

Garden City Library Young Adults book club – Podcast Transcript

(opening music)

Hi everyone, we are the young adult book club of Garden City Library in Brisbane. Today we're recording a podcast of the CBCA Book of the Year Awards, in the older readers category. We'll be ranking our books from the least favourite to the best and the one that we think should win.

Our least favourite book as a book club was "A Hunger of Thorns" by Lili Wilkinson. We didn't feel like the setting made sense, as only some of the characters had magic, but they were living in a super-industrial type world run by big corporations but they were never really gone into detail about how it became like that or how the world was run really. And then like she saved the world and then everything kind of went back to like before, but it was never really given how that happened exactly. Yeah, it did have some good points, it wasn't entirely bad, but it didn't stand out as much as the other books.

The book that we ranked fifth was "Grace Notes". From fifth to first, we didn't really think any of them were bad, they were just, some of them didn't stand out as much as other ones. So with "Grace Notes", we didn't find it bad but we didn't love it either. We did say the artistic perspective and the music would be interesting for someone who liked those things but maybe not so much for people who didn't like art and music, like the arts in general. I felt that maybe the book was like a bit okay, they didn't have any super strong moments. That the story, while not contrived, it felt like a bit bland maybe, it was pretty generic as books go. I still felt that it was well written and it certainly had a flow to it. It didn't feel broken between each character's perspective. We also weren't sure about the setting being in Covid times. Yeah, we didn't like that because like, please let us out of Covid. The dual perspectives were nice, as one of the other books had that. Fifth to first, we didn't really think any of them were bad, they were just, some of them didn't stand out as much as other ones. So with "Grace Notes" we didn't find it bad, but we didn't love it either. But we did say as a musician, that the music area wasn't as realistic as it could have been. We also thought the romance may not have been as realistic. A big theme we kind of got out of it was, it was about finding your own perspective away from a best friend that you've had since childhood. And that process was really speed up for her, because of the death of one of her friends, who also happened to be her best friend's older brother. The theme they wanted to portray, or they portrayed well. i.e. the losing or moving on of friends, danger in the books like getting worried about stupid things and but it seemed pretty normal for a book, but I think they did the teenage aspect well. I guess portraying it like that is good because its accurate, but bad because it is just average life. Yeah. Death is like, it happens to everyone, but like you're not ready for it when it comes. They portrayed her feelings and emotions throughout like her grief quite well.

The book that we ranked third was “Too Can Play that Game”. We also really did like the cover for this one. We thought the art and colour contrasting was also done really well. We felt that this book was accurate, as you know a teenage lover I guess. It felt unlike maybe “Grace Notes” more realistic, but still memorable as they had some more key themes and perhaps more memorable elements. Like there was a theme they worked towards the whole book, a gaming convention at the end and that was like a central theme. And then the arc of them falling in love. They both had slightly different personalities that meshed well. Also, I liked how similar to how “Let’s Never Speak of This Again” it also was quite realistic. The main character Sam, had like her expectations and hopes, and it was memorable in that aspect. It also was quite enjoyable to read even if you’re not into indie games for example. I particularly enjoyed it, even though I don’t know much about indie games. I was pretty surprised because I never thought I was like into that kind of genre.

The book that we liked second and that was a really good book as well, was “Ink Flower” which was about World War 2 and like concentration camps. Also, we did like the cover for this one, but it wasn’t as good as some of the other ones we thought. The main idea of the book is a father telling his kids about his experience in the concentration camps. Effectively on his deathbed and how the kids try to reckon with this and process the feelings they might be feeling about their father passing away and the experiences that he had during the concentration camps. In my opinion, it’s one of the better, maybe even the best fiction portrayal of concentration camps. I like how they portray them with the perspective of the kids in the 80’s and the Dad in the 30’s or whatever. It was quite immersive whenever he told his story of what happened. I really liked both perspectives, the daughter and the father, and it was nice to see that it was quite realistic as when at first she was reluctant to listen about this and something that her father had heard from her like her whole life, and how eventually she did understand. It was quite interesting and thought provoking to read. Yeah I quite enjoyed this style of writing. Yeah I read “Ink Flower” and I really liked it. I think the cover was good and I think it looks really like aesthetic and I think it was a good representation of the book. Like it wasn't as good as some of the others but I think it's still really good and I really liked how they represented the World War. Because obviously it's quite a difficult topic to understand and like you know especially for YA readers so I thought like it gave a really good understanding.

The book that we think should win the CBCA book week was the “The Quiet and the Loud”. Personally I really liked it. We also as a book club really liked the cover. We thought it had a really nice romance that felt realistic in like it was well paced. them having to take a break and like work on themselves was more realistic because obviously they both had a lot to work through and finding out themselves but still loving

each other was a really nice aspect that sometimes people don't meet at exactly the right time but it doesn't mean they never work. I thought it was a nice betrayal of like harder topics that some people might not be as aware of it's like it covers a lot of mental health issues, like different family dynamics and having family overseas that you don't talk to like for variety of reasons and like growing out of your friends. This is a common theme through a lot of these books is that a lot of these books is that that characters who growing up and growing away from friends that they've had since childhood or just they're on a slightly different path. "The Quiet and the Loud" did represent quite a lot of topics, but it was quite broad in this that it made the book serious and quite mature. It was also interesting and hooked you into the world that the main character was living in. Also the friends in the book weren't the best people and she didn't exactly see that, but when she did it was quite gratifying as well and it does show that like there are lots of different people in the world and not everybody is like nice and some people take you for granted as well. I felt the book touched on a lot of different themes and in doing this surprisingly it managed to keep enough of the focus on each individual theme without feeling like other themes got left behind like despite the fact that has 4-5 maybe 6 core themes e.g. her father and their relationship issues, the lover that got introduced halfway through the book, old friendship with Jess, and the fires. Despite having so many different themes, I still felt that the book managed to tie them all together really well. At times maybe felt it was a little crowded, but I thought the author did a good job making to keep it you know grounded and still all together and not feeling you know loose and sprawling like the wheel of time. Another really key aspect I think it had good peak, with Jess having giving birth. I think it also had a nice ending with like some pretty good tie ups and some question marks as you know leaving you know emptiness to the readers imagination as that is always important with a book because it allows the reader to imagine and that allows for future thought which in turn allows for a better experience overall. The most important thing is the peak and the end, that's the thing you remember, and I think this book did really good job of that. I really enjoy "The Quiet and the Loud". I found that it was really broad and open range like for readers of different ages, people could take different themes away from the book at different ages and I'd be really interested to compare what I think of it to others. I also really like the cover of the book as well. I think it's like quite intriguing when the cover of the book has a silhouette of a person and like the darkness that kind of makes you want to read more and like find out what's going on and like the Red River. I think it also portrayed the bushfires of 2019 really well. It doesn't feel that long ago but it was almost five years now. They did affect like so many people and animals and stuff and that it I feel it was portrayed really well for the devastating thing that it was. People would find out from overseas and be horrified that this was happening and we were all like yeah we just have to kinda deal with it. That was how the characters went with it they were like we just gotta try and stop this and people aren't listening so we're gonna have to tell them, which I thought was a really good message for some of the younger readers reading it.

You have to take the steps to get people to listen and to get change to happen. Another aspect that I thought was quite well written, was her personal struggles when it came to remembering what her childhood was like. I thought there was also a balance between people who were good for her and people who were not so good for her and how she had to deal with it. It was quite realistically portrayed as well, her own mental struggles and also happened to like be like quite a good person despite what had happened to her and how she always tried to help people as well. With everyone not being a nice person and some of the loose ends at the end of the book, that was really reflective of real life not everyone is a super nice person and we like people for different reasons that others might not understand. Not being able to answer everything is like a part of real life. I think that was betrayed quite well. Considering the fact that she was so young, she still has so much left to do, that it's realistic that she doesn't have everything figured out by the end. I guess that's a bit of what Jess was feeling with her anxiety and having struggles and why she wanted to have do everything. She felt that she was going to die soon for some unexplained reason and she you know tried to struggle through that. I feel like the main character tried to help her with that but they just didn't really figure it out super well which I feel does reflect real life. Not everything is a fairy tale and not everything ends super perfectly. I still feel the book ended with enough threads tied off and enough problems solved that you don't leave with like a bad feeling, like it doesn't have a bad ending like maybe other books.

That was our ranking for the six books of the young adult category. We think the “The Quiet and the Loud” should win.