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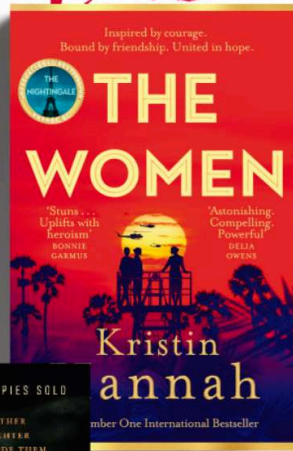
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Gifts for all

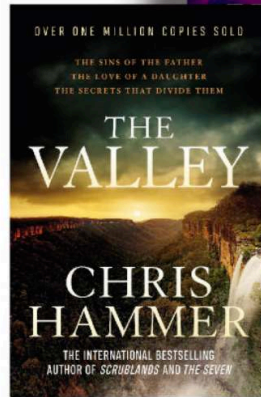
Christmas book guide



footsteps of her serving brother and joins the Army Nurses Corps, she has no idea what awaits her in the evacuation hospital on the other side of the world. The heat hits her first. Then the smell: excrement and fish. Kristin Hannah's wartime novel is a gut-wrenchingly real portrayal of the chaos, destruction and trauma of war. It's also a testament to the sacrifice and courage of those who served, especially the women, whose commitment to their country is all too often forgotten. A powerful and timeless read, as you would expect from the bestselling author of *Firefly Lane* and *The Nightingale*.

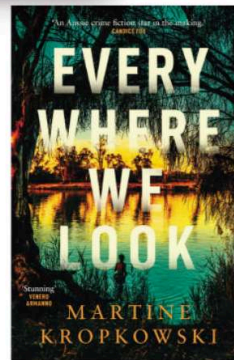
Page turners

The Valley by Chris Hammer, *Allen & Unwin*
Hallelujah, it's Hammer time! Australia's reigning king of outback crime fiction is back with *The Valley*. Set in a fictional (yet eerily real) village with a history of gold mining and logging, the story begins when a body is found in the Broken River. The cause of death: murder. The detective on the case: Nell Buchanan. The story that follows is a windy road with unexpected turns and an almighty cliffhanger, much like the drive into the valley itself. Chris Hammer – the bestselling author of *Scrublands* and *Silver* – does it again.



Big Little Lies. Indeed, it's every bit as engrossing, and it deals with many of the same themes: domestic abuse, female friendship and motherhood. The story centres on three friends on a weekend away in the countryside a year after a tragic incident ricocheted like a bullet through their lives. It's a weekend of reckoning, and a hell of a read. Prepare to be completely absorbed and thoroughly entertained.

Everywhere We Look by Martine Kropkowski, *Ultimo*
They say comparison is the thief of joy. Unless you're an author being compared to Liane Moriarty. Martine Kropkowski's debut novel, *Everywhere We Look*, is being hailed as the next



The Women by Kristin Hannah, *Pan Macmillan*
It's 1965, war is raging in Vietnam and anti-war protests are boiling over in the States. When Californian Frances "Frankie" McGrath follows in the



The Blue Hour by Paula Hawkins, *Penguin Random House*
This story is governed by the tides. Set on Eris, a small Scottish island with one house, one resident and one causeway only accessible at low tide, this book is a breath of fresh, salty air. The island was once the home of Vanessa, a late, great artist, and is now inhabited by her confidant and friend, Grace. When a shocking discovery is made at a London art gallery, the secrets of Vanessa, Grace and Eris come to the surface. Paula Hawkins – of *The Girl on the Train* – delivers a heart-pumping mystery.





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For fans of real stories *by real people (and dogs)*

Living in Tin by Linda Wells,

Ginninderra Press

It started as a tin shed. In 1914, The Bungalow was built in Alice Springs (Mparntwe) to house Arabana woman Topsy Smith and her seven children after their Welsh-born father, Bill Smith, died. Topsy was the first of many Aboriginal mothers and their children who lived in The Bungalow. Author Linda Wells paints a vivid picture of The Bungalow using archival documents, oral histories and interviews. The result is a magnificent reflection on time gone by, and a worthy recipient of the 2024 NT Chief Minister's Book Award for non-fiction.



Kingmaker

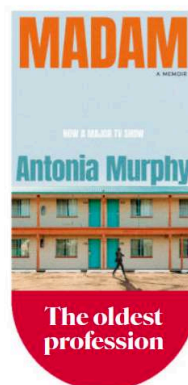
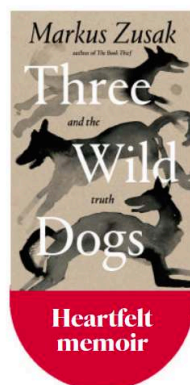
by Sonia Purnell, *Hachette*

Among the many books written about Sir Winston Churchill, *Kingmaker* brings new light to the role of Pamela Churchill Harriman – Winston's daughter-in-law and, later, Bill Clinton's special envoy to France. This biography challenges stereotypes and recognises Pamela's role in international diplomacy and Cold War politics. Her relationships with Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon and Ford highlight the respect she garnered; Madeleine Albright noted Pamela was not one to "let her century pass her by".

Three Wild Dogs and the Truth by Markus Zusak,

Pan Macmillan

"It's not a bad way to live – to remember your life by your dogs." This is at the heart of the memoir of Markus Zusak, author of *The Book Thief*. It's his story, as told through three dogs from his past and present, all big, all rescues, all chaotic. First there was Reuben, a "wolf at your door with a hacksaw," then the beautiful-but-deadly Archer and finally Frosty, a maniac on a leash. This is a tender and brutal book. How can something be soft and sharp at the same time? Ask a dog owner.



Madam by Antonia Murphy,

Simon & Schuster

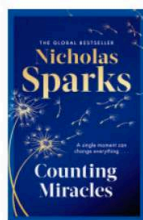
The dedication of Antonia Murphy's memoir reads: "For the sex workers, madams and strippers ... and badly-behaved women everywhere." *Madam* is Murphy's account of being a mother who opens an escort agency in small town New Zealand. It's her story, and that of the women of The Bach (the escort agency). These women are ineligible for government support but don't earn enough for housing, food and childcare. Murphy shares their stories with respect and sensitivity. Read this before watching the TV adaption starring Rachel Griffiths.

Bookshelf



The Big Book of Australian Yarns by Jim Haynes, *Allen & Unwin*

Aussies love a good yarn, and Jim Haynes knows how to spin one. This legendary collection of stories is proof.



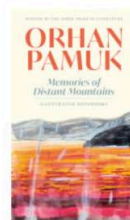
Counting Miracles by Nicholas Sparks, *Hachette*

Three strangers' worlds are about to collide in this powerful novel about the journeys we take and those who touch our hearts along the way.



Everyone this Christmas has a Secret by Benjamin Stevenson, *Penguin Random House*

New high jinks from the author of *Everyone in my Family has Killed Someone*. Gripping.



Memories of Distant Mountains by Orhan Pamuk, *Penguin Random House*

Inside the mind of a literary genius, featuring daily observations and delicate sketches from Orhan Pamuk.



The Golden Thread by Tea Cooper, *HarperCollins*

A fictional historical mystery inspired by the real blood-stained dress found in the attic of Old Government House in Parramatta.

REVIEWS BY ALLEY PASCOE.



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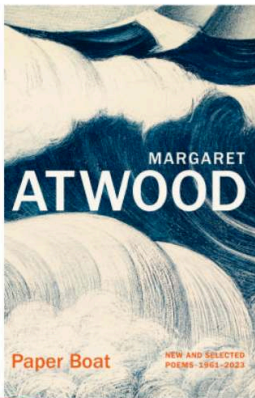
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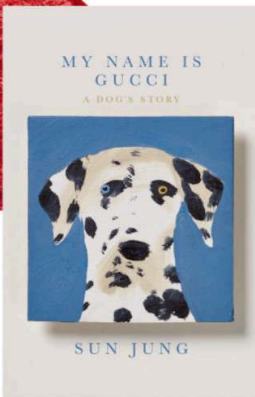
Gifts for all

For the *literary aficionados*



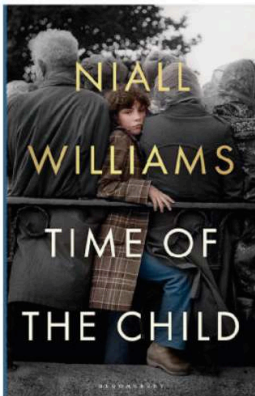
Paper Boat by Margaret Atwood,
Penguin Random House

The words of Margaret Atwood have shaped the literary landscape for six decades. Her stories have haunted us, her voice has captivated us, and her poems have enchanted us. *Paper Boat* is a collection of poetry spanning from Atwood's earliest beginnings to brand new work of late. Together, the pieces chart the evolution of a great. Come aboard.



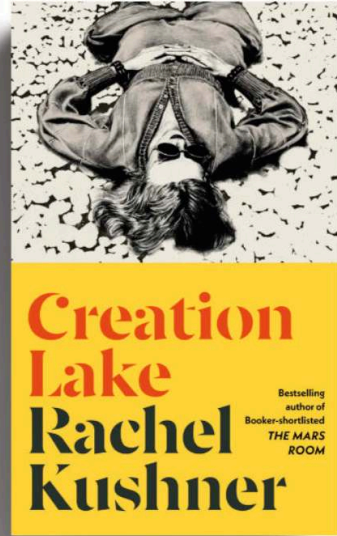
My Name is Gucci by Sun Jung,
Transit Lounge

Gucci is not your regular shelter dog. He is a Dalmatian-esque crossbreed living in a Singapore rescue centre. He is also a sage. Gucci has lived countless lives and the accumulated memories of his reincarnations are inscribed in his body and mind. When a woman from Sydney adopts him and relocates him from Lim Chu Kang to Kings Cross, he is not surprised. He knew he would meet his "new" owner again, because they were meant to be reunited. The story of Gucci is wildly original and magnificently told. Magic drips from the pages, warmth emits from the chapters, and wisdom imparts from the narrator.



Time of the Child by Niall Williams,
Bloomsbury

When Ann Patchett raves about an author, you take note and read accordingly. The author in question is Niall Williams, and his new literary classic is *Time of the Child*. In its pages, we're transported to the small Irish town of Faha. It's the last place one would expect a miracle to happen, but over the Christmas of 1962, that's exactly what occurs when an abandoned baby is left on the front doorstep of the local doctor's house on Christmas Eve. And so, it became known as the time of the child. This is a beautifully written, big-hearted novel about the Christmas season that changed a community forever.



Creation Lake by
Rachel Kushner,
Penguin Random House

Believe the hype. When *Creation Lake* was released earlier in the year, it became an instant New York Times bestseller and earned a spot on the 2024 Booker Prize shortlist. It's familiar ground for Rachel Kushner, who was previously nominated for the Booker Prize, after 2018's *The Mars Room*. This time around, Kushner centres her magic on undercover agent 'Sadie' Smith and her attempts to infiltrate a potential eco-terrorist cell in rural France. The Moulinauds follow the teachings of reclusive Bruno Lacombe, and Sadie follows his email trails, where he waxes lyrical about Neanderthals and caves – "of the way in which everyone who came before us left a mark on our genome, adding to the story of our ancestry and evolution". Part reflection on ancient history, part Jason Bourne with a strong female lead, this novel has the right mix of dark humour and incisive social commentary.





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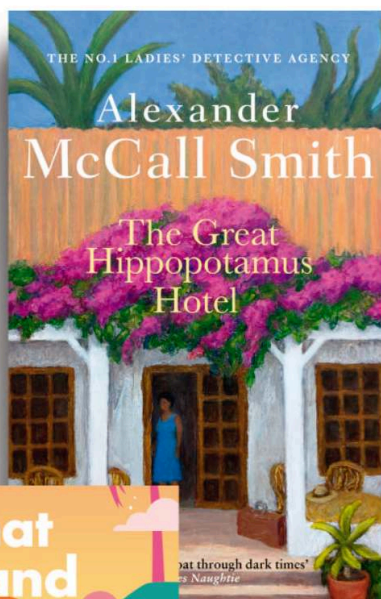
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For everyone who needs a *decent escape*

The Great Hippopotamus Hotel by Alexander McCall Smith, *Hachette*

Welcome to the #1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Or rather, welcome to book #25 in the #1 Ladies' Detective Agency series by Alexander McCall Smith. The latest instalment of the beloved string of books sweeps us away to The Great Hippopotamus Hotel just outside of Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, where a series of unfortunate events have unfolded. Never fear, Mma Ramotswa and Mma Makutsi are on the case – and on a mission to restore the hotel's reputation – with their trademark honesty, humour and compassion.



Finding Joy in Oyster Bay by Susan Duncan, *Allen & Unwin*

If your life feels like an unwinding spool of string, take solace in knowing Kate Jackson's life is a "catastrophic mess of her own making". The former journalist-turned-cafe owner had abandoned her life – and six-month-old baby – leaving only a 10-word note behind: "Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. I'll be back. I don't know when. K." In her wake, the community of Cook's Basin step in to save the day – and their all-important cafe. In true Susan Duncan style, *Finding Joy in Oyster Bay* is rich with community spirit, true love and quirky characters.

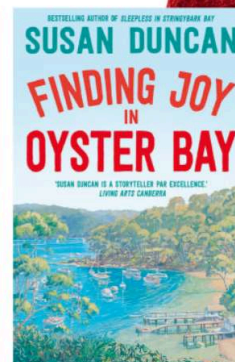
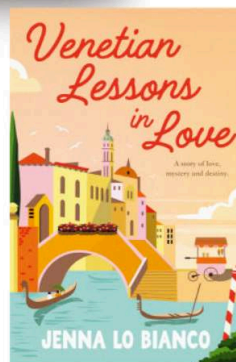
That Island Feeling by Karina May, *Pan Macmillan*

Make yourself a mimosa and perch by the pool to dip into this delightful holiday romance novel. Littered with rom-com references among a tropical backdrop, *That Island Feeling* follows Andie Alcott and her friends as they venture to Pearl Island to 'celebrate' best friend Taylor's divorce. Unfortunately, their Airbnb is double booked (nightmare) with a buck's party – hilarity and lust ensues. Fortunately, local islander Jack tries his hardest to rescue the holiday, resurrect the island's tourism industry and charm Andie. Karina May nails this genre and this novel is an easy escape.



Venetian Lessons in Love by Jenna Lo Bianco, *Pan Macmillan*

It's been a year of Venice books, *grazie, bella*. First there was the delightful *The Venice Hotel* by Tess Woods, then the historic *The Instrumentalist* by Harriet Constable, and – just in time for Christmas – we've been gifted with *Venetian Lessons in Love*, by Jenna Lo Bianco, the Italian-Australian author of *Love & Rome*. Set against the



backdrop of picturesque Venice is a classic enemies-to-lovers story arc following perpetual hot-mess Lucia, who is trying to save her late parents' Italian language school from an unscrupulous businessman. Matters are complicated by a mysterious, kissing Casanova. It's a fun and flirty jaunt in Italy.



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Gifts for all

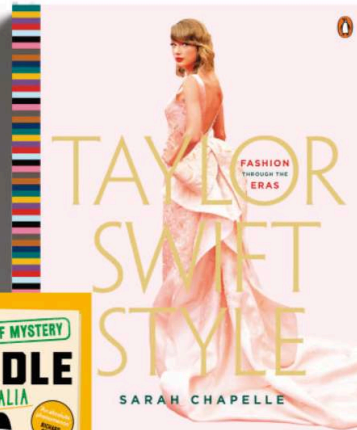
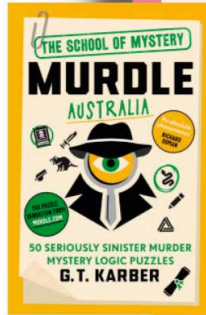
Stocking fillers

Murdle Australia by G.T. Garber, *Allen & Unwin*

For fans of the cult game Wordle comes *Murdle Australia*, a sensationally more deadly version of the logic puzzle. Immerse yourself in the files of the world's greatest investigative mind, Deductive Logico, to crack the case. Don't just read a mystery, solve it. BYO pencil.

Look at Moi Ploise by Beck Feiner with Katie Cunningham, *Murdoch Books*

From Kath Day-Knight's catchphrase to Kylie Minogue's gold hot pants and Cathy Freeman's gold medal, this is a celebration of Aussie life through the decades. Brought to you by artist Beck Feiner and writer Katie Cunningham. Keep an eye out for the ode to *The Weekly's* kids' birthday cakes of the '80s.

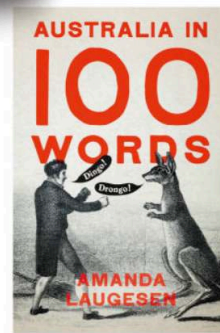


Taylor Swift Style by Sarah Chapelle, *Penguin Random House*

For everyone who elatedly saw the Era's tour or disappointedly missed out, comes a precious keepsake/consolation prize. *Taylor Swift Style* is a fashion bible tracing Tay Tay's sartorial steps from her cowboy boots circa 'Tim McGraw' to her '22-fedora hat and all the sequins, scarves and slogan tees in between.

Australia in 100 Words by Amanda Laugesen, *New South Publishing*

A larrikin, a bludger and a bin chicken walk into a bar. This isn't the start of a joke, it's a series of expressions included in Amanda Laugesen's retelling of Australian history in 100 words. This is a slang dictionary with a difference: depth, substance and stories from yesteryear.



For the little ones



The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Extinct Animals by Sami Bayly, *Hachette*, 8+

Stunningly illustrated and deeply informative. The descriptions of extinct and critically endangered animals are punctuated with 'fun facts'. For example, did you know that the Delcourt's Giant Gecko from New Caledonia was the size of a small house cat?



The Brightest Christmas Star by Laura Motherway and Deb Hudson, *Hachette*, Baby+

High above in the sky, a star shines impossibly bright on Christmas night. It twinkles and sparkles – and illuminates the festive cheer – just like a star on top of a Christmas tree. This delightful book is a true gift to the world.



The Wobbly Bike by Darren McCallum and Craig Smith, *Walker Books Australia*, 4+

Learning to ride a bike is a rite of passage for kids, and *The Wobbly Bike* is a timeless classic for them. When Pop's old bike won't stop wobbling, could it be the tyres, the terrain, or the rider? Let's find out, on a joyous ride through the colourful Top End.



Meerkat Mayhem by Mem Fox and Judy Horacek, *Penguin Random House*, 3+

Everyone's favourite children's author, Mem Fox – who brought us *Possum Magic*, *Where is the Green Sheep?* and *A Giraffe in the Bath* – gives us a new classic. This time starring a meerkat and involving some serious mischief.