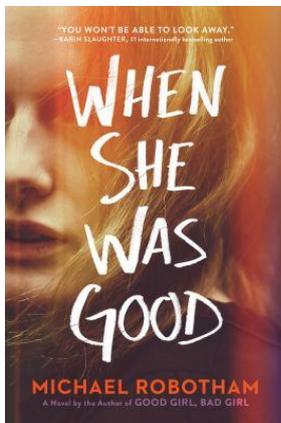


When she was good by Michael Robotham (Cyrus Haven bk 2)

Reviewed by Skye



Michael Robotham delivers another tightly paced, character driven thriller with *When She Was Good*, the follow up to the hugely successful *Good Girl Bad Girl*. To get the most out of this book, you really need to have read the first in the series.

In *Good Girl Bad Girl*, we meet Forensic Psychologist Cyrus Haven and Evie Cormac or 'Angel Face'. The subject matter in this series is disturbing, Evie has suffered horrific abuse and remains under threat from her abusers. Cyrus' brother Elias murdered their family and now lives in a secure psychiatric facility.

When She Was Good opens with Cyrus searching for further clues about Evie's past. Despite warnings that this will bring him into danger, Cyrus continues his search for answers in the hope that the truth will set Evie free.

The murder of a retired police detective (specialising in child abuse convictions) who had been reviewing the conviction of paedophile Eugene Green and possible links to the 'Angel Face' case sends Cyrus deeper into the dark world of child trafficking and abuse.

As Evie's past is being revealed, Cyrus increasingly becomes a target of powerful forces determined to keep their secrets from being revealed.

Michael Robotham is an author at the top of his game. Short, punchy chapters alternate between Cyrus and Evie to make this a fast paced and engaging read.

Interested in this title? Check out the library [catalogue](#).

The last migration by Charlotte McConaghy

Reviewed by Donna



The Last Migration is the story of Irish-Australian Franny Stone who follows the last flock of arctic terns from the Arctic to Antarctica – on what will be their final migration.

There are many themes to this brilliant novel – high-seas adventure and the enigmatic captain Ennis, with shades of Captain Ahab, ecological catastrophe and the relationships between humans, nature and freedom, unconditional romance and the need to be who you really are.

The novel sways between the past and present as we unpick the tragedies of Franny's life – from rural Ireland and Australia, the violence, the love and the fears. It is love and the will for survival that drive the novel and the glimmer of hope that maybe it is not too late to change our world.

Charlotte McConaghy's aim in writing is to touch the reader – to evoke an emotional response. This novel is achingly beautiful – there were times, particularly in the final third of the book, that I had to stop and take a breath. It is not a lengthy novel but the epic nature and power of the story and writing has the feel of a much weightier novel. Days later and I'm still on that boat. Highly recommended and this is a big call, but...

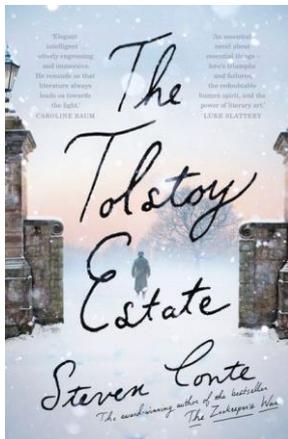
This is the best thing I have read this year.

Phew!

Interested in this title? Check out the library [catalogue](#).

The Tolstoy Estate by Steven Conte

Reviewed by Pat



From the winner of the inaugural Prime Minister's Literary Award, Steven Conte, comes a powerful, densely rich and deeply affecting novel of love, war and literature.

In the first year of the doomed German invasion of Russia in WWII, a German military doctor, Paul Bauer, is assigned to establish a field hospital at Yasnaya Polyana - the former grand estate of Count Leo Tolstoy, the author of the classic *War and Peace*.

There he encounters a hostile aristocratic Russian woman, Katerina Trubetskaya, a writer who has been left in charge of the estate. But even as a tentative friendship develops between them, Bauer's hostile and arrogant commanding officer, Julius Metz, becomes erratic and unhinged as the war turns against the Germans. Over the course of six weeks, in the terrible winter of 1941, everything starts to unravel...

Even though war stories are very far from my favourite type of reading, I loved this book. The reality of war is portrayed in minute but subtle detail. The futility exposed in the sad eyes of a dying young soldier who has never made love to a woman. The madness of the leaders, the bravery of the fighting men and the compassion of those who patch them up.

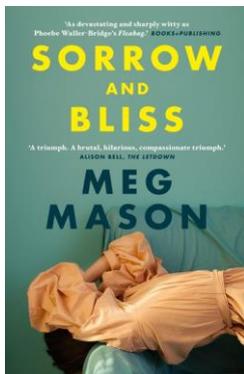
All of this captured in the freezing Russian winter which removes parts and lives of young men as they fight on in a war that is already lost. And then amongst it all, a glorious love story grown from a love of literature and an understanding that all of life is nothing without the beauty of words. This story is about *War and Peace* and it is at its essence war and peace. The enduring love of Paul and Katerina warmed my heart. I know them and I love them for their intelligence, their humanity and their endurance.

Please read this book it is truly beautiful.
This is also available as an e-book.

Interested in this title? Check out the library [catalogue](#).

Sorrow and bliss by Meg Mason

Reviewed by Pat



This novel is about a woman called Martha. She knows there is something wrong with her but she doesn't know what it is. Her husband Patrick thinks she is fine. He says everyone has something; the thing is just to keep going.

Martha told Patrick before they got married that she didn't want to have children. He said he didn't mind either way because he has loved her since he was fourteen and making her happy is all that matters, although he does not seem able to do it.

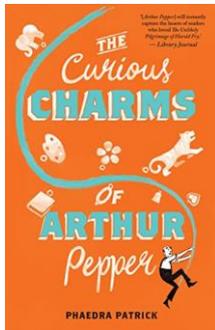
By the time Martha finds out what is wrong, it doesn't really matter anymore. It is too late to get the only thing she has ever wanted. Or maybe it will turn out that you can stop loving someone and start again from nothing - if you can find something else to want.

A sad, hopeful, thought provoking, insightful novel. It's an engrossing novel about a woman, her family, her life and her marriage and it provokes a real insight into mental illness.

Interested in this title? Reserve a copy [here](#)

The curious charms of Arthur Pepper by Phaedra Patrick

Reviewed by Maree



I would describe this book as the story of a man that had a long and happy marriage.

On the first anniversary of his wife's death, Arthur finds a charm bracelet hidden away in one of his wife's boots. She never mentioned it to him, yet it is obviously a very valuable piece of jewellery. Arthur wonders about the eight precious charms dangling from the bracelet: an elephant, flower, book, paint palette, tiger, thimble, heart, and a ring. They must have had some special meaning for his departed wife. Why had she never

mentioned it?

As he goes on a voyage to learn about each charm, he finds out that his wife had a unique and colourful past that he knew nothing about.

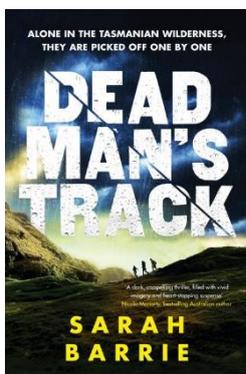
His quest for the source and meanings of these golden charms leads him on a discovery that reveals as much about himself as it does about his departed wife. It is a voyage of discovery and awakening.

The themes of aging, loss of a loved one, how to go on with life after losing a loved one, as well as how to relate to your children and their loss of a mother or father. It was both an easy, happy read and a page-turner.

Interested in this title? Check out the library [catalogue](#). Also available as [e-book](#)

Dead man's track by Sarah Barrie

Reviewed by Pat



Alone in the wilderness, they are picked off one by one.

A tragic accident, a terrible crime, an unknown threat ...

Scarred by a recent tragedy on Federation Peak, Tess Atherton is reluctant to guide a group of young hikers in the wild Tasmanian winter, but it seems safer than remaining amid the violence that threatens them in Hobart.

Little does she know that she has brought the danger with her.

Detective Senior Sergeant Jared Denham is *closing* in on a serial killer, but someone doesn't want him getting to the truth and the case is becoming personal. He already owes Tess his life, and wants to return the favour - but when it comes to enemies, Jared may be looking in the wrong direction.

There's a lot going on in this book with a splash of romance and an accompanying slow and steady build of suspense that explodes towards the end of the book, as the plot threads all come together in a creepy and terrifying conclusion.

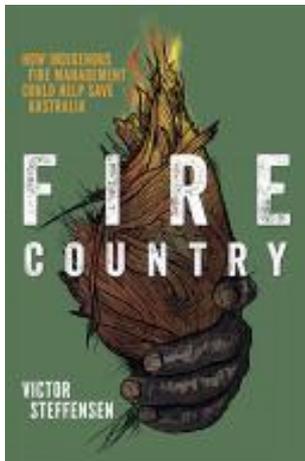
Sarah Barrie's love of the outdoors and the Tasmanian wilderness shines through in her evocative writing, and the reader can feel the wild beauty of the places she visits in her books. The novel could be read as a stand-alone but will be enhanced by reading the earlier Calico Lodge novels ([Bloodtree River](#), [Devil's Lair](#)) to enjoy the ongoing development of the characters and their backstories.

Interested in this title? Reserve your copy [here](#)

Fire Country: How Indigenous Fire Management could help save Australia

by Victor Steffensen

Review by Donna



Fire Country is a powerful work detailing the importance of Indigenous cultural burning and documents the value of acknowledging and sharing this knowledge for both personal and national wealth.

Fire Country is also Victor's story. Shortly after leaving high school, Victor developed a thirst to acquire more traditional cultural and ecological knowledge. He develops a close relationship with two Elders who become his mentors, who share their love of country and show Victor how to truly read the land. What follows is a fascinating account of the many ways the land evolves and the signs that show how to heal and care for country.

We learn of the different soil types, the importance of breeding cycles, the different types of smoke and burns and the overwhelming joy and respect for traditional land and values. We also learn of the risk of losing this huge bank of knowledge and how the practices of the past have inadvertently led to so much harm.

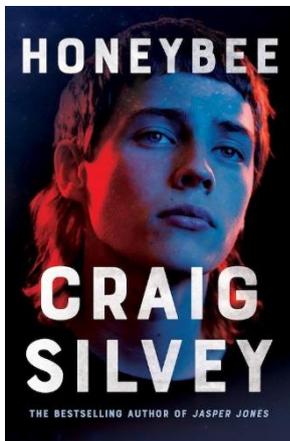
I must admit to being very ignorant about what was a cultural burn, and while there were a few aspects that were a bit technical (and I don't do technical) I really enjoyed **Fire Country**. The writing style is very laid back, almost having a cuppa and a chat!

But I learned so much. I would highly recommend this to anyone who wants to find out about cultural burning and Indigenous land management. With the horrific effects of Black Summer to be felt for many years to come, I take some hope from the very valuable and important work of our Indigenous fire practitioners.

Interested in this title. Reserve a copy [now](#)

Honeybee by Craig Silvey

Review by Pat



The highly anticipated new novel by the bestselling author of *Jasper Jones*, has been worth the wait.

Late in the night, fourteen-year-old Sam Watson steps onto a quiet overpass, climbs over the rail and looks down at the road far below. At the other end of the same bridge, an old man, Vic, smokes his last cigarette.

The two see each other across the void. A fateful connection is made, and an unlikely friendship blooms. Slowly, we learn what led Sam and Vic to the bridge that night. Bonded by their suffering, each privately commits to the impossible task of saving the other.

Honeybee is a heart-breaking, life-affirming novel that throws us headlong into a world of petty thefts, extortion plots, botched bank robberies, daring dog rescues and one spectacular drag show.

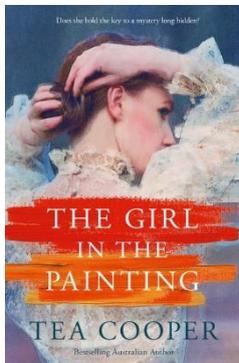
At the heart of *Honeybee* is Sam: a solitary, resilient young person battling to navigate the world as their true self; ensnared by a loyalty to a troubled mother, scarred by the volatility of a domineering step-father, and confounded by the kindness of new alliances.

Honeybee is a tender, profoundly moving novel brimming with vivid characters and luminous words. It's about two lives forever changed by a chance encounter -- one offering hope, the other redemption. It's about when to persevere, and when to be merciful, as Sam learns when to let go, and when to hold on.

Interested in this title? Reserve a copy [here](#)

The girl in the painting by Tea Cooper

Review by Pat



Maitland 1913. Miss Elizabeth Quinn is something of an institution in Maitland Town. For longer than anyone could remember she and her brother, businessman Michael, have lived in the impressive two-storey stone house next to the church.

When she is discovered cowering in the corner of the exhibition gallery at the Technical College the entire town knows something strange has come to pass.

Was it the prehistoric remains or perhaps the taxidermy exhibition that had reduced the whale-boned encased pillar of society to a quivering mess? Or is there something odd about a striking painting on loan from the National Gallery?

Mathematical savant Jane Piper is determined to find out. Deposited on the doorstep of the local orphanage as a baby, she owes her life and education to the Quinn's philanthropic ventures and Elizabeth has no one else to turn to.

As the past and the present converge, Elizabeth's grip on reality loosens. Can Jane, with her logical brain and penchant for puzzles, unravel Elizabeth's story before it is too late?

Ranging from the gritty reality of the Australian goldfields to the grand institutions of Sydney, the bucolic English countryside to the charm of Maitland Town, this compelling historical mystery in the company of an eccentric and original heroine is rich with atmosphere and detail.

Interested in this title? Reserve a copy [now](#)