

Full reviews

Greg Bastian's novels for young adults

Ride the Tiger

Magpies Vol 16. ?reviewer?

Josh, in his final year of high school, becomes interested in a girl living in a Homeless Refuge, and almost before he knows it, is drawn into a criminal act. Feeling angry at the restrictions set by his middle class, up-tight father, Josh is easily led to 'ride the tiger', to grasp at freedom, to do the wild and unpredictable thing. However, the guilt that follows his actions causes Josh to take off for a while with Amber. During their travels, he gets a glimpse of lives of people living on the edge of society'. drug takers, alcoholics, homeless drifters, and gains an insight into some of their problems.

Josh eventually returns home and throws himself into the local issue of support for the Station Street Homeless Refuge. Despite the opposition of his father, Josh gains a measure of personal freedom while taking up some of his previous responsibilities. Josh learns much from his wild 'tiger ride' but finally shows enough maturity to act responsibly, but now with added compassion for the less fortunate in his community.

This is an entertaining read that demonstrates how easy it is to get caught up with the 'wrong crowd', how fast the mood of a group can change, and how quickly group actions can leap from fun and excitement to crime. Josh learns the hard way of he personal consequences of group actions. he faces facts and turns his experiences and newly gained insights to a good cause.

Lies and Alibis

Leon Trainor in the *Weekend Australian*, 7 November 1992.

... it was refreshing to read Lies and Alibis, a straightforward story about ordinary people with problems. Lies and Alibis is a novel from UQP's series for young adults, which means it has a tightly-plotted story line, good crisp style and solid characterisation underpinned by a no-nonsense set of values.

It is about Hamish Kinsela, an unhappy teenager in his last year in high school who is the subject of much suspicion. The police and most of the adults in the Blue Mountains town where he lives believe he has been starting fires. Hamish is angry, at his parents' separation and divorce and maintains an air of rebellious indifference to the various authority figures. This only confirms their worst suspicions but his peers regard him with something akin to hero worship.

It is a very gripping-story. Gregory Bastian keeps you on tenterhooks for the whole novel. You won't know who is starting the fires or how Hamish's story will end until novel's final pages, some of which are very moving. Bastian, conveys- strongly the

importance of parental love and; the characters seem to believe there support for even the most rebellious teenagers.

Lies and Alibis

F. Gardiner

Is he a pyromaniac or is he a pyromaniac? Maybe, but first and foremost he is a cleverly contrived unreliable narrator. Apart from the abrupt ending, this is a well-constructed and intriguing novel, which because of its subject matter, readability and brevity should appeal to those readers-in-need, teenage boys. Hamish the narrator is accused of setting fire to a number of public buildings in the community. His account apparently reveals much about himself and his family, and to a lesser degree, about the community; but its contradictions and the odd 'unconscious' revelation indicate a very different tale. Much discussion of both the novel and the issues it raises would follow the reading of this novel which could be subtitled, Portrait of the singing detective as a young man.

Lies and Alibis

Annette Duguid

As one after another of the town buildings fall to a pyromaniac, the chief suspect, Hamish Kensila, faces both ostracism and hero worship. First person narration by this teenage protagonist allows the reader access to the workings of a devious mind. A perceptive insight is given into the character of an intelligent, disturbed adolescent. As structures such as church venues and the Masonic Temple are reduced to ashes, layers also peel off the respectable and respected pillars of community to reveal unpleasant aspects of character. The denouement is unexpected and satisfying. This wellcrafted and beautifully written novel is an engrossing read from page one.

The Great Secondhand Supper

Reviewer? Date?

Age 14+ Avid fiction readers are frequently closet fiction writers and those of us who are frustrated authors will sympathise with Jason Washington, the key character In this novel.

Jason attempts to mate a prizewinning novel against a backdrop of family unrest frustrated romantic entanglement and school pressure. INS novel, entitled The Great Secondhand Supper does not win die much needed cash prize; but a great deal of personal growth takes place for die main characters of the story and the young writer's authorship Is given encouragement Though not Me traditional 'happy-ever-after' ending, the novel concludes on a note of hope.

The style in which the story is written is humorous. It is not action-packed, but rather depends on philosophies attitudes and ideas for its appeal. The great secondhand supper (the one written by Greg Bastian not Jason Washington!) will appeal 10+ thoughtful readers. It would be a worthwhile addition to the secondary library shelf.

Reviewer?

The Great Secondhand Supper is the title of Jason Washington's first attempt at writing a short story. With his story he plans to win a short story competition, not for his own glory, but to save his family from bankruptcy.

The novel takes its title from Jason's story but deals with far more than the work that Jason puts into his writing. Jason believes that he can save his family from a bad investment and from the worries that they have and the trader believes in his optimism and shares in his final disappointment. The novel raises issues which would be of interest to middle high school students and is one which should be in the library.