

Waite, Judy

Lena's Story (The Street)

Bloomsbury, 2017, pp96, £5.99
978 1 4729 3400 0

Part of *The Street* series, where each book focuses on a different character within a group of friends living on the imaginary Swatton Street, *Lena's Story* is an engaging and enjoyable read.

Lena Kowlaski is out with her friend, Chelsea when she spots an abandoned puppy and decides to rescue it. At the same time two hooded cyclists nearly run her down and clip the dog in the process. This incident ignites a chain of events that complicate Lena's busy life. Her dad wants her to get a job waitressing and it would fill the time that she can't spend in the local theatre school now it has closed. However, Lena wants to spend time with the puppy not serving coffee. Then, when a wallet belonging to her boss goes missing, dad points the finger at her friends, Lena feels she can't take anymore. A dramatic gesture brings events to head and Lena finds out who her friends really are.

Lena's Story is a hi/lo style quick read and is printed on yellow paper, therefore making it suitable for some forms of dyslexia. There is also a twelve question multiple choice quiz at the end, along with discussion questions to make the reader think about the issues raised in the story. This book would be a great addition to any library collection, appealing to reluctant readers and students with dyslexia in the first instance. It would also be great for more guided reading sessions. The story is suitable for Year 7 upwards.

Sam Sinclair

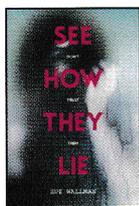
Wallman, Sue

See How They Lie

Scholastic, 2017, pp320, £7.99
978 1 4071 6538 7

Mae has grown up at the idyllic and exclusive Hummingbird Creek Facility, part-resort, part-rehab. As the daughter of the brilliant psychologist who runs it, she enjoys access to the same sports training, recreational facilities and medical care as the troubled teens whose lives the Creek lifestyle is supposed to turn around. But as Mae's longing for life outside the Creek grows, the more obvious it becomes that the Creek will never let her go without a fight.

This is a gripping psychological thriller; the build-up is slow, but for me that only deepened the mystery. There is so much to learn about life at the Creek that it was never boring, just suspenseful. I would however, have liked a bit more detail in the ending as the mystery unravels and we hurtle towards an action-packed finish. A few more answers about how



this went on for so long would have been satisfying. But Mae's feeling of being trapped will resonate with many readers desperate to take their next step beyond school, as will her curiosity about the world outside her narrow experience. There is of course the almost compulsory blossoming romance but it was subtle and peripheral, more another aspect of Mae's development than a box-ticking exercise. The real strength of the book is the world of Hummingbird Creek, perhaps not utterly realistic, but fully realised and totally complete.

Andrea Regan

Winter, Tamsin

Being Miss Nobody

Usborne, 2017, pp384, £6.99
978 1 4749 2727 7

Rosalind has more to contend with than many 11 year olds. Her younger brother Seb has cancer, she cannot talk when not in her family group and she is being bullied at her new secondary school. She decides to do something about the latter and sets up a blog as 'Miss Nobody', so that she can face the bullies and give other victims a voice. But what can she do when her persona is hijacked and people start being really hurt by the online taunts and threats? As a series of tragedies follow one after the other how will she ever get things sorted out?

There are quite a few stories about being online at the moment and they vary from the light-hearted to the really serious; this is definitely in the latter category. The themes are ones that affect many young people but which they have difficulty dealing with if they go wrong. The underlying story thread is about coping with disaster in the family and the way that families and friends can support each other through the dark times.

The author has balanced the various stories and created a truly heart-breaking tale, but there is light at the end of the tunnel and we all learn that it is best to tell the truth, rather than try and hide from it. Definitely a book not to be read on public transport; the last couple of chapters had me grabbing for the box of tissues. Highly recommended.

Margaret Pemberton

Worley, Wendy

Echoes of Friendship

Silverwood Books, 2017, pp222, £8.99
978 1 78132 597 1

From a small collection of photographs, letters and memorabilia from her own family history, the author has crafted a powerful story of the First World War and skilfully interwoven it with a story of today, of bullying, friendship and a school trip

to the First World War battlefields. Fifteen-year-old Andy is sensitive and introverted, his parents are separated, there is little money in the house and he doesn't get on with his Dad. A school project sparks an interest in his family tree, something which his Aunt Jean is able to help him with, and she supplies him with transcripts of letters which his great-grandfather Matt (known as Mac) sent from the Western front. The letters show that Mac befriended a German soldier, Hans, during the war, and that their friendship lasted after the war was over. How this occurred is a mystery that Andy is determined to solve.

A new girl joins Andy's class, Sophe, from Germany. She and Andy get on really well, they share their interests and their friendship blossoms, to the annoyance of Dan, the leading bully, who torments Andy at every opportunity. Andy is unable to discuss the bullying but Sophe soon realises the problem, which comes to a head on the school trip when Andy bravely faces up to his tormentor. Andy's and Sophe's relationship parallels the international friendship between Mac and Hans, and after one more term at Andy's school, Sophe, like Hans, has to return to Germany. Will their relationship continue, as Mac and Hans's did?

Powerfully and vividly drawn, this is a warm and sensitive portrayal of friendship and loss, of overcoming fear and of the common bonds of humanity. At times the prose is spare and haunting, as with the description of a beautiful September evening the moment before a gas attack, and Mac's horror at having to watch a colleague shot by a firing squad.

With the clever technique of the alternating Mac and Andy chapters being in the first person and present tense (Mac) and third person/past tense (Andy), the author has skilfully brought the past into the present and linked the two stories together into one relevant whole. This is a story that will resonate on several levels with many teenagers, and is thoroughly recommended.

Steve Hird

12 to 16 Information

Bowen, Meurig and Bowen, Rachel

The School of Music

Illustrated by Daniel Frost
Wide Eyed Editions, 2017, pp96, £14.99
978 1 8478 0860 8

This book looks really attractive and highly inviting and also it is very unusual in both content and organisation. At one level it is certainly extremely informative about music in general including the essence of music itself, from how instruments are played to rhythm and harmony. But it is also a textbook in structure asking a reader to work through page by page