

# The SCHOOL MAGAZINE

SINCE 1916



## BOOKSHELF LIST 2009

### Orbit



- 1 EMMY AND THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING RAT** *Written by Lynne Jonell and illustrated by Jonathan Bean* (Random House 2007) ISBN: 978-1-74166-327-3

Emmy, Joe and their friend, a talking rat, have a mystery—or several—on their hands. Why do Emma's parents travel overseas all the time? Why does Emma's sinister nanny, Miss Barmy, force her to drink horrible concoctions every day? And why does the evil Professor Vole keep a caged collection of remarkable rodents in his dingy shop? A humorous plot and well-constructed characterisation, combined with mystery and magic, make this a lively novel with which to start the year.

- 2 KASPAR: PRINCE OF CATS** *Written by Michael Morpurgo and illustrated by Michael Foreman* (HarperCollins Children's Books 2008) ISBN: 978-0-00-728469-6

London, 1912: three lives become unexpectedly intertwined. Johnny Trotter (a Savoy Hotel bell-boy), Prince Kaspar (a distinguished Russian cat) and Lizziebeth Stanton (a rich young American) find themselves headed across the icy Atlantic Ocean to New York, aboard the new super-liner, the *Titanic*. Morpurgo's writing is excellent, as always, and Foreman's richly coloured illustrations enhance a novel that gives historical background to early 20th-century England and depicts the harrowing final hours of the *Titanic*.

- 3 OCTAVIUS O'MALLEY AND THE MYSTERY OF THE CRIMINAL CATS** *Written by Alan Sunderland and illustrated by Ben Redlich* (HarperCollins Publishers Australia 2008) ISBN: 978-0-207-20050-2

When strange events start happening in the shady alleys of Rodent City, it's up to Octavius O'Malley—self-confessed finest detective in the city—to save the day. Ably assisted by Spencer, his diminutive mouse offsider, Ocko twitches his whiskers into what appears to be a cat conspiracy ... or is it? Another very funny instalment in Alan Sunderland's Octavius O'Malley series, made even funnier by Ben Redlich's hilarious illustrations. The book introduces young readers to the detective genre in a playfully clever way.

- 4 SAMURAI KIDS: WHITE CRANE** *Written by Sandy Fussell and illustrated by Rhian Nest James* (Walker Books Australia 2008) ISBN: 978-192115020-3

Niya Moto yearns to be a samurai, but with only one leg, what chance does he have? None—until the legendary samurai warrior Ki-Yaga, sensei of the Cockroach Ryu, offers him training. Together, Niya and the other Cockroaches—one-armed Mikko, blind Taji, six-fingered albino Kyoko and other unlikely apprentice samurai—train to defeat the fierce Dragon Ryu at the Samurai Trainee Games. Set in feudal Japan, this lively adventure novel shows that the journey is as important as the destination, and strength of character more important than outward appearance.

- 5 THE ROBE OF SKULLS** *Written by Vivian French and illustrated by Ross Collins* (Walker Books 2007) ISBN: 978-0-7445-8361-8

Evil sorceress Lady Lamorna has her heart set on a new robe—but kidnapping, blackmail and more than a little black magic are needed to pay for it! With brave Gracie Gillypot who is running for her life, a gallant prince who doesn't mind getting his hands dirty, two chatty bats, three ancient crones, one woolfishy evil stepsister, and a rather dim-witted troll, you have all the ingredients for a rip-roaring adventure! French avoids clichés, instead playing with the fantasy genre in interesting and unexpected ways. Well-rounded and often very funny characters will delight young readers who enjoy adventures.

- 6 THE MOST STUPENDOUS ATLAS IN THE WHOLE WORLD by the Brainwaves** *Written by Simon Adams and illustrated by Lisa Swerling and Ralph Lazar* (Dorling Kindersley 2008) ISBN: 978-1-40533-196-8

Meet the Brainwaves, diminutive daredevils who lead us on an amazing journey to discover our planet. Explore every continent in seven large fold-out spreads, interspersed with fascinating explanations of such important processes as erosion, climate, the water cycle, the planet's composition, oceans, peoples of the world and more. This fun atlas is jam-packed with information and is a terrific tour of our world. The lively illustrations, combined with numerous bite-size facts, make this an excellent geography text, accessible to students of all reading levels.

- 7 DEEP WATER** *Written by Ann Turnbull* (Walker Books 2007) ISBN: 978-1-4063-0964-5

When Jon and Ryan wag school, their boat capsizes in a remote spot and Ryan breaks his arm. It's up to Jon to go and get help—but does he? Jon is terrified of the trouble he'll get in and convinces himself that someone will soon find Ryan. With locals searching, the police involved, and crucial time passing, hopes of finding Ryan fade. Will Jon do what he knows he must—and will he do it in time? Gripping from start to finish, this is a thrilling and suspenseful story of a young boy's moral dilemma from an acclaimed British children's author.

- 8 RATWHISKERS AND ME** *Written by Lorraine Marwood* (Walker Books Australia 2008) ISBN: 978-1-921150-39-5

On the Victorian goldfields in the mid-1850s, young Lin has been forced to take on a new identity, following the traumatic fire in which his family perished. Sun Song, a Chinese market gardener, is the only person who shows any kindness towards Lin, while Ellery, a man with links to Lin's past, has evil plans. Only friendship and loyalty will help Lin and his dog, Ratwhiskers, survive and make sense of his past. A uniquely Australian verse novel, both powerful and atmospheric, *Ratwhiskers and Me* is historically informative and socially relevant in its explorations of identity and racism.

- 9 THE SECRET GARDEN** *Written by Frances Hodgson Burnett* (Puffin/Penguin UK, 2008) ISBN: 978-0-141321-06-6

Following the death of her parents in India, sour-faced and very spoilt Mary Lennox is sent to live with her reclusive widower uncle in his isolated Yorkshire mansion. With the help of a local boy, Dickon, and her sickly cousin, Colin, Mary learns how to coax an unused garden back to life. As the garden blooms, so do Mary's humanity, Colin's health and, finally, Uncle Archibald's spirit. 2009 marks the 100th anniversary of this children's classic, which offers an historical perspective on late 19th century Britain and celebrates determination, persistence and the power of positive thinking.

- 10 THE GAME** *Written by Diana Wynne Jones* (HarperCollins Children's Books 2008) ISBN: 978-0-00-726713-2

Hayley never knew her parents, and when her grandparents pack her off to Ireland to live with her aunts and cousins, she is introduced to 'the game'. This involves adventures in the forbidden 'mythosphere', where myth and reality meet and where Hayley discovers the truth about her family. Another wonderful book by this prolific and well-loved author, where common sense is as important a tool in survival as magic. Bringing concepts from mythology into modern life, *The Game* is an excellent introduction to many ancient stories and includes a useful section of activities and background information on mythology.