

This is a much needed volume from Agnes Nieuwenhuizen, with a little help from her friends at Victoria's Centre for Youth Literature. What is presented, as the introduction says, is "a large and enticing smorgasbord of mostly recent titles along with reminders of some older but still wonderful books".

Reviews are arranged in thematic chapters, interspersed with a few short essays giving a taste of a specific genre or format. Most reviews are from about 150 to 300 words, making them ideal to dip into for kids or others, but equally readable in full by enthusiasts or professionals. Each title is coded as best suited to young readers (Y), young adults (YA) adult (A) readers, or a combination of these. The themes chosen are themselves imaginative and often present an original way of categorising titles. Don't be fooled by preconceptions. I cringed a bit at "In defence of pink books" but Lili Wilkinson presents a strong defence of a group of books I will look at more closely in future. Another section is "extreme and edgy" which includes a wide range of books, many neglected in school collections. Get this book and enjoy exploring the rest for yourself.

**Marita Thomson, St Paul's Catholic College, Manly, NSW**

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen may no longer be at the helm of the Centre for Youth Literature in Melbourne, but fortunately with the release of *Right Book, Right Time*, we are still able to share in her deep knowledge and her unending enthusiasm for literature specifically for teenagers. Agnes's philosophy is simple "read for yourself and not for others". Find the books that are right for you and "Read! Read! Read! Read for pleasure, for thrills, for escape, for ideas."

In addition to Agnes's reviews, a number of Australia's well respected children's literature reviewers and educators add their expertise to the book. These include Mike Shuttleworth, Linnet Hunter, Erica Wagner, Kevin Steinberger, Trevor Agnew, Robyn Sheahan-Bright, Lili Wilkinson and the author's son, the late John Nieuwenhuizen.

The book is organized into twelve thematic sections including, *Extreme and edgy*, *Fantastic worlds*, *Outside the square* and *When you want to laugh* and there are 200 main entries with a quote and detailed notes on each book. In total there are over 500 titles recommended.

Entries are from Australian and overseas authors and include recently published as well as some of the classics which Agnes believes "amply repay a visit".

This is not an academic tome. It is a highly accessible list of great reads with the focus on matching the right book to the teenage reader at the right time. It is a must for every secondary school library and public library and for everyone involved in children's literature. It will become a valuable tool for selection of novels. (There were a number of novels listed in the book not on my library shelves – soon to be remedied!) However, if you are head of a Resource Centre, as I am, you will need to buy several copies as they are musts for the school's English Department, your office and several will be needed for your students to pore over.

**Marcia Phillips, Ballarat Grammar, VIC**

The author of this book has credentials second to none to produce a guide to books for young adults. In late 2005 Agnes Nieuwenhuizen retired from her job as manager of the Melbourne-based Australian Centre for Youth Literature, the body she set up to get young people reading. She has dominated the field for nearly twenty years. A winner of the Dromkeen Medal in 1994, she's been described as "Australia's foremost advocate of youth literature". Attractions such as tv and computer games compete for teenagers leisure time and some of this age group see books as being uncool. Parents, librarians, teachers and so on need to choose carefully when recommending reading material for teenagers. *Right book, right time* provides a selection of over 500 books to satisfy most as the reviews are trustworthy and presented in a very readable format. There is quite a bit of cross-referencing which is helpful. Young people would also find the layout and wording appealing. There are 12 thematic sections. Why not alert them to sections like 'extreme and edgy' or 'outside the square' or 'when you want to laugh' and they can do their own search for something eye-catching.

I read this book from cover to cover, finding a number of books, especially overseas novels that I have yet to read. As a teacher-librarian I would recommend that people up-date their two previous guides to YA lit written by Agnes as this is now the ultimate Australian guide. I will be keeping mine on hand and will also share it with my teenage daughter.

**Jane Duckworth, Essendon Keilor College, VIC**

From the extremely effective front cover (fashionable and slightly grungy teenage boy complete with piercings) to the equally appealing back cover, *Right book right time* is set to become a must-have for teachers, librarians and parents.

Teens who hunger for the security of knowing that there are loads of great books out there waiting to be discovered will also be interested in this presentation of worthy titles.

By featuring one book per author, *Right book right time* is a gateway to a smorgasbord of literary feasts. The 'spin off' books lead readers deeper into the delicious web of fantastic fiction and non-fiction waiting for them.

Contributions from a range of other experts add potency to Nieuwenhuizen's already all-encompassing knowledge.

The design and layout is attractive. The text is accessible to a range of readers – this is no high brow academic tome designed to gather dust on a shelf. The use of genre/chapter headings and an excellent index means the reader can read the book cover to cover, browse through favourite genres or look up favourite authors and titles in the index. *Right book right time* is a practical and user friendly resource. It is a book to be read, leafed through and consulted time and again.

I do have just one gripe; that the US title for the first *Harry Potter* book is listed (p. 210).

A review doesn't really do justice to such a broad, engaging and worthy book! You must procure your own copy for reference now and again and again. My 'to read' list has just grown somewhat larger thanks to *Right book right time*.

A brilliant book published just at the right time, to continue the world wide interest in children's and YA books. *Right book right time* would make an ideal gift for anyone interested in reading, especially those with an interest in YA titles.

**Judith Way, VIC**

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen's latest publication is a testimony to her lifelong interest in children's literature. This guide to recent works in the area of teenage fiction is organised under broad and contemporary headings that reflect both young adult reading interests and publishing trends. Categories such as 'life, love & loss', 'been and gone' and 'when you want to laugh' embrace familiar genres. However, this guide explores a range of titles that do not fit easily into familiar frameworks. They cover extraordinary narratives that are 'outside the square' for their ingenuity in style, storyline or presentation, stories that are 'extreme & edgy' dealing with many of the social issues that confront teenagers today and personal accounts that recount 'not such ordinary lives' in a biographical format.

The chapters are interspersed with short, pithy pieces, by various respected writers, on current trends in young adult literature including the growth in verse novels, the importance of 'pink books' for female readers and the place of translated works in a reader's diet. Each entry within the categories fills a page and includes its place and date of publication, a short quote from the book and a summary of the plot and themes presented. There are also briefer listings of other similar texts or books in a series.

The style of presentation and writing is both engaging and entertaining. Readers will find some well know and popular titles but also be exposed to new and intriguing works, from both local and overseas authors. The book provides a sound basis for careful and reflective collection development in the library as well as providing teachers with a wealth of contemporary and recently published material to promote with teenagers. Sticky notes are a 'must' to mark the titles that are unfamiliar and to aid the reader in searching out library collections or heading to the nearest bookstore. Highly recommended.

**Jennie Bales, Lilydale District School, TAS**

This is a collection of enthusiastic, detailed reviews of over 500 books. Nieuwenhuizen's rationale for making the difficult choices inherent in such a project is not to attempt to provide "a definitive or comprehensive selection but rather a large and enticing smorgasbord of mostly recent titles along with reminders of some older but still wonderful books" (p. viii). Dividing books into meaningful themes is also challenging. Here there are 12 thematic sections that are often quite broad, with some snappy titles: "Extreme and edgy", "Not such ordinary lives", and "Outside the square" to name a few. Each contains one-page entries on mainly recent books, many of them Australian, interspersed with various shorter lists that are often eclectic, and include overseas writers and older books. Each thematic section is introduced thoughtfully, placing the themes within a wider context.

The section "Outside the square" features unique books that can't easily be summarised, such as *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak and *Alchemy* by Margaret Mahy. There is a double-page list of "enduring international 'outside the square' books for keen readers", such as *Crime and Punishment* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as well as a page of recent Australian YA books with Shakespeare connections (eg. *Faking Sweet*, *Aliki Says*, *The Boy the Bear the Baron the Bard*). There's also a list of fiction and non-fiction addressing climate change, which follows a double-page review of Tim Flannery's *We Are the Weather Makers*. I found this range of genres entertaining and useful.

Initially I'd hoped for more further reading suggestions ("if you liked this book, try..."), but the detailed selection of titles with extra lists and ideas interspersed within sections provide ample further reading pathways. Many reviews mention the writer's other books, and sometimes a further page is included; for example, Sonya Hartnett (who appropriately appears in both "Extreme and edgy" and "Outside the square") also features on a page discussing four of her other works.

Between sections are short "mini-essays" on such diverse areas as verse novels, 'pink' books, translations, non-fiction and graphic novels. These are written by other contributors. I liked the coding of each title in a manner that shows the audience for which it was initially published, but also its appropriateness and interest for a further audience; for example, YA/A or A/YA. *Right Book, Right Time* is full of great reading suggestions from a very wide range of genres, and is itself an enjoyable read.

**Jane Gibian, International Grammar School, NSW**

What a fabulous book this is with reviews and recommendations of over 500 books to suit a wide spectrum of readers and would-be readers.

The genre lists are very comprehensive and current; this is a great help when working with Young Adults in their endeavours to find timely and relevant books.

The inclusion of so many Australian publications enables the librarian to suggest contemporary and appropriate books that will suit both the most tentative as well as the enthusiastic readers. I love having this new tool to work with students as it is so efficient, easy to follow and available!

**Denise Tannock, Ivanhoe Grammar School, VIC**

So many books, so little time. Seeing so many familiar books listed here, I was happy to know I'd read them. Seeing all the others that are yet to be read made me wish for retirement! The reading list is extensive and versified. The synopses are succinct and allow enough lures to entice a reader who thinks the book might be right for them! The title clusters are based on themes such as action, adventure and crime, fantastic worlds and this sporting life. This enables a student to locate already familiar genres whilst hopefully scanning others and venturing in to a new experience. Some books and authors are inter-linked through other criteria such as country setting or even Australian movie titles so a passage can be navigated wherever the interest takes.

Local stories and those from far flung places appealing to girls and boys are here covering topics such as religion, war, relationships and sport. Of particular interest from a History Stage 4 syllabus point of view are the ones related to world and regional wars that provide

scope for extended reading and research. Also Stage 6 English is catered for in the form of related texts for Crime Fiction and Journeys. Poetry and verse novels are also represented. Each book is categorised for either Younger Readers, Young Adult or Adult allowing librarians/teachers to direct students without having actual knowledge of the texts. Author profiles and Website links provide additional useful information.

A highly useful library and classroom text to answer the question: 'I liked that book Miss. Can you recommend one like it?'

**Sally Spurr, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Kensington NSW**

This wonderful Library and English resource book of 500 great reads for teenagers is an absolute must for all primary, secondary and tertiary institutions that meet the needs of students as well as all public libraries with a junior and/or young adult section.

The author is a national treasure in the fields of literature for younger readers and young adults. She reviews fiction & non-fiction works with a great depth of understanding and compassion for the needs of the audience and the adult trying to introduce these works to readers.

Also all the contributing reviewers do a similarly superb job in the wide range of genres covered, from humour through fantasy to war & conflicts and picture books to name a few. This is "an indispensable, user-friendly guide for parents, teachers, librarians, booksellers and teenagers." It is also a fascinating read and stimulating just to pick up and start browsing. It already has a place on my school library shelves and I would highly recommend to all who want to dive into the enriching world of reading on many subjects and at varied levels.

**Susan Hill, McCarthy Catholic College, Emu Plains, NSW**

What a fantastic resource *Right book, Right time: 500 great reads for Teenagers* by Agnes Nieuwenhuizen is! Literally, 500 great reads for teenagers (and others who love teen literature.) The books, from Australian and International authors, are gathered together under twelve thematic areas with catchy titles that will inspire the reader to head to them. Titles such as *Been and Gone*, *Life, Loss and Love* and *Fantastic Worlds*. Recently published novels have featured highly but the lists also include outstanding older novels worthy of consideration. Each listing includes a short extract from the book to further entice the reader followed by a review. These listings vary in content with some detailing the author and information about other books they have written of a similar style.

If the above isn't enough of a reason to purchase and read this book, there are also some interesting short essays on a number of topics written by well known people in the field of Teenage literature. Mike Shuttleworth (from the Centre for Youth Literature) has written about Poets raiding the Novelist's shelves, whilst Allen and Unwin's own Erica Wagner has turned her attention to graphic novels in *Let your Eyes Dance*. Helping a teen reader find "the right book at the right time" can be a life changing experience and *Right book, Right Time* may help you find that special book.

**Pia Butcher, VIC**

*Right Book, Right Time* is a key to unlock the fascinating world of Young Adult, "Crossover" and Adult Fiction for readers of all ages, abilities and interests, offering stepping stones and jumping-off points in an enticing, highly satisfying, cross-cultural reading trail, to tease, tempt, delight and feed the most voracious literary appetite. Our most respected and acclaimed expert and passionate advocate of books and reading for contemporary Australian adolescents, Agnes Nieuwenhuizen, presents (along with six co-contributors) a well planned, relevant, user-friendly compilation of "best books": recent great reads by famous authors, "newbies" with first books, and wonderful classics, our familiar favourites.

Offering an excellent cross section of choices for all genre devotees, thus guaranteeing widespread appeal, the two hundred main entries are arranged alphabetically by title, within twelve broad thematic sections, such as *Fantastic Worlds*, *Life, Love and Loss*, *Outside the Square*, *War and Conflicts* and *This Sporting Life*, with an introduction to each theme and an end piece with mention of spin-offs, movie tie-ins, new connections and "read ons". Each

review is well-crafted and succinct, beginning with a snippet of text from the story, and including references to other titles and series in bold type. Reviews are coded with an appropriate reading age (Younger Readers, Young Adult and Adult), reflecting primary audience or readership for which the book was originally published, include scanned book covers, and introduce books published in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, Europe and Asia. Six mini essays are also included within the volume, encouraging readers to explore lesser known and appreciated areas, such as “pink books” and books translated from other languages. These two-four page spreads include mention of other titles (highlighted in bold), and page references to those titles reviewed elsewhere in the volume. The inclusion of references to picture books for older readers, Non Fiction titles and puzzle books will particularly appeal to male readers. Titles, authors and series are referenced through the extensive, easy to navigate Index.

Design-wise, Ruth Gruner is to be complimented for her brilliant, appealing cover art - a “way cool”, “edgy” male reader, and two fresh-faced, attractive young women – which combines with the simple, effective format of this literary smorgasbord, a sampler to savour, a “hooked on” handbook reflecting the tastes of our contemporary teen readership, across genre, style, theme, era and cultural background. *Right Book, Right Time* is indeed a timely, must-have publication for inclusion on Middle School and secondary school library shelves, as compulsory reading for parents, educators, Teacher Librarians and students alike, an extra special, easy-to-follow, valuable ready reference for adolescent and adult readers, brim full of credible, reputable reviews to trust, share and enjoy, sharing being an important part of the passion and reading pleasure, valuing the opinions of others. It is the perfect companion volume to Daniel Hahn’s *The Ultimate Teen Book Guide*, also available through Allen and Unwin, to supplement ongoing “Literacy Through Literature” initiatives and generate reading enthusiasm.

**Alison Cassell, QLD**

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen’s latest book ‘*Right book, right time: 500 great reads for teenagers*’ is not just a valuable selection tool, it’s an exciting read in itself!

Variably described as “Australia’s foremost advocate of youth literature”, the “champion of books”, Agnes is a former teacher, book reviewer for “The Age”, founder of both The Centre for Youth Literature at the State Library of Victoria and the biennial *Reading Matters* Conference. Agnes is passionate about Children’s and Young Adult literature and the promotion of reading for pleasure. She is the author and compiler of a number of books and winner of the Dromkeen Medal for services to youth literature.

Agnes’ book provides a smorgasbord of great reads from a wide variety of genres, styles, countries, mostly recent but delving back to a few old favourites. Reviews are arranged in twelve thematic sections such as ‘Extreme and edgy’, ‘Outside the square’ and ‘What if...?’ Most of the reviews range between 150 and 300 words in length – meaty enough for professionals to get a taste of the book, but short enough for younger readers to dip into. The 200 main entries are interspersed with 300 other reviews and recommendations, many related or spin-off titles. Besides Agnes’ reviews, many other well-respected reviewers have added contributions in their areas of expertise.

In summary, the eclectic nature of this book (in its choice of books to review, the knowledge range of its contributors and diversity of presentations) means that it suits many purposes – as a gift to a teenager, for parents who wish to delve into and promote their child’s reading, for teachers to gain an overall glimpse of the wealth and diversity of Children’s and Young Adult literature, or for librarians and teacher-librarians to form a basis of thoughtful collection development.

To me, it’s a book I want to come back to again and again, using post-it notes as I go, marking sites from which I set off on reading journeys. It’s a treasure trove!

**Marj Kirkland, Aquinas College, QLD**

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen is well known to teacher-librarians and teachers as a guru of knowledge about good books for children and young people. So, her latest addition to the

area, *Right book Right time: 500 great reads for teenagers* will be welcomed by her existing audience and hopefully by the parents and teenagers seeking new inspiration in choosing what to read.

With a book of this nature, several elements make it both useful and easy to negotiate. This book has clear contents pages; a brief and scintillating introduction ("Read! Read! Read! Read for pleasure, for thrills, for escape, for ideas. Read books that make you laugh and cry and wonder and think. Read for yourself and not for others."); a detailed index of authors and titles and a reading code for each book: Younger readers, Young adult and Adult.

The books reviewed are arranged by genre and there is one review per page. There are also lists of further titles in each section.

Interleaved between the chapters are mini essays with titles such as "in praise of pink books", "let your eyes dance" and "weird and wonderful stuff".

The books reviewed come from a variety of countries and include several translated from other languages. Each review includes date of publication, a short extract and a summary of plots, themes and character.

A most useful addition to any library! One small complaint: a 355 page paperback, designed for much page turning, could be bound more robustly to ensure a longer life.

**Barbara Wilson, St George Christian School, Hurstville NSW**

For those charged with the responsibility of matching the right book at the right time for young adults, Agnes Nieuwenhuizen has produced a valuable aid. Her enthusiasm for YA literature and her knowledge of young people are in clear evidence in this "large and enticing smorgasbord of mostly recent titles." It is a smorgasbord which includes picture books, film, classics and a number of books in translation. While its focus is on Young adult literature, the book includes items whose target audience is younger readers and adults.

The book is divided into 12 themes including "Action, adventure and crime," "fantastic worlds" and "When you want to laugh" Each of the 200 main reviews takes a single page, and includes reading audience, country and date of publication, a brief quote from the book, a quick overview of the plot and an evaluative comment. In some cases there is news of sequels, or a comment on other books by the same author, and a thumbnail of the cover. All in all, each entry is a concise but useful overview of the novel. There are also pages dedicated to featured artists (Isabelle Carmody, Michael Morpurgo, Walter Dean Myers,) or themes such as epic war stories or living between cultures.

This is a publication which will be invaluable as a selection tool for libraries, or for class reading. The reviews are ideal to support the preparation of book talks, and the organization will make it easier to help students find books on a particular theme.

**Lynne Keys, Albury High School, NSW**