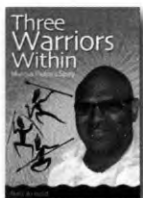


Book reviews

Three Warriors within: Marcus Pedro's story



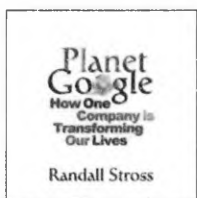
Nell Arnold
Big Sky Publishing, 2009
ISBN: 9780980325171
RRP: \$24.99

The concept behind *Three Warriors Within* is admirable. It attempts to make the inspirational story of Marcus Pedro, a motivational speaker, accessible for today's youth. It is the tale of Pedro's challenging early years on a Torres Strait island, his struggles with bullying and literacy, his move to mainland Australia, and the difficulties he faced finding himself and his voice. Pedro cites three major influences in his life: a school teacher, a kung fu master, and a police officer, whose teachings awoke corresponding voices of internal wisdom and guidance. These became the warriors within. Pedro's story of repeated failures, self-questioning, self renewal, and the gradual development of a bracing personal philosophy is relevant and powerful. Readers are shown that throughout his life Pedro has come to accept responsibility for his own destiny, and has turned this responsibility into a source of personal strength and joy.

Nell Arnold's personal contributions throughout the book are less valuable. They tend to confuse, rather than illuminate Pedro's life lessons. This is unfortunate, given the simple style and lay-out of the book, which reflects Pedro's presentations to school children. The text is light and accessible, with key points enlarged for discussion, and information chunked into small paragraphs. *Three Warriors Within* would be of enormous value to lessons focusing on self-esteem and self-empowerment.

Rebecca Sylvester
rebeccas@maitland.nsw.gov.au

Planet Google: how one company is transforming our lives



Randall Stross
Atlantic Books, 2009
ISBN: 9781843549826
RRP: \$24.95

Google has been with us for little more than a decade. In that time it has attained a remarkable influence in many work and personal spaces. This book explores its development and achievements. Given the book's business orientation, we also learn a little about competitors such as Microsoft and Yahoo.

Author Stross, an American business academic and newspaper columnist, writes with an engaging style that succeeds in synthesising and effectively presenting a great deal of information. Eight catchy-titled chapters focus on particular matters that have influenced Google's evolution. Throughout there is consideration of business plans (or non-plans), and ethical issues such as privacy and copyright.

Extensive accompanying notes (56 pages) are disconcertingly linked to the text by neither footnote nor endnote. Instead the reader must depend upon linking by pagination – possibly the publisher's decision to 'dumb down' an academic approach? A useful index provides entry to both text and notes.

Google's founders supposedly arrived at its name as a result of a misspelled domain-name search. I doubt that they considered googly (a ball seeming that it will break one way, but going the other). Still, it's natural, when considering a company instituted with the motto "don't be evil", and now having so much power outside our control, for us to beware of the googly.

Recommended for anyone wanting to improve their awareness of the rationale, history, and development of the company that increasingly influences our lives.

Michael Middleton
m.middleton@qut.edu.au

//the_uses_of_digital_literacy//



John Hartley
University of Queensland Press, 2009
ISBN: 9780702237003
RRP: \$35.00

Steeped in the tradition of intellectual prose, Hartley takes what appears to be an interesting and relevant topic and turns it into a dry and academic treatise on what 'cultural studies' was, is, and should be. Richard Hoggart was the father of cultural studies, and this book claims to carry on where *The Uses of Literacy* left off 50 years ago, incorporating modern digital media into the picture.

Part of the Creative Economy + Innovation Culture series, the topics explored range from repurposing literacy and education for innovation, investigating the media/creative/user-created industries, exploring narrative through youtube and digital storytelling, and considering fashion as consumer entrepreneurship. One of the dangers of writing about the digital age within print form is that new media is not included. Hartley suffers this with Twitter not even being a twinkle in the internet's eye when this book was written.

To cultural studies theorists, this book may well become as famous as Hoggart's tome, however to readers not versed in the academic history and politics of the area, it is not as a whole worth reading. Librarians and their role in the new multimedia world of education are not considered by Hartley, however it would be a useful book for students of cultural studies and English teachers to gain a contemporary understanding of literacy in the digital world.

Naomi Doessel
naomidoessel@gmail.com

Me and you



Geneviève Côté
Puffin Books, 2009
ISBN: 9780143504047
RRP: \$14.95

Rabbit and Pig are two friends who envy each other's looks. But when they both fall into a puddle, and begin to look alike, they realize that they much prefer the differences between them. With limited sentences and a repetitious structure, the story is largely told through the pleasantly coloured illustrations. I particularly liked the use of a small green frog (on the Pig side of the book), who could be 'found' on most pages by child readers. The storyline also allows the possibility of rabbit/pig play activities for storytelling sessions in a public library, as both characters use socks, fairy floss, big shoes, and a pair of stockings to change their appearance.

Nicely illustrated, this book would be most suitable for pre-school reading.

Deborah Mould
debmould@yahoo.com

Every secret thing



Marie Munkara
University of Queensland Press, 2009
ISBN: 9780702237195
RRP: \$24.95

Humorous, witty, exceptional story telling – Marie Munkara brings us to the far north, face-to-face with the Mission Mob and the Bush Mob, the early Catholic missionaries, and the aboriginal people they encountered. You could not find two more disparate groups, and the coming together is hilarious – to start with.

There's a naive, childlike quality to the story telling that enables difficult stories to be told by presenting plain and simple truths – the humour of the Bush Mob, the slow erosion of their quality of life and cohesion as a society through the interference of the outside world, and the pollution, metaphorical and literal, brought by the outsiders. Despite the harm done, the human frailty of the Mission Mob is presented in a matter of fact, non-judgemental way; in fact, there is a dignifying attempt to humanise the people who (unknowingly?) caused so much harm.

Munkara brings the facts to light without seeking to establish a burden of guilt on the reader. We can be drawn into her world with our minds and eyes open, to laugh until we cry.

Adrienne Walker
adriennew@internode.on.net

Censoring an Iranian love story



Shahriar Mandanipour
Little, Brown Book Group Limited, 2009
ISBN: 9781408702222
RRP: \$29.95

Shahriar Mandanipour's multi-layered exploration of censorship in modern-day Iran comes from a good place, but is at times disorientating for the reader. A fictional narrative dispersed between layers of history, Iranian literature, and the writer's own struggles to write a love story free from censorship, *Love Story* is obviously a labour of love for the author. The award-winning Iranian writer's journey to create a love story based in a society where contact between men and women is strictly forbidden is at times compelling, but at other points seems to lose the plot completely. Insightful and self aware, Mandanipour inserts himself and his struggle for publication into the story, writing and rewriting scenes from the main narrative and striking lines out in self censorship. However, while this constant diversion from the fictional narrative to the author's personal struggle (which is the real story of this novel) allows Mandanipour to express his characters' feelings in a way they cannot themselves, it is at times patronising and difficult to follow as the line between fiction and reality becomes too often blurred. The writer, like the reader, seems lost in the fictional world he has created.

Nella Scott
nscott@luxurytravelmag.com.au

Aussie legends



Tom Baddeley
Tracey Gibbs, illustrator
Freemantle Press, 2009
ISBN: 9781921361609
RRP: \$19.95

In a time of celebrity worship, Gen Y's keen on their 15 minutes of fame, and children wanting to be 'famous' when they grow up, it was a pleasure to read Tom Baddeley's rhymes about six of our Aussie legends.

From Burke and Wills to Phar Lap and Yvonne Goolagong Cawley, this little book is full of rhythm and fun about Australia's pioneer, sporting, and cultural spirit.

The stylised illustrations supplement the raft of facts contained within. This book is suited to primary school aged learners of Australian history. The rhymes would assist in maintaining children's interest in the six varied episodes in Australia's history. Tom Baddeley's writing style brings alive the diverse characters and some heroic and tragic chapters of Australia's past.

Diane Hollingsworth
dianehollingsworth@hotmail.com

Combat Medic: an Australian's eyewitness account of the Kibeho Massacre



Terry Pickard
Big Sky Publishing, 2008
ISBN: 9780980325126
RRP: \$29.95

On the 22nd of April, 1995, 2000 Rwandan soldiers attacked 150 000 defenceless and frightened refugees in a place called Kibeho. Medic Terry Pickard was one of 32 Australian medical staff and infantrymen who struggled to treat victims they were unable to protect in the midst of unbelievable brutality.

This book cannot be held at a distance – yet the role of reviewer requires we untangle thoughts and emotion; that we evaluate and compare. *Combat Medic* can be viewed with that same discipline, but from a larger stage than that played on by popular history or academic analysis. My literary judgement is that this work fulfils one of the basic, finer roles of the writer – which is to bear witness.

The author's credentials as a witness are immaculate; the writing is honest, impartial, and controlled as he takes us into hell with him, unsparing and wide-eyed, reporting things from which he still struggles to emerge years later.

Combat Medic is suitable for public and college libraries, as war history, and as a case study for Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Rhonda Cotsell
rhonda.cotsell@canberra.edu.au

The book of other people



Edited by Zadie Smith
Penguin, 2007
ISBN: 9780141029320
RRP: \$23.95

This is an eclectic and sometimes puzzling collection of compositions created by a similarly eclectic array of authors in response to the directive "to make somebody up". Each work goes by the name of the character at its heart, and was donated by its author so that profits from sales of the collection go towards a project called NYC826 which supports students in developing their skills in creative and expository writing. The contributors list is enticing – Zadie Smith, Colm Toibin, Nick Hornby, Jonathan Safran Foer, Hari Kunzru featuring among them. Mostly, they don't disappoint. There are two graphic short stories included, some plain humorous stories, some perplexing, but as a whole the collection illustrates the breadth of valid treatments that creators use to establish character, so that as a project it exemplifies the charity it supports.

Some of the works were less satisfactory than others – many were neat and entertaining, some concentrated on character at the expense of readability. Toibin's reluctant prodigal Irish son at his mother's death bed is reminiscent of "Brooklyn" in some ways. Foer's vignette, "Rhoda", is almost stereotypical but nonetheless entertaining. On the whole an interesting exercise to dip into.

Bronwyn McLoughlin
rbmsgmcl@ozemail.com.au