

**OLDER READERS:** Entries in this category should be for books for young people aged between 13 and 18 years (secondary school level). Books in this category may be fiction, drama, illustrated text, poetry or graphic novels. In this category particular attention is given to books that enable the reader to reflect on and gain insight into the nature of young adulthood and universal values. These books can be described as having complex characters, examining their thoughts and motivations to develop inner stories and subtexts.

- Literary merit - Setting: The setting effectively contributes to the storyline. The sense of place and time is very strong and maintained throughout the story.
  - What is the world of your book? Is it a realistic setting or a fantastical setting? Is it a world you recognise?
  - How is the world established? Is it well-constructed? Do you get a good sense of where your character lives?
  - What does the author do to draw you into the world?
  - What is the best example of world-building you've ever seen in a book? What did that author do *right*?
- Literary merit - Characterisation: There are strong main and minor characters where dialogue creates distinct characters. There is a convincing dialogue introspective with the author matching the voices and style to each character perfectly. The book fully engages the reader who can identify with characters.
  - Are the characters well-developed? How does the author develop the characters so you understand them?
  - Are there major and minor characters in the book? Which character/s do you prefer? Why?
  - Do the teenage characters actually *sound* like teenagers when they talk? Is the dialogue authentic?
  - Did you identify with the character/s at all? How so?
- Literary merit - Plot: The transitions of pace, mood, action and resolution are accomplished effectively. The writing is credible and appropriate in its use of cultural material. The writing extends the reader's experience and helps the reader understand more about themselves and their world.
  - Is the book well-paced? Does it flow well?
  - Is the book in chronological order, or does it move back and forward in time? Is there one point of view, or multiple points of view? What structure do you prefer?
  - Did you like the ending? Can you think of any alternative endings?
- Literary merit - Theme: Ideas are worthwhile and skilfully crafted, generated and selected to explore recognisable theme/s or develop a fresh perspective.

- What are some of the themes explored in the novel? Are they recognisable or completely unique?
- Think about some of the themes in the book, then think about other books with similar themes. Have the authors approached them in the same way, or are they different?
- What is the *message* of the book, if it has one?
- Age appropriate: Most appropriate for lower secondary to college years (13-18 years).
  - Who is the target audience of the book?
  - What does age-appropriateness mean?
  - Is there anything challenging in the book that people should be warned about (trigger warnings)?
- Conventions of writing: Editing is professional, with conventions of spelling and grammar upheld.
  - Is the book professionally constructed? Are there any mistakes?
- Style of writing: There is a sustained and consistent use of a range of precise and effective words and phrases. Sentence construction is used in a natural and creative manner to reveal purpose and attitude. Language appropriate to the theme and characters.
  - What is the style of language? Is it simple, poetic, casual, compelling, or something else?
  - Does the language suit the plot/characters/themes? How so?
  - Is the book easy to read or more challenging? Why?
- Mood: Creates, develops, varies and sustains the mood successfully.
  - What is the overall mood of the book? Does the mood change throughout the story?
  - How does the author establish the mood? What techniques do they use?
  - How did you feel after reading the book? Did you feel unsettled, frustrated, inspired, adventurous, or something else? How did the mood of the book contribute to that feeling?
- Design: All elements of highest quality combine to make an excellent production. The endpapers reflect the storyline. Fonts, style and size are highly appropriate for the targeted reader.
  - Do you like the front cover? Does it reflect the concept of the story?
  - Can you think of any alternative covers?
  - Do you like the font, page design and any illustrations? Do they suit the story?
  - What kind of book covers are you usually drawn to?