

**FUEL FOR MIND**



**Notable Australian  
Children's Books 2008**



# younger readers

**BOURAS, Gillian**  
**APHRODITE ALEXANDRA**  
Illustrated by Anna PIGNATARO  
Lothian Children's Books, Hachette Livre Australia  
ISBN 9780734409966  
59 pages

This special story is told with subtlety using sparse, well-phrased language. Presented in chapters, there is a depth to this short narrative and an almost lyrical quality that crosses generations, relationships and cultures. The painterly illustrations match the text well, and aptly reflect Aphrodite Alexandra's dilemma: she dearly wants her two grandmothers to get along with each other, overcoming family differences and cultural divides. The protagonist faces a situation that is common in contemporary society, reassuring readers faced with similar difficulties.

**BROOKSBANK, Anne**  
**SIR KATHERINE**  
Puffin, Penguin Books Australia  
ISBN 9780143302841  
222 pages

After Katherine's parents die of the plague, she is raised as a boy by her grandmother. She is drawn into a dangerous quest, her skill with sword and bow and arrow stand her in good stead when she is confronted by giants, dragons and magic treasure. The plot thickens once King Arthur makes her one of his knights. This truly magical, mythical tale builds to an exciting climax, yet the plot retains its integrity and the characters remain true.

**CIDDOR, Anna**  
**NIGHT OF THE FIFTH MOON**  
Allen & Unwin  
ISBN 9781741148145  
243 pages

Six fosterlings strive to become the chosen anruth in this richly detailed story set in the time of the Druids in ancient Ireland. Tangible imagery evokes living in, and celebrating, the seasons. The characters portray a breadth of human behaviour, and readers should be able to easily suspend disbelief and empathize with each of the fosterlings. In particular, we feel Ket's desire to become the next Druid. The historical setting is fascinating in this adventurous and highly original tale.

## ★ SHORT LIST 2008

**CLARK, Sheryl**  
**SIXTH GRADE STYLE QUEEN (NOT!)**  
Illustrated by Elissa CHRISTIAN  
Puffin Books, Penguin Group Australia  
ISBN 9780143303008  
65 pages

How refreshing to have such a wonderful collection of bite-sized poem-paragraphs. Dawn feels the odd one out,

not interested in boys or the popular group, and is on the cusp of growing up. Her drastic actions in response to the fighting and yelling when her parents decide to divorce make everyone wake up and listen to each other. The notebook style, with its use of green ink, is unusual and effective. This book makes a genuine contribution to literature dealing with family break-up.

**DAVIS, Tony**  
**ROLAND WRIGHT FUTURE KNIGHT**  
Illustrated by Gregory ROGERS  
Random House Australia  
ISBN 9781741662290  
118 pages

Informative, fast and funny, this is the charming first story of Roland Wright who wants to be a knight against all odds (only boys from noble families can even dream of becoming a knight). When mysterious visitors arrive in the village Roland has the opportunity to become a page, the first step to knighthood! The characters are likeable and the theme of the Middle Ages and knights has direct appeal. Roland's pet mouse is delightfully depicted at the end of each chapter.

**FLANAGAN, John**  
**ERAK'S RANSOM**  
Random House Australia  
ISBN 9781741662092  
441 pages

Will, a Ranger's apprentice, sets out with his friend Halt to deliver the ransom to secure the captured Skandian, Oberjarl Erak. The adventures are set against the backdrop of an unforgiving desert, and involve a sheik, a nomadic Bedouin-like tribe and a group of murderous fanatics. The fantasy is fast, bloody and dramatic, counterbalanced with humorous details addressing social niceties, weddings, political negotiations, practical jokes and love. Fans will devour it and readers new to the series will want more.

**FLANAGAN, John**  
**THE SIEGE OF MACINDAW**  
Random House Australia  
ISBN 9781741661347  
331 pages

Here is an exciting, interesting and detailed adventure book, from the well-crafted *Ranger's Apprentice* series. There is a full quest of heroism and bravery, with small hints of magic, humour and romance to round it out. As with the previous titles, this is good quality writing without gimmickry that appeals to readers of all ages. Detailed descriptions of the setting plus unfolding action enhance the plot and further the suspense. A good read that stands alone well