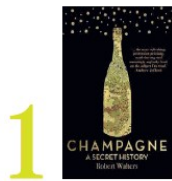


5 BOOKS IN 5 MINUTES



1

Wine
CHAMPAGNE: A SECRET HISTORY
Robert Walters
Allen & Unwin \$32.99
The Champenois invented marketing/brand-management and their region is today the most successfully represented worldwide. The great houses produce and blend their own styles that remain consistent over the years – a remarkable feat considering the volumes.

Walters questions, in an honest and well balanced examination, whether this results in the very best wines possible. He concludes: not always.

In his sometimes controversial and contrary investigation of the area, its history and products, he engages in some myth-busting and introduces some grower-producers taking a different approach, whose terroir-driven styles offer an alternative perspective on the region. Champagne lovers will enjoy this book and the comprehensive tasting notes. Don't believe all the marketing, and try Walters' recommendations.
NICK STORER ★★★★★



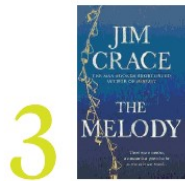
2

Fantasy
GONE DRAGON
T.P. Sheehan
Querencia Books \$29.95
The good news is that the plot of *Gone Dragon* will resound beautifully with fantasy fans, thanks to its potent mix of warriors, magic, politics, betrayal and mighty dragons. The better news is that its sequels – this is Book 1 – may well be even better.

SA author Tom Sheehan has set up wonderfully for what is to follow, with a complex story that grabs the reader and barely loosens its grip until the end.

There's a sense that the writing, which could use a little tightening, will become more polished as the series goes on to hit new heights.

Fans will be clamouring to find out what happens next to our hero Magnus and his true love Catanya, both of whom are becoming much more than they could ever have imagined.
SCOTT MOORE ★★★★★



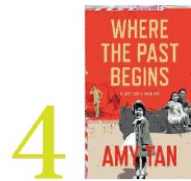
3

Fiction
THE MELODY
Jim Crace
Picador \$32.99
In a nondescript European town the fading but famous musician Alfred Busi reflects on the horror that is ageing. Known to one and all as Mister Al, he rambles about his childhood home by the sea, both the character and the setting stuck with one foot in the past.

Lost in grief for his recently deceased wife, Busi's world is shattered when he is attacked by a feral child. The assault and Busi's battered and bruised appearance harden community attitudes towards those living at the edges, with shattering effect.

Crace reflects on age, loneliness and the all too human tendency to treat animals far better than members of our own species.

The narrative moves slowly through flashbacks and introspection, but lays bare the cruelty humans are capable of unleashing on each other.
MITCH MOTT ★★★★★



4

Memoir
WHERE THE PAST BEGINS
Amy Tan
4th Estate \$32.99*
Tan has already explored mother-daughter relationships in her fiction. In this memoir, she recounts her own experiences as a Chinese American growing up in the 1960s.

She surprises with stories of her parents in pre-communist China, their lives as earnest Christian immigrants, her education and her relationship with her mother. This became more intense after her older brother and father both died of brain tumours when Tan was 15.

The most poignant part of her memories is the recounting of her mother's instability – which often strayed into sheer cruelty. Tan describes well the forgiveness needed, and the love and loyalty which her family tradition both inspires and demands. Her fans will relish the story behind her stories.

ROBYN DOUGLASS ★★★★★
*\$19.95 from News Shop, 31 Weymouth St, city, 8206 3317



5

Picturebook
LOLA DUTCH IS A LITTLE BIT MUCH
Kenneth and Sarah Jane Wright
Bloomsbury \$24.99

From an American husband and wife team, this light, bright, exuberant book is one of a growing genre in which little girls are parented (or buttered) by large, loving, long-suffering bears.

Effervescent, extravagant but affectionate Lola Dutch has three other sidekicks – an alligator, a pig and a crane – and a positive fountain of creative ideas: breakfast is a lavish French feast, a visit to the library results in truckloads of borrowings and a book on the great artists furnishes a room with Lola's zappy look-alikes including Bear playing God on the ceiling to her Man.

The book zings with colour against generous white space and the inside of the dust jacket makes a replica of Lola's elegant house with cut-outs of Lola and Bear in typical poses for the young reader to deploy inside it.
KATHARINE ENGLAND ★★★★★

Ties that bind families link two debuts

WORDS MARGOT LLOYD

This week belongs to two glorious, compulsive, considered Aussie debuts, both about the lengths people will go to keep their families together.

Kali Napier's *The Secrets at Ocean's Edge* starts on a far-flung farm in Western Australia at the beginning of the Depression. Girlie Hass and her parents, Lily and Ernie, are preparing to pack up their life and move to the seaside. They've defaulted on their loans, but Ernie's hopeful they can make a new start in Dongarra, where they plan to run a guesthouse.

Lily – straight, proper, trying to do her best with a bad lot and desperate to impress the CWA ladies – has misgivings, but she doesn't realise the extent of Ernie's debt. Girlie, on the other hand, can never seem to do right by her mother, and is aware that there's something unsaid in her household. She just doesn't know what it is. With the arrival of Lily's brother, shell-shocked and unpredictable, and the realisation that Dongarra is hiding its own secrets, it becomes clear that keeping up appearances might be the least of the Hasses' worries.

The Secrets at Ocean's Edge is a powerful story, and the title itself doesn't quite do it justice. Napier has a firm hold on her plot and characters, investigating the world of

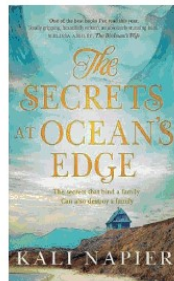
Dongarra through the lens of Girlie's naivety, Lily's craftiness and Ernie's endless misplaced optimism. They're all well-drawn, but Lily is mesmerising. Though she's desperate for social power and occasionally cruel to her daughter, it's still impossible not to feel for her as she tries to outrun her past.

But this is a story of a time as much as a family. The CWA meetings and the six o'clock swill are familiar, so too the ugly race relations and dangerous gossip. The Hasses could be any lower middle-class family of the era, and there's a real pleasure in seeing the Depression through Napier's eyes.

Colin Dray's *Sign* is another story told through the eyes of a child. But Sam is no ordinary kid, having just had a laryngectomy to deal with an unspecified cancer. We meet him just after this operation, when the full impact of never being able to speak again is starting to hit home.

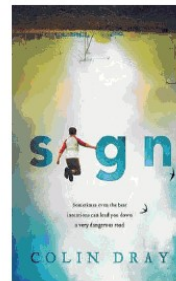
Taking care of Sam and his little sister Katie is their mum, hassled and trying to make ends meet, and their Aunt Dettie. Since their dad left a few years earlier, Dettie has become a constant in Sam and Katie's life: sometimes strict, sometimes a bit old-fashioned, but loving all the same. That is, until she announces that the family is going to be reunited in Perth, on the other side of the country, where their father is waiting.

Longlisted for the Vogel Award in 2015,



Fiction
THE SECRETS AT OCEAN'S EDGE
Kali Napier
Hachette \$29.99

Sign is one of those books that picks up pace as it goes along. The farther away from NSW the trio travels, the higher the stakes. It's hot and uncomfortable, tempers are fraying, and they seem to be headed straight into bushfire country. At the same time, Sam is trying to work out what's going on with Aunt Dettie, and how to yell for help without a voice.



Fiction
SIGN
Colin Dray
HQ \$29.99

Like Napier, Dray knows how to write from a child's point of view without being patronising, which makes his descriptions of Sam's first weeks without a voice even more moving. As the tension mounts during the car trip west, though, Dray moves into darker territory, exploring the unspeakable things we can do for the people we love the most.