

# Reads4Teens

## The Last Taboo

Written by Bali Rai  
Corgi £5.99  
ISBN: 0 385 60920 5

Girl meets boy, girl falls in love with boy – so far, so good. But Simran is Asian, and many of her family condemn her relationship with Tyrone because he is black – the last taboo of the title. Rai writes with ease in the language used by teenagers (and perhaps shocking to others) of the difficulties faced by Simran and Tyrone as their relationship begins to threaten family ties and friendships, leading to a dramatic climax. Bali Rai deals with important and controversial issues not because it is fashionable to do so, but because he is compelled to. Long may he continue!



Jean Allen

plight of Yuri, condemned to a life on the run after a few careless words spoken against the system. He is eventually caught and arrested and transported along a 'road of bones', to a bleak wilderness, reminiscent of the Siberian prison camps. What makes the book so powerful is that although we think we know the actual historical and geographical locations, the author has reinvented them and created her own satire on one of the bleakest episodes in human existence. Yuri escapes from his enforced imprisonment in the wilderness, only to find himself in an even more dangerous position. But can the young man, once so bitterly critical of the ruthless totalitarian regime which has stripped him of his freedom, stand firm against the Glorious Lie, so despised by his grandmother?

Richard Monte

murdered – in the bleak and barren countryside around Dartmoor. Can he and his brother Cole find some answers? Their journey to the desolate area where she was killed takes them into a world of bullying and corruption. They cannot understand why Rachel's friend, Abbie, seems unable to speak openly to them about exactly what happened on the night of the murder. What is being hidden from them? Why are they being watched and finally shunned? No action on their part will bring Rachel back to life but the brothers' experiences, as they work together to find the murderer, have a profound effect on their own relationship. Disturbing in places this highly accomplished, atmospheric writing will arouse strong feelings and keep the reader totally involved and guessing until the last piece of the jigsaw falls into place.

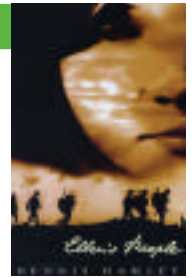
Marianne Adey

## Ellen's People

Written by Dennis Hamley  
Walker Books £6.99  
ISBN: 1 84428 219 8

World War 1 as seen through the eyes of Ellen, a young country girl. Her safe, narrow world is thrown into chaos by the horrors of the war and the impact on their family when her brother, Jack, returns home having lost a leg. The initially destructive effect is powerfully shown and so, perversely, are the opportunities offered to young women. The old order changeth and nothing will ever seem as quiet, or as safe, or as dull again. And the role of women changed for good. A straightforwardly told story with strong and memorable characters offering a refreshingly different perspective.

Enid Stephenson



## A Respectable Girl

Written by Fleur Beale  
Simon and Schuster £5.99  
ISBN: 1 416 91099 9



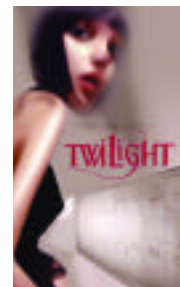
New Zealand, in the middle of the nineteenth century, is a country living ill-at-ease with the Maori inhabitants. This book gives terrific insight into life in a frontier town and has a truly

courageous heroine, Hannah Carstairs. Her father is a somewhat feckless drinker, her stepmother a Maori (female Maoris can marry white settlers but Maori men cannot marry white women). Tensions between the white settlers and the Maori communities increase and both her twin brother and step brother, Arama, get swept up in the fight. At the same time Hannah's world becomes even more unstable with disturbing hints about her dead mother's past. The twins flee New Zealand to England where they confront the past. There are few books about Europeans settling in such countries as New Zealand and this fine novel illuminates a past many are only too happy to ignore.

Enid Stephenson

## Twilight

Written by Stephenie Meyer  
Atom £8.99  
ISBN: 1 904233 64 3



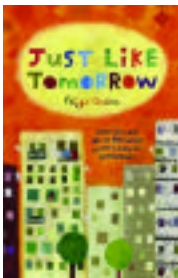
Bella Swann is seventeen and lives with her mum. She now has a new partner so Bella decides to go and spend some time with her

dad in the dull, anonymous town of Forks. She dreads going there and recalls its tediousness and constant rain from long-ago summer visits. However all changes when she makes friends with the Cullen family there and realises they have a secret which ultimately threatens her life. Marketed for teenagers this outstanding story would also appeal to an adult readership. Bella and Edward are well rounded characters who form the focus of the love story which is the main plot line. Stephenie Meyer's debut novel keeps up the quality throughout and not a paragraph is wasted. Highly recommended.

Anna Harris

## Just Like Tomorrow

Written by Faiza Guène  
Translated by Sarah Adams  
Random House Definitions  
£5.99 ISBN: 1 862 30158 1



The sink estates on the outskirts of Paris are often where immigrants end up with dead-end jobs, (or no jobs), run-down flats, gangs of roaming youths and a veneer of help from social services. Faiza grew up in such a place, though perhaps one with more imaginative support as she took part in a local community project that encouraged young people in the flats to write film scripts. Doria is fifteen and fed up. Her father has returned to Morocco and remarried. Her mother is illiterate and stuck in a repetitive job with little hope of escape. School is not great and her options seem limited. Written in sparkling form in the first person this feels like a real account of life. Doria has a strong sense of the absurd, a wry humour and is a totally twenty-first century, feisty heroine. A hit in France and deserves to be so here.

Enid Stephenson

## The Road of Bones

Written by Anne Fine  
Doubleday £10.99  
ISBN: 0 385 61063 7



*The Road of Bones* is one of Anne Fine's most rewarding books. An Orwellian nightmare set in a land which resembles Stalinistic Russia, it follows the

## The Road of the Dead

Written by Kevin Brooks  
The Chicken House £8.99  
ISBN: 1 904442 75 7



Taut, gritty, uncompromising yet curiously tender is Kevin Brooks' voice here. One terrible night Ruben becomes aware that his sister is dead – senselessly

## Exchange

Written by Paul Magrs  
Simon & Schuster £9.99  
ISBN: 1 416 91662 8

Simon, an introverted teenager whose parents are killed in an accident, goes to live with his ill-matched grandparents. He and his grandmother read voraciously in order to escape from the difficulties and disappointments of everyday life, much to his grandfather's disapproval. One day they stumble across a mysterious shop - the Great Big Book Exchange, where the temperamental plastic-armed owner and his female Goth assistant offer them an escape from their humdrum lives. A well crafted book with a rich cast of believable, if slightly strange, characters.



Jean Allen

## Cyrano

from the play by Edmund Rostand  
retold by Geraldine McCaughrean  
Oxford University Press £8.99  
ISBN: 0 19 272603 X



A new version of the eighteenth century French classic story about the large-nosed, ugly man who was immortalised in the Gerard Depardieu film in 2000, as well as other adaptations, both in book and film form. This latest version again tells of Cyrano's hopeless love

affair with his cousin Roxanne and how he is persuaded to write love letters to his beloved in the name of another man. Geraldine McCaughrean has recaptured Rostand's lyrical words in this small gem with its unusual format, elegant typeface and captivating jacket. Not necessarily intended as a book for young people - it will be enjoyed by mature readers who will appreciate both the heartbreaking tale and the wonderful language.

Valerie Bierman

## The Hand of the Devil

Written by Dean Vincent Carter  
Bodley Head £10.99  
ISBN: 0 370 32883 3

Ashley Reeves is a journalist who receives a letter detailing the existence of a very rare insect along with an invitation to view it. Ashley's journalistic and inquisitive nature takes him to the remote island where the author of the letter and invitation lives alone. Initially he appears as an eccentric but interesting old man who delights in talking about his passion for



insects. However, when Ashley becomes stranded on the island the old man's past rears secrets that are both shocking and horrifying. And as his tale unfolds the truth concerning the island places Ashley in grave danger. This page-turning book holds the reader's attention to the very end, keeping them on the edge of their seats with the tense and chilling writing. Its twists and turns are well executed and the fast pace never falters.

Anna Harris

## The Story of My Life

Written by Anne Cassidy  
Scholastic £12.99  
ISBN: 0 439 95474 6



The story of a sixteen year old whose life gets away from him. He seduces his brother's girlfriend and drifts along with an older man whom he knows has killed. He seems to be carried on a river of bleakness, accepting the violence and yet hating himself for what is

happening. The question is whether, in the last analysis, he will help the killer to trap his next victim. A dark thriller written with grim psychological insight.

Pat Thomson

## The China Garden

Written by Liz Berry  
Gallery 41 Books £10.99  
ISBN: 0 9548 8645 3

This book has all the qualities you could look for in a good read - a family, mystery, secrets and whispers, a haunting, hidden garden, suspense, romance and legend. It is also intertwined with old English customs and traditions involving standing stones, mazes and ancient houses hiding



secrets. Clare's mother startles her with the news that she has a new job in a Somerset village and goes on to suggest that Clare stays with friends in London until she goes to university. The more Clare realises that her mother does not wish her to join her the more determined Clare becomes to go with her to Ravensmere. When they arrive Clare feels she belongs and that everyone seems to know her. Mother remains tight-lipped about the many strange happenings but as Clare begins to unravel the mysteries she is challenged in many ways - most of all by the compelling young man in black motorbike leathers. Completely enthralling and beautifully narrated, the ending comes all too soon and is as unexpected as it is exciting.

Louise Stothard

## To Save My Father's Soul

Written by Michael William Molden  
Melrose Books £16.99  
ISBN: 0 9548480 4 7



George only ever met his father a few times but he was always a significant part of the life he shared with his mother. When he dies, George determines to find out more regarding his father's continual mysterious absence. However, in unearthing his father's true identity,

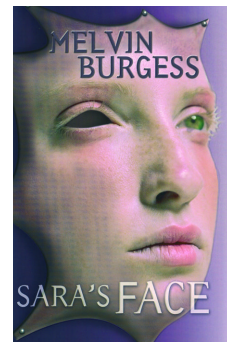
George embarks on a journey of discovery that is both physical and spiritual. His quest: to save his father's very soul beyond his death. This is a challenging read and I would not recommend the book to under sixteens as some of the imagery is powerfully graphic. However, the insight that George's spiritual journey provides is both fascinating and designed to raise questions. His voyage takes us to spheres of meditation and exploration of astral planes. We meet angels and demons and confront the dark characteristics of humanity. The writing is engaging although becomes a little overly descriptive at times but would appeal to readers who have ever questioned their own spiritual destiny.

Anna Harris

## Sara's Face

Written by Melvin Burgess  
Andersen Press £9.99  
ISBN: 1 84270 180 0

The latest novel from an author renowned for dealing effectively with complex and controversial issues. This appears to have been inspired by the world's first face transplant in France. It is chillingly intense and focuses on Sara Carter, a beautiful young singer who is haunted



by a desire to be physically perfect. She becomes the protegee of Jonathan Heat, a celebrity whose face - like Michael Jackson's - has been 'nipped and tucked' repeatedly by plastic surgeons. The results are so hideous that he is obliged to wear a mask all the time. Sara also has a warped personality and becomes obsessed that he is planning to steal her face for himself. Despite the horror and dread induced by the daring narrative young adults will find it hard to put the book down.

Jenny Blanch