

2010 - 2011 READING GUIDE

Summer reading



The Heir of Night

Helen Lowe
Orbit, 2010
ISBN: 978-0-356-50008-9
RRP: \$24.99

The Heir of Night is an engaging read that elegantly draws the reader into the life of Malian, the heir of night. Lowe delivers a well-crafted tale that not only introduces us to the likeable Malian but also delicately reveals layers of increasing complexity within the plotline, as Malian begins to discover her heritage and potential by facing the ancient enemy of her people, "the swarm". As Malian progresses on her journey of self-discovery, the reader follows, discovering the vibrant and rich world of Lowe's creation. This is an excellent read for pre-teen, teen, and young adult readers who are fans of the genre and despite content, themes, and language suitable for younger audiences adult readers may find it equally engaging.

The richness, depth, and the gradual revelation of the world's complexity will appeal to many readers. However, at times the flow of the storyline seems a little jerky as suspense is built up to a climax only to be followed by slower, almost uneventful chapters. This weakness aside, *The Heir of Night* is an excellent read and a stunning introduction to *The Wall of Night* series and I am sure many readers will eagerly await the sequel.

Rowan Michael

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Serious men

Manu Joseph
John Murray,
2010
ISBN:

9781848543126
RRP: \$32.99

Ayyan Mani and Arvind Acharya seem like opposites to the reader at first. Ayyan is from the untouchable Dalit caste, and is the clerk to Arvind, a genius from the Brahmin caste who runs the Institute of Theory and Research, a scientific institution dedicated to the "pursuit of truth". To Arvind, this pursuit

culminates in the search for microscopic aliens high in the earth's atmosphere. Ayyan is less concerned with truth, and more concerned with elevating his own stature through the genius of his son, whether this genius is in fact true or not. Initially engaged in an intricate game of caste rivalry, the effect that the beautiful young scientist Opama has on Arvind, and then the Institute, results in the game turning to political and academic one-upmanship and Ayyan finds himself playing on a much larger scale. But will he balance or will he fall? This is a wonderful novel, an engaging read with sometimes harsh insights into the caste culture of India, the politics of academia, the search for extra-terrestrial life, and ultimately male comradeship and respect for actions and intelligence outside of the social system. A must read.

Naomi Doessel

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Beneath the pale blue burqa: one woman's journey through Taliban strongholds

Author: Kay Danes
Publisher: Big Sky
Publishing, 2010
ISBN: 9780980658286
RRP: \$34.99

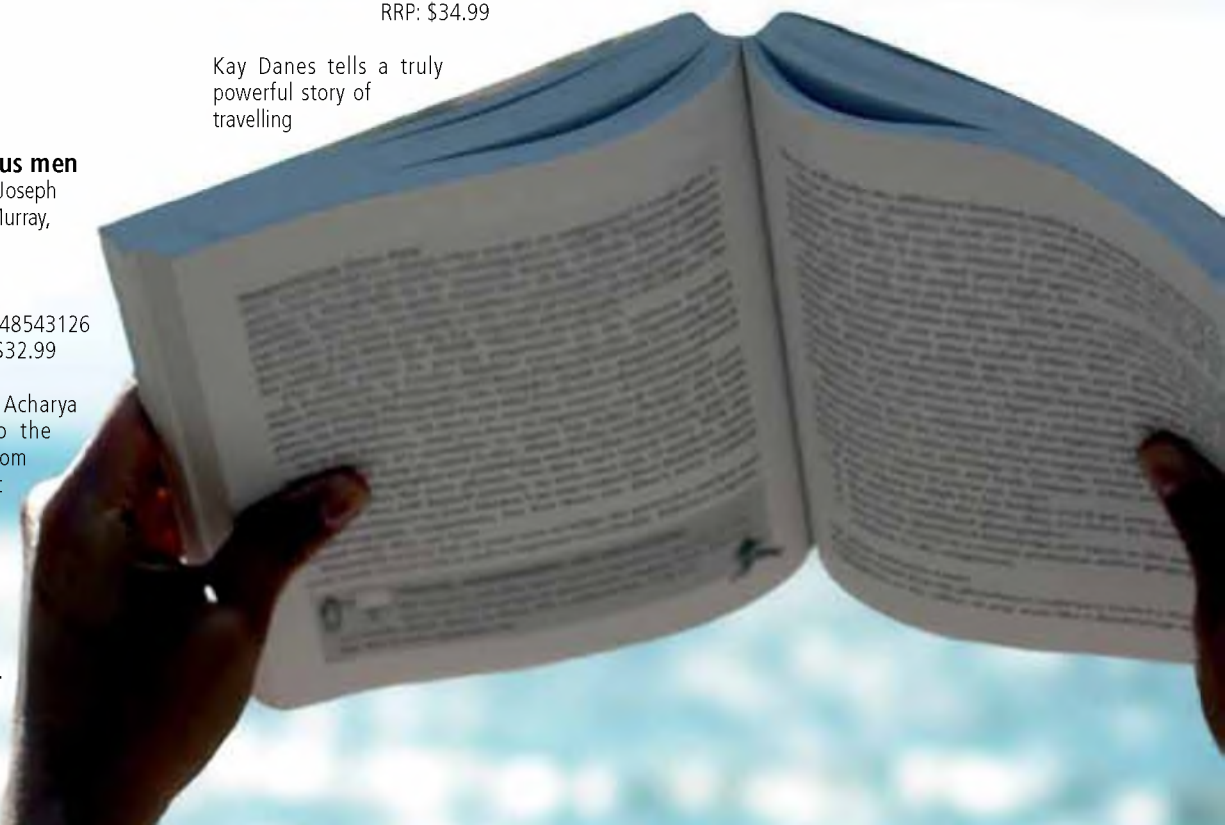
through the Taliban strongholds and the rare places journalists and the world cameras never dare to visit or explain to westerners. Having survived an 11 month hostage ordeal in Laos and the longing to see their children, husband and wife Kay and Kerry Danes remained determined to piece back together family life; Kerry returning to active duty with the Special Forces and Kay embarking on a humanitarian aid mission venturing beyond the safe zones in war torn Afghanistan to develop small initiatives delivering life changing opportunities to Afghan communities.

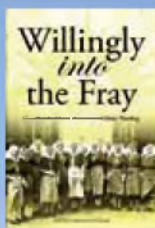
As a leading international humanitarian. Kay has presented much needed focus on the struggles of Afghan communities and especially women and children in the remote wastelands of Al Qaeda terrorists through this book. Her own inspirational insight - from within places no-one dares to venture and most wish simply to ignore - proves the strength, courage and sacrifice of those creating social justice in a world of terrorism. Grip your seat as you relive Kay and her companion's ordeal as they drive the ancient Silk Road amidst kidnappings, suicide bombings, carnage and chaos.

Colette Stapleton

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Kay Danes tells a truly powerful story of travelling





Willingly into the fray: One hundred years of Australian nursing

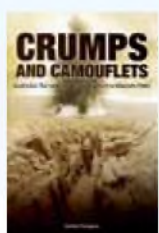
Editor: Catherine McCullagh
 Publisher: Big Sky Publishing, 2010
 ISBN: 9780980658262
 RRP: \$34.99

Willingly into the Fray encapsulates the essence and experience of the past 100 years of Australian nursing with stories from both RAANC veterans and current serving members. Many of the stories explore truly Australian characteristics with humour and heart-warming statements complementing the strong historical context of Australian nursing. Personal recollections are collected in sections including the Boer War, World War I, World War II, The Korean War, The Malayan Emergency, The Vietnam War, Gulf War I, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, Bougainville, East Timor, Gulf War II, Banda Aceh, accompanied by photos from the RAANC archives.

This first compilation for Cathy McCullagh, an experienced military army officer, is a celebration of the dedication of Australian nurses. *Willingly into the Fray* is an enjoyable appreciation of the nursing profession and its professionals, an absolutely beautiful representation of the vast changes in society forming the history of the RAANC.

Colette Stapleton

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Crumps and camoufllets: Australian tunnelling companies on the Western Front

Damien Finlayson
 Publisher: Big Sky Publishing
 ISBN: 9780980658255
 RRP: \$29.50

After reading Les Carlyon's *Gallipoli* and *The Great War*, I could hardly believe that a stone had been left unturned – and then I was handed *Crumps and Camoufllets*.

In something as large as the First World War, there are bound to be small groups of specialists who get overlooked later when the histories are written. Damien Finlayson's book addresses this on behalf of the Australians who made up the Australian Tunnelling Companies deployed on the Western Front between 1916 and the cessation of hostilities. Their tasks included digging underground shelters for soldiers, stores and machinery; creating instant communications trenches during offensives; and tunnelling forward under No-Man's Land to the German lines, where large

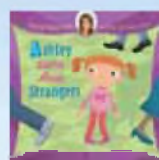
– sometimes enormous – quantities of explosive were planted, later to be detonated much to the surprise and demise of the enemy – the original 'land mines'.

They also attempted to monitor and counter the German attempts to do the same thing to the Allied lines. Whilst doing this, they had to deal with all the usual difficulties miners have to contend with: deadly gas (such as carbon monoxide) build-ups in the tunnels, bad ground and tunnel collapses, as well as everything else the War brought in abundance – the shooting, shelling, and unsanitary insanity suffered by all.

Finlayson's book has an ample sprinkling of diary material from members of the Companies, saving the book from being a dry historical tome, and is well-illustrated with many photos that I'm sure have not been seen in the numerous, more general, histories of WW1. I'm personally delighted to add this book to my library.

Barry Miller

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Helping Hand Books series

Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York
 Sterling, 2010
 RRP: \$11.99 each



Ashley learns about strangers
 ISBN: 9781402773938

Emily's first day at school
 ISBN: 9781402773921



Matthew and the bullies
 ISBN: 9781402773914



Michael and his new baby brother
 ISBN: 9781402773907

Madonna has done it, Kevin Rudd has done it, even Barack Obama has done it and now Sarah Ferguson Duchess of York, has done it again.

Ferguson has written a number of books, this time a series of Helping Hand Books for children. The four books are illustrated by Ian Cunliffe and are for children with reading ages of 4-7 years. They are simple stories of common challenges for children and about issues that concern parents. The books cover topics of children learning to deal with a new baby in the family, the first day of school, strangers and bullying. Designed to be read by parent and child together, the intent is to create an environment in which the child is comfortable discussing the problem.

Each of the issues is dealt with in a positive, albeit simplistic, way. If only family life with children was this easy! The real value of these books lies in the tips for parents written by a

child psychologist, Dr Richard Woolfson, located at the end of each story.

Will the kids care who wrote the stories? Probably not. These books will be successful with children if they can relate to them and enjoy them. They are instructive and there is always a happy ending.

Diane Hollingsworth

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Memoirs of a showgirl: From Brisvegas to the Champs Elysee

Shay Stafford
 Hachette Australia, 2010
 ISBN 9780733624872
 RRP: \$35.00

An intense publicity campaign has surrounded the recent release of Shay Stafford's autobiography *Memoirs of a Showgirl*. Whilst the book mostly recounts her life in France as a dancer at the famous Moulin Rouge and Lido cabarets, it also charts her professional journey, beginning with childhood ballet lessons in Queensland, progressing to jobs in Gold Coast casinos, then to contracts in Japan and Malaysia before she reaches the top of her field (and long-held dream) in Paris.

Shay described her decade-long relationship with her adopted city and its inhabitants as "seven parts fascination and three parts frustration". Her approach is honest and the story includes her culture shock (job nudity), tumultuous relationships and backstage dramas, yet it never strays into self-pity. A glamorous nightlife is contrasted with personal difficulties and the efforts of performing shows twelve times a week.

Shay (assisted by her husband, journalist Bryce Corbett) writes with charm and humour; she keenly depicts the characters and a melting pot of nationalities. However, there are some production flaws: sharper editing would have removed typos, clichés and repeated phrases. The book's structure – five acts totalling 53 chapters – would have benefited from a table of contents. I was also disappointed that there were not more photographs, especially of her colleagues.

The book ends with her return to Australia, now as a wife and mother of two. Though 'showgirl mums' exist in the industry, she is ready to pursue a different direction. I enjoyed *Memoirs of a Showgirl* far more than I expected, and I strongly recommend it.

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