chapters that result detail Candice's attempts to reconcile her father and his brother, Rich Uncle Brian, to rouse her mother from the depression caused by the cot-death loss of Candice's baby sister, to save her new school friend from the dangers caused by his determination to return to the alien dimension from which he believes he has come and to help the school bully to do better at her schoolwork. Quirky Candice is typically candid – at least in her letters to the American penfriend who never replies - about her desire to pursue happiness for all her relatives, friends and merest acquaintances. It is a pursuit that makes her a wonderfully funny, inspiring practical role model for the peaceful resolution of conflict and the promotion of peace at the local, interpersonal level.



Pan's Whisper by Sue Lawson (Walker Books) This is a moving and engrossing story about a young girl having to go into foster care because of a family tragedy and learning how to cope with her anger and pain. For many years her older sister has protected her from her mother's unpredictable behaviour but an accident occurs that tears this dysfunctional family apart. The loving, calm response of her foster parents to her outbursts of anger and the fact her foster mother defends her at school slowly help her to work through her pain and learn to trust again. She is also befriended by a boy in her class who has also suffered a loss and is able to understand and talk to her about her self destructive behaviour. Pan finally comes to a peaceful resolution of the conflicts that have been making her young life so miserable.

Pookie Aleera is Not My Boyfriend by Seven Herrick (University of Queensland Press) In his trademark economical, quietly singing verse Steven Herrick's latest novel tells the story of life in class 6A at a country primary school, gently drawing the individual personalities, the established relationships between classmates, with the young class teacher, newly from the city, with the long-suffering school groundsman, the stern but approachable Principal and the much put-upon, dimly literal local policeman who comes to give regular talks on safety issues. When Cameron makes Anzac biscuits with his Mum she gives him 10 to take to school and share with his mates; the warm experience of sharing the biscuits inspires Mick to suggest a week's trial of a new idea: that everyone might go out of their way to do something special for someone else. In many ways this only formulates something that has been going on shyly and quietly throughout the class and throughout the book, but bringing it up front enables the characters to be conscious about what they are doing and to make special, mutually sanctioned efforts to reach out to the lonely, the marginalized and eventually the whole school. Herrick's characters are very convincingly developed individuals and his spare, sidelong way of working – through one-sided conversations, interior thought, suspended stories that are not completed until pages later – leaves a lot of room for the reader's own interpretation and input and saves the novel from any possible didacticism or preachiness.

The Beginner's Guide to Revenge by Marianne Musgrove (Random House) Thrown together by chance, thirteen-year-olds Sebastian (unhappily in Canberra with his future stepfather) and Ramola (a soldier's daughter who has moved school five times) each think they have a score to settle. While Sebastian does try revenge he realizes that it does not make anything better, regrets his actions and tries to make what amends he can. And he tries to dissuade Ramola from her revenge pathway. In the end Ramola decides there are better ways to deal with the behaviour of others than revenge – maintaining her dignity and gaining a real friend.

The Invisible Hero by Elizabeth Fensham (University of Queensland Press) This story is about bullying and overcoming the problem through courage and passive resistance, and it also highlights the positive impact of small acts of kindness. The main character, Philip, has learning difficulties and is singled out for unwanted criticism by teachers as well as fellow students. A "play it forward" kind of custom of doing anonymous kindnesses begins and soon catches on in the school. This is an excellent book which incorporates good peaceful resolutions by the kids themselves as well as the messages from the heroes and heroines (some famous, some not) the class choose for their school project. It is a powerful and emotive book, and one that is expected to be widely read and enjoyed by young people and adults.

Summaries of the shortlisted books and the winning entry will be posted on:

<http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/awards/literature/>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

While the following titles were judged to not meet all the criteria for short listing, the judges felt that they had merit and should be noted as recommended.

Junior readers

Hey Jack: The Worst Sleepover – Sally Rippin & Stephanie Spartels (Hardie Grant Egmont)

Star – Catherine Bateson (Omnibus)

Older readers

Shahana – Rosanne Hawke (Through My Eyes series – Allen & Unwin)