Hooked On NZ Books
He Ao Ano

Encouraging a culture of book reviewing in secondary schools

Raising awareness of New Zealand books

The reviewing workshop

- First, jot down details of a book that you've read recently, to remind yourself about it

- Then in pairs – take it in turns to ask your partner questions about their book. Find out if you'd like to read it too.

Did you ask?

- Who is it by?
- What's it about?
- What's the genre?
- Who are the characters?
- What are they like?
- When is it set and where?
- Who is it aimed at?

The most important part of a review:

Did you like it?

and

WHY?

Why?

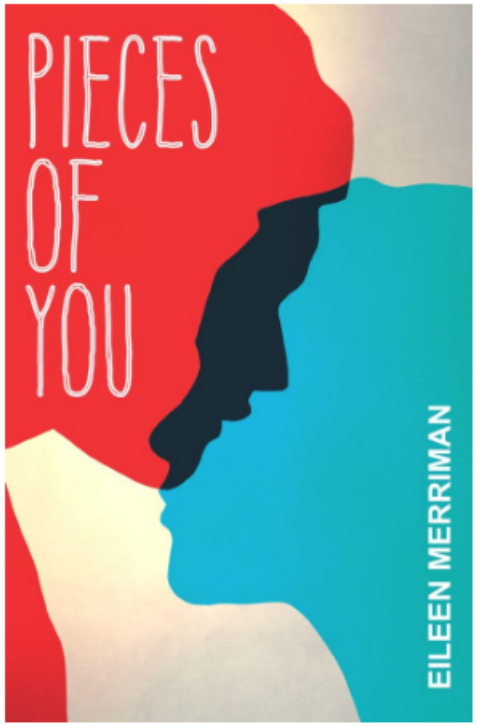
Provide evidence

- I didn't really enjoy it **because** even though the plot was exciting, the dialogue was unbelieveable and clichéd.

Use quotes

Be personal

- This is/is not my usual reading.
- This is/is not as amazing/terrible as their previous book XXX which I loved /loathed – **because**....
- I loved it **because** it made me laugh out loud on the bus – lines such as.....



Welcome to Hooked on NZ Books He Ao Ano!

This is a website for young adult (YA) readers all about reviewing and New Zealand books.

It's where you can become part of a critical conversation.

Find out

- How to write a smart, interesting book review
- How to publish your review on this site
- How to collect reviewers' bookmarks
- How to get a free book to review.

Browse

- Our archive of professional reviews of YA titles
- Reviews written by YA readers of recent and classic New Zealand books

Read

Comment and opinion from YA authors, reviewers and readers: To swear or not to swear? Mandy Hager explains why she won't be deleting Ash's expletives.

Writing Reviews

How to write a review

Ten tips for rocking reviews from David Hill

Ten top reviewing tips from Harry Ricketts

Model review

Creative Commons usage

How to write a review

Good book reviews are for readers, to tell them:

- Title, author, publisher, year
- What this book is about
- How it compares with similar books
- How well it works as a book, and why.

Here's how to write a good review

1. Get started! Get reading, and give yourself plenty of time to read the book, take notes, perhaps read it again, and think, before you begin to write.

Read more

2. Sort your notes into headings and decide which you want to write about.

Read more

3. If you read reviews by experienced reviewers, you will probably find that their opinion of a book is saved for the last couple of paragraphs. The rest of the review will try to give an account, in as fair a way as possible, of what the book is about – its characters, story and setting (both time and place). It may also discuss the author's style and the way the story is structured, as well as comparing the book to others by the same author, or to other books of that genre.

Read more

4. Most books that will be reviewed for *Hooked on NZ Books He Ao Ano* will be novels, and although setting, style and plot are important, characters are at the heart of every story, so try to give more weight to your discussion of character(s) than you do to other elements.

5. You might also like to think about why the author wrote the book. Do you think the author wanted you to learn something from the way characters behaved and interacted? What themes, or messages, or morals emerged during the telling of the story?

6. Don't give the ending away!

7. Now for your opinion. Your opinion or rating of the book is an argument: this is what I think, and this is why, and these are the aspects and parts of the book which led me to think this.

Read more

8. One convention of reviewing is that you refer to what the author has done in the present tense. So you would say "Molly Feathers tells a ripping yarn" rather than "told", or "When Eru Tamiti describes Patu's koro . . ." rather than "described". (Feathers and Tamati are the authors, not characters in their books.) The first time you refer to the author, use their first and last name and, after that, just their surname. When you refer to the book by its title, always put the title in italics.

9. Use short quotations to illustrate your points and to give readers a sense of the author's style, and always integrate the quotation gracefully into your sentence or paragraph. You do not need to give page numbers for quotations.

10. Write your review a few days before the deadline. Then check it carefully the day you send it, making sure the title, author's name and names of the characters are spelled correctly. Get someone else to read it.

11. It's probably a good idea not to read other people's reviews of the book while you are writing yours, unless you feel particularly confident of your opinion. Never, ever plagiarise from another reviewer.

Read more

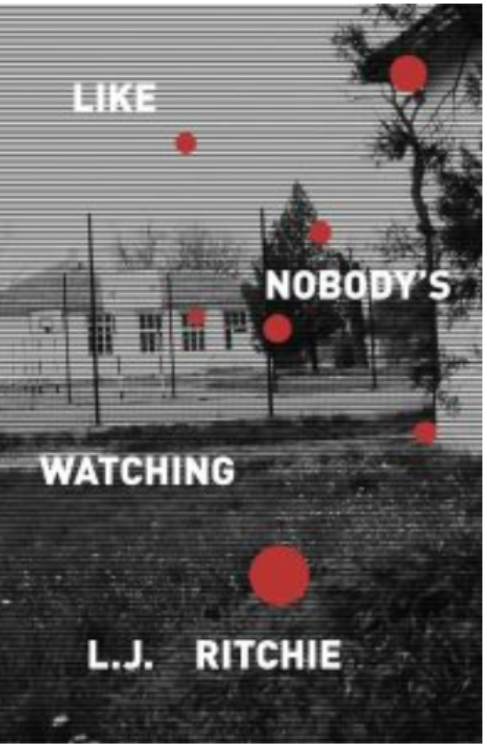
12. There is no one right way to do this and one of the pleasures of reviewing is seeing what other people say about a book you have read. Enjoy yourself – it's not often you get a chance to have your say in a public forum! Write with your personality as well as your intellect.

Read more

Ten tips for rocking reviews from David Hill

David Hill, reviewer and author.

1. All writers "steal". They get ideas from what they see/hear, and use these in their writing. The best way to steal as a book reviewer is to read other reviews. How do they begin and end? How much do they tell you about the content? How do they express their opinion? What sorts of evidence do they provide?
2. Think about the word "REVIEW". It means to look back; to describe something from your past and how you felt about it. So your book review has two aims: (a) to describe what's in the book; (b) to give your opinion of the book's success – or failure.
3. Some people won't know the author. A sentence early on will help: "This first novel by Wellington writer Phyl Phrogphace……"; "Australian cricketer Shayne Sheepshank's autobiography……".
4. And some people won't have read the book. So give them a summary of what it's about, or what happens in it. (But be careful of spoilers.)
5. However, don't spend too long on your summary. As a rough guide, it should be no more than about one-third of your review.
6. If you're reviewing fiction, give your opinion of the PLOT, CHARACTERS, WRITING, SETTING (time and place), THEME (message – if any). How good or bad are they? What features do you like most or least? Readers enjoy knowing what happens in a book, and who's in it, so make sure you mention PLOT and CHARACTERS.
7. For nonfiction, readers will want to know the book's topic; how the author covers it (from meeting to marriage? 2000-2015? cavalry attack to drone attack?); whether details are clear and interesting?; anything new or memorable?; what is the writing like?
8. Your opinions must have EVIDENCE to back them up. If you say the plot is slow or confusing, mention some events or episodes as examples. If you think characters don't seem real, refer to things they do or don't do. If you say the writing is outstanding, quote some of the best lines.
9. Be DEFINITE (if you can) and BALANCED (if you can). If the characters seem real, say "very convincing", not "quite lifelike". If the plot or content is difficult to understand, say "obscure…..confused", not "fairly hard". Definite opinions are more interesting than vague ones. Mention strengths **and** weaknesses. But don't say something is "totally brilliant / utterly hopeless" unless you can provide evidence. If you say "A dead slug knows more about motorbikes than this guy", make sure you can back up your opinion.
10. How to end a review? Maybe say who will like the book most, or how important it is ("The most up-to-date bio of Rihanna I've read"), or the effect it had on you ("I used up a box of tissues."; "I wanted to vomit"), or a look forward ("I can't wait for her next fantasy"), or any tricks you've seen other reviewers use.



Find a review

Search our archive of reviews of NZ young adult books by name, title or keyword:

Search

Or browse our archive of reviews of NZ young adult books by author's surname:

A-C, D-F, G-I, J-L, M-O, P-R, S-U, V-W, X-Z

You can search the archive of reviews of general NZ fiction and nonfiction on the *New Zealand Books Pukapuka Aotearoa* website.

Search *NZ Books Pukapuka Aotearoa*

New Zealand Review of books
Pukapuka Aotearoa
A QUARTERLY

Blog Archives

Well packaged history, Anna Mackenzie

Posted on **August 26, 2019** by **NZ Books**

Amundsen's Way: The Race To The South Pole Joanna Grochowicz Allen and Unwin, $19.00, ISBN 9781760637668 The Telegram Philippa Werry Pipi Press, $23.00, ISBN 9780473462826 Amundsen's Way delivers exactly what it promises on the cover: the story of Norwegian Roald…

Tagged with: **Allen and Unwin**, **Anna Mackenzie**, **Issue 127**, **Joanna Grochowicz**, **Philippa Werry**, **Pipi Press**, **Spring 2019**
Posted in **Children**, **History**, **Non-fiction**

Doors and mirrors, Alex Mitcalfe Wilson

Posted on **August 26, 2019** by **NZ Books**

Search the archive

children of the corn

Recent issues: subscriber-only access

Issue 127 Spring 2019
Issue 126 Winter 2019
Issue 125 Autumn 2019
Issue 124 Summer 2018

Subscribe to NZ Books to access the issues above

Browse the Children category

Doors and mirrors, Alex Mitcalfe Wilson

Well packaged history, Anna Mackenzie

Boys' own journey, Chris Szekely

A child's-eye view, Anna Mackenzie

Giving them what they want, Linda Burgess

Girls galloping horses: unstable identities, Amy Brown

Back in the day, Gavin McLean

Fighting a good fight, Tatjana Schaefer

Cliquety-clique? David Hill

Truths both bald and stretched, Eirlys Hunter

From a trio of veterans, Anna Mackenzie

Scaring them silly, Linda Burgess

Creating taonga, Trevor Agnew

Drawing pictures in the mind, Barbara Else

Forward to the 1950s, Trevor Agnew

Foreign countries, Kathryn Walls

History, myth and jollity, Linda Burgess

History lessons, James Norcliffe

Hurtling along, armed with a map, Eirlys Hunter

Reading, writing and arithmetic, Barbara Else

See more

Over to you . . .

Would you like to respond to anything you've read here?

Is there an NZ author you'd like to interview?

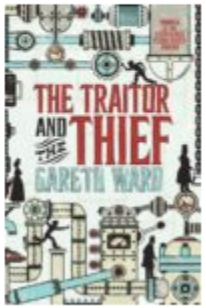
An issue you'd like to raise?

Send a proposal to editor@hookedonbooks.org.nz, telling us your idea, who you'd like to talk to and what you want to ask them, and we'll try to set it up for you.

Comment, opinion, advice, discussion

NEW ZEALAND BOOK COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera Pukapuka o Aotearoa

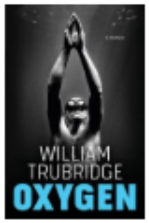
Why should we #ReadNZ?



Gareth Ward opens up to Denika Mead

Featured Review

Breath-taking, Feya Durkin



Oxygen
William Trubridge
HarperCollins
2017

Oxygen by William Trubridge is a breath-taking story about one man's quest to push his body and mind to the absolute limits.

Trubridge is a professional New Zealand freediver, and *Oxygen* tells the story of his early days, his discovery of freediving, his ride to success, and his quest to dive 100 metres below the surface of the ocean, equipped with nothing but a single breath (and a really tight wetsuit).

Read the review

Search our reviews archive

Submit your own review

Scroll down to see reviews submitted by YA readers:

Screens vs sunshine, Denika Mead

Dawn of the Zombie Apocalypse
Lee Murray
IFWG Publishing
2019

Dawn of the Zombie Apocalypse by multi-award-winning New Zealand author, Lee Murray, is a story about a 12-year-old boy called Seb who downloads a game on the school network. This decision sets off a zombie apocalypse. The apocalypse spreads through Bridgetown, causing an insatiable need to stay in sight of a screen in those infected.

With the town glued to their phones, it's up to Seb and his two friends, Darren and Talia, to figure out a way to reverse the effects of the apocalypse and save everyone. They have a planning session, trying to find a solution which is really enjoyable and funny: "'We could go to Greenland,' I suggested.

Read more

Modern love, Hannah Marshall

Invisibly Breathing
Eileen Merriman
Penguin Random House
2019

Featured Review

Breath-taking. Feya Durkin

Oxygen
William Trubridge
HarperCollins
2017

Oxygen by William Trubridge is a breath-taking story about one man's quest to push his body and mind to the absolute limits.

Trubridge is a professional New Zealand freediver, and *Oxygen* tells the story of his early days, his discovery of freediving, his ride to success, and his quest to dive 100 metres below the surface of the ocean, equipped with nothing but a single breath (and a really tight wetsuit).

Read the review

Search our reviews archive

Submit your own review

Scroll down to see reviews submitted by YA readers:

Screens vs sunshine, Denika Mead

Dawn of the Zombie Apocalypse
Lee Murray
IFWG Publishing
2019

Dawn of the Zombie Apocalypse by multi-award-winning New Zealand author, Lee Murray, is a story about a 12-year-old boy called Seb who downloads a game on the school network. This decision sets off a zombie apocalypse. The apocalypse spreads through Bridgetown, causing an insatiable need to stay in sight of a screen in those infected.

With the town glued to their phones, it's up to Seb and his two friends, Darren and Talia, to figure out a way to reverse the effects of the apocalypse and save everyone. They have a planning session, trying to find a solution which is really enjoyable and funny: "'We could go to Greenland,' I suggested.

Read more

Modern love, Hannah Marshall

Invisibly Breathing
Eileen Merriman
Penguin Random House
2019

Invisibly Breathing is Eileen Merriman's third novel, and it offers more than your typical romance. Bullying, homophobia and being an outsider – Merriman tackles plenty of tough topics in this moving and delicate novel.

After the success of Merriman's previous two novels, *Pieces of You* and *Catch Me when You Fall*, I had high expectations for this book, and *Invisibly Breathing* certainly doesn't fail to live up to the standards of Merriman's previous works. At its heart, *Invisibly Breathing* is a typical YA romance, but offers more than your average love story.

Read more

Fantasy, romance and a little bit odd, Hannah Marshall

The Rift
Rachael Craw
Walker Books
2018

Zombie deer, dimensional rifts and a race to save an island from disaster – welcome to the world of *The Rift*, the newest offering from YA author Rachael Craw.

The Rift takes readers on an epic journey to Black Water Island, where Rangers guard the sacred Old Herd against the Rift, a mysterious natural phenomenon that poses a significant danger to the island and its inhabitants. Cal West is an apprentice Ranger, whose mission to save the island is interrupted by the return of former friend Meg Archer; both share a dark past.

Read more

Conflict, mistrust, a strong brotherly bond and bikes!, Denika Mead

Hucking Cody
Aaron Topp
Mary Egan Publishing
2015

Hucking Cody is a young-adult novel by Aaron Topp, set in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. *Hucking Cody* tells the story of a teenage boy named Cody who is obsessed with mountain biking and is struggling to prove himself to his older brother Zane. Throughout the novel, the relationship between the two brothers fluctuates between physical fighting, lots of tension, conflicts, mistrust and a strong brotherly bond.

This is not a fantasy novel, it is strongly based in reality and has no dragons or wizards in any form. The novel is written in first person with a colloquial air.

Read more

Across generations, Sophie Mance

Levi's War
Julie Thomas
HarperCollins
2018

Levi's War is a poignant, meticulously researched novel by Julie Thomas. Although part of the Horowitz Chronicles, it can be read as a stand-alone book, provided the reader is prepared to keep track of a tangled web of characters spanning three generations.

The book opens in London in 2017, in a backroom of the national archives, where, alongside high ranking military officials responsible for curating a memorial exhibit, we're introduced to Levi Horowitz – more specifically, to a recording of Levi from 1945. On screen, he introduces himself: "my real name is Levi Horowitz and this is the story of my war.

Read more

Language and culture, Amelia Mance

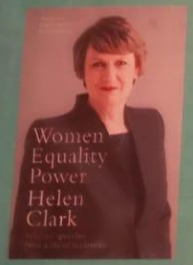
In the Dark Spaces
Cally Black
Hardie Grant Egmont
2017

At first, Cally Black's debut novel *In the Dark Spaces* seems just like any YA sci-fi/dystopian novel; in a universe where resources are scarce, 14-year-old Tamara barely manages to survive as a stowaway on the *Starweaver Layla*, the spaceship where her aunt works. Tamara spends her days looking after her toddler cousin, Tamiki, and occasionally, in true sci-fi style, creeping through the vents to steal extra food. But, despite the stereotypical opening, Black's imagination soon transports the reader on a thrilling journey through space. Beautifully written, Black's rich description, combined with her creativity, puts *In the Dark Spaces* into a league of its own.

Read more

Wizards, dragons, castles and pet tuataras! Denika Mead

Quest
A J Ponder
Phantom Feather Press
2018



New Zealand Review of books

Pukapuka Aotearoa

A QUARTERLY

Stephanie Johnson
looks for errors in Carl Shuker's new novel

Victor Rodger
finds a Southern man on a *Southern Stage*

Megan Dunn
assays a book of new essays

David Hill
chillaxes with the young 'uns

plus screens, speeches, suffrage and the sea

$10.50 INC GST.

9 771170 910307 >

www.nzbooks.org.nz

Volume 29
Number 2
Issue 126
Winter 2019

YA reviewer

Modern love

Hannah Marshall

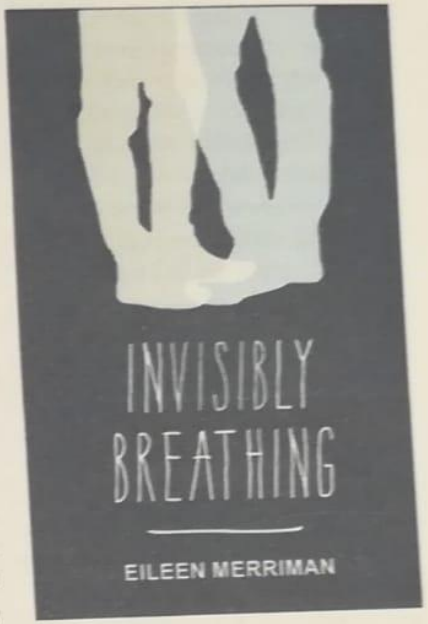
Invisibly Breathing
Eileen Merriman
Penguin Random House, $20.00,
ISBN 9780143772859

Merriman's writing is brave and fierce when it comes to dealing with difficult ideas in our society.

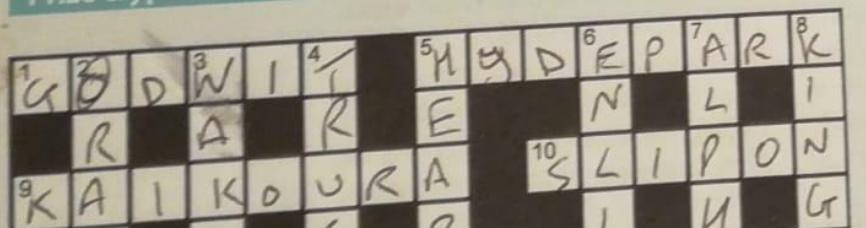
Invisibly Breathing is Eileen Merriman's third novel, and it offers more than your typical romance. Bullying, homophobia and being an outsider – Merriman tackles plenty of tough topics in this moving and delicate novel.

After the success of Merriman's previous two novels, *Pieces of You* and *Catch Me when You Fall*, I had high expectations for this book, and *Invisibly Breathing* certainly doesn't fail to live up to the standards of Merriman's previous works. At its heart, *Invisibly Breathing* is a typical YA romance, but offers more than your average love story. Not least, *Invisibly Breathing* is centred around the relationship between Felix Catalan and Bailey Hunter, and its LGBT representation is welcome in a world where the inclusion of such groups in literature is long overdue. Thus, Merriman's refreshing and modern take on romance is exactly where YA literature needs to be in 2019.

Combine modern romance with topics such as bullying and belonging, add in a distinct New Zealand flavour, and this book is a winner. Set in a familiar Wellington and told from the points of view of both Bailey and Felix, Merriman creates authentic and distinct character voices who narrate the story with a strong YA voice. *Invisibly*



Prize cryptic crossword – Puzzle 54 by Brent Southgate



21 Weapon found in North Island port, not new but registered (6)
23 Rugby manoeuvre – kick out from pack (8)
24 Watering pig in error? Quite the reverse (6)
25 Carbon polluter pockets billion. (6)
22 What to call crazy Madeleine when not crazy (6)

Send completed crosswords (photocopies are acceptable) to *New Zealand Review of Books*

Why Y?

David Hill

Ursa
Tina Shaw
Walker Books, $23.00,
ISBN 9781760651244

Invisibly Breathing
Eileen Merriman
Penguin Random House, $20.00,
ISBN 9780143772859

Flight of the Fantail
Steph Matuku
Huia, $30.00, ISBN 9781775503521

An unspecified number of years back at a Going West Festival, I was on a panel talking about aspects of YA fiction. At question time, a firm voice from the floor asked why we needed the YA category, anyway? Wasn't it maybe a bit of a fad, a publishers' ploy to sell more titles? We'd got along for years without it, so why invent it now?

I mumbled something beginning with "Aw..." Then Bernard Beckett smiled his mandarin smile, and replied, "But, X, you spent years taking photos – " (yes, X was a photographer, and a damn good one) "– without motor drives or digital cameras. Wouldn't you say they've extended your options, allowed a new focus?"

Nods and grins from audience, including a gracious one from X. I hate it when younger authors say things so much better than me.

Beckett was, and still is, right. The establishment of YA fiction and non-fiction has allowed writers to develop narratives, topics, characters, relationships, language, which had previously sprawled unsatisfactorily between children's and adult books. It's encouraged new forms of dialogue, social exploration, structure and tone. It's offered fresh, relevant material.

And it's acknowledged the singular, stressful role that adolescence and its fringes represent today: a period of huge energy, but limited power; of protean identity; tumultuous internal and external pressures; a world which seems to change faster for them than for any other group. Education, health, recreation, merchandising, justice and law all recognise that teenagers are a legitimate sub-group. The time was long overdue for literature to accept the appropriateness of a YA category.

It remains an edgy area. Write for any part of the 13-18-year-old spectrum and you brace yourself for moral, as well as literary, censure. It hardly ever comes from the target audience, though some of them have told me that my novel was "mostly okay, and they skipped the boring bits". It's adults who complain about perceived moral turpitude in YA books. Of course, they want to keep adolescents safe: to protect them from exploitation and corruption. Trouble is, protection is often a first step towards repression.

YA is an elusive genre to define. Do you categorise it by plot, people, prose, audience (the last ranges from able pre-teens to less confident older readers)? The borders and characteristics shift all the time; nothing wrong with that.

These three novels all nudge those borders in various ways.

"The YA successor to *The Book Thief*, *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451*" blares the blurb for Tina Shaw's new narrative of dysfunction and discord. I'd prefer to let this accomplished author's book stand on its own.

It's a familiar enough trope. A city in an unspecified time and place, with a marginally steam-punk technology of airships and grimy factories. A privileged ruling group of Travesters, and a slave class of Cerels who are treated like ferals and sub-humans. A blond, personable tyrant called The Director, with his secret police, The Black Marks. A gutsy teenage protagonist named Leho from the tenements. Add subversion, a bit of puppy romance, and shake. It works well.

We're off to a galloping start, with Leho and his edgy mate Bit chucking incendiary devices at a Black Marks book-burning ceremony, before escaping through tunnels and sewers, back to Nanna and their ghetto. The Cerel underworld is instantly before us, and it's a strong spine in the narrative, rich with stories, tradition, ritual and a sense of community, even as its people are sapped by hunger, tuberculosis, arbitrary arrest, work camps, exile, rape (Leho's sister is a victim) and "extinction".

You'll think of Nazi Germany – there's even a slogan, "Work Makes You Free" – Stalin's Russia, Orwellian fiction. You'll have grounds for thinking of settings even closer to home. But Shaw's city of Ursa stands on its own booted or shabbily soled feet, and becomes an increasingly potent presence in the story.

Moody older brother Jozzy is part of a resistance movement which, in an unexpected but inventive development, sees Leho wangle himself an espionage role in a high-class vege garden. His mother, blinded in an earlier uprising, is a Cerel icon. When he saves the cherished pet dog of a Travester girl, it's a sweet meet which brings him a sweetmeat, plus a new plot thread of hand-holding and hope. (You may occasionally wish to kick the dog.) But things are never going to be easy, as a rather perfunctory, but realistically painful, regime change looms.

Travesters, and especially their Black Marks, do sometimes edge towards being comic book baddies. But it's a story in which adult characters are generally given significance and dignity, which doesn't always happen in YA fiction. There's an agreeable glitter of mischief between the generations, with jokes, winks, affectionate joshings.

Leho carries the plot, and he's a success: fierce, frightened, fallible. Shaw gets his language and feelings pretty much spot on. He's the pivot of her crafted, vivid novel. It's one which stays mainly within the dystopian future conventions, but when they're managed with this degree of skill, there's nothing wrong with that, either.

Eileen Merriman's powerful third novel has an orthodox quality, too, though in her case it's the orthodoxy of super-real, super-current fiction. Weird bright boy gets picked on at high school. Second weird bright boy arrives. They form a mutually protective alliance. Adults and authorities bumble and bash and betray. There's a splintering marriage, a housing, failed father, uncomprehending teachers. You sometimes hear the sound of boxes being ticked.

But Merriman transforms the potentially clichéd into the immediate and specific. On her very first page (in her very first paragraph, actually), we find that Felix is a devotee of Catalan numbers, safe primes and Mersenne numbers. Look them up; I had to. He wears the headphones, has the dyed and spiked hair. He can't understand small talk, and he obsessively counts the thousand steps between home and school. How distinctive can you get?

He also has an imagination that slips the surly bonds of earth – read John Magee's lovely poem if you don't know it – and that imagination goes into hyperdrive when Bailey arrives in his physics class. Bailey sometimes has bruises or black eyes. He also has a stutter. Another echo of ticked boxes.

They won't reduce the story's appeal to its audience. Alternating between the two boys' voices, *Invisibly Breathing* outlines a sympathy that deepens into friendship, then affection, then mutual attraction. It deftly renders the wonder and fear of Felix and Bailey as they joyously, fearfully, comprehend the trajectory they're on.

Merriman's previous two novels deserved their approving reviews and short-listings. This one heaves with incident: party, detention, substance misuse, blind and nearly dumb dates, confidings and confrontings. Catastrophes loom. There's a climactic sequence with flight, clifftop arrest, medical emergency including beeping monitors, declarations of love, a very adroit ending. No reader is going to feel short-changed.

It's a clever book. Ingenious chapter headings, smart sentences, inventive glides of plot and relationships. It's very contemporary, veined with phones and txts and Twitter and *Grand Auto Theft V*. There's a stadium-sized cast of kids, and Merriman gets their blitheness, erratic fuses, invulnerability-cum-fragility spot-on. Hormones rage. Language smacks. You'll want the very best for the two protagonists, you may also want to make them stand in the corner sometimes. I'll grumble about some of the adult caricatures. A garlic-breathed, cheaply sarcastic teacher? Another like a doughty St Bernard? That's a bit too dismissive and easy.

Eileen Merriman is a consultant haemotologist. Her profession helps the plot. It also helps give me a chance to declare that her book is bloody good.

Taranaki author (yay!) Steph Matuku's first YA novel also late bells along. A Kotuku High School class trip, a bus driver's seizure, a crash into a ravine, multiple fractures and fatalities – and all in the first four pages.

There are just seven survivors. Joltingly soon, there are just six. Phones won't work, food is pretty well non-existent, though Devin proves pretty good with an improvised eel spear. And (sometimes a bit hard to follow) a recent earthquake has shifted mineral plates, causing interference with signals.

The five teenagers are a promisingly disparate lot: geeky or predatory or gauche, all authentically incomplete and raw. One has a heart issue, another has a homicide issue. Quick inserts reveal their back stories: solo or abusive parent; gender orientation dilemmas; school packs and school persecutions. Loyalties and relationships form, along with an effective set of antagonisms. The plot glitters with conflicts and confrontations.

There's certainly plenty for them to confront: giant wetas, eerie tremors in the earth, a rising river, hallucinations, reliance on a manicure set to stitch up a nasty gash, plus psychopathic tendencies inside their group and threatening forces outside it. Some of them grow in stature, others dwindle. There's discord, damage, a sense of something inimical brooding nearby. What does a repeated flash of blue signify? And how about the spaceship protruding from a landslip? No spoiler there, I swear.

Back in town, meanwhile, ambivalent big business is behaving ... ambivalently. Others are starting a rescue effort, but not very effectively. Once again, adults tend to be ineffectual or nasty. Okay, it represents an adolescent viewpoint realistically enough, but it diminishes those characters.

Anyway, events hurtle onwards. Strange men appear, along with strange horses. The spaceship appears further (still no spoiler). There are multiple explosions and graphic shocks. Graphic, but not gratuitous; they're nearly always integrated into the plot. The good – and Matuku ensures her kids are a textured mixture of selfless and selfish – don't all end happily, which acknowledges the resilience of YA readers.

Matuku is a hard-working writer, and it shows sometimes. Her style intermittently edges towards the purple, a fair few adjectives and adverbs need lopping. But her evocation of Lord of the Flies darknesses within human hearts, her balancing of horrors and subversive humour, adolescent surfaces and mythical deeps, plus the ways her young protagonists combine bitchiness with bravery, are just some of the successes in this handsome Huia publication.

So here are three local practitioners with books that have already met with approving nods from readers and the odd admiring sigh of envy from other writers. Be nice to feel that each represents another small step for humankind, towards building up a genre that no longer needs to justify its existence.

David Hill's *Dinosaur Hunter: The Joan Wiffen Story*, illustrated by Phoebe Morris, will be published by Penguin Random House in August.

Eileen Merriman is a consultant haemotologist. Her profession helps the plot. It also helps give me a chance to declare that her book is bloody good.

Writing Reviews

How to write a review

Ten tips for rocking reviews from David Hill

Ten top reviewing tips from Harry Ricketts

Model review

Creative Commons usage

Collect bookmarks

Become a frequent reviewer.

Reviewers who have a second review published will have their names marked like this:

More reviews, more bookmarks!

Submit a review

To submit a review, complete the checklist below, then either write or paste into the text box below. More information on writing reviews and Creative Commons are to the left of this page.

* indicates required field

Name: *

Email:*

I have read the guidelines for reviewers on How to write a review. *

I have included a byline, using my full name, age and town/city where I live. *

I have included the bibliographic details of the book I am reviewing: title, author, publisher, year of publication. *

My review is between approximately 500-1000 words. *

I agree to license my work under a Creative Commons 3.0 New Zealand Attribution Licence.*

Enter your review here, or attach it below:

YA books available for review

Child Power	Raewyn Dawson (YA/ adult)
Shooting Stars	Brian Falkner
Cassie Clark Outlaw	Brian Faulkner
1918 Broken Poppies	Des Hunt
Winter of Fire	Sherryl Jordan
Invisibly Breathing	Eileen Merriman
Dragon Hero	Eileen Mueller
Slice of Heaven	Des O'Leary
Quest	AJ Ponder
Prophecy	AJ Ponder
Like Nobody's Watching	LJ Ritchie
Sticking with Pigs	Mary-Anne Scott
Make a Hard Fist	Tina Shaw
Ursa	Tina Shaw
Cuz	Liz van der Laarse
The Clockill & the Thief	Gareth Ward
Rain Fall	Ella West
Wedlock	Denis Wright
The Covenant Keeper	Lani Wendt Young
When Water Burns	Lani Wendt Young
I am Daniel Tahi	Lani Wendt Young
The Bone Bearer	Lani Wendt Young

Please encouage your students to become reviewers for us

- They can review any NZ book, Fiction or Non-Fiction, Children's, YA, general audience or poetry
- If they contact me: editor@hookedonbooks.org.nz
  I will send them the list of books I currently have available and will post their choice out to them.
- Reviews should be at least 500 words long
- They should be submitted through the website and the relevant boxes ticked