

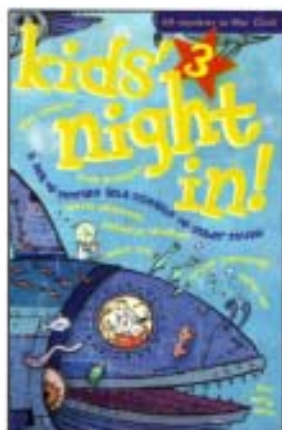


# ent Readers

Books suitable for competent readers who enjoy longer, more complex stories. Some will be enjoyed by readers in lower secondary school.  indicates an Australian book,  a NZ book. **M** indicates a book for more mature independent readers.

bound, shackled and helpless. This adventure, written in the style of the Zac Power, Alex Rider, Alpha Force and Young James Bond series, will appeal to older primary boys.  
*Russ Merrin*



**Kids' Night In 3: a Sea of Stories and Oceans of Other Stuff** (2009)  
*Jessica Adams, Anna Fienberg, Laura Harris & Tamara Sheward eds., Various illustrators, Puffin, 501pp.*  
978 0 14 330445 6 **\$24.95 Pb**

Fairy tales, modern tales, modern fairy tales! In this bumper third volume we find a genre to suit any taste. High-calibre authors and illustrators have contributed their efforts to provide a feast of story. I particularly love the sense of personalisation in this collection. Not only have authors contributed short stories, represented by both word and picture, also included are favourite recipes (including explanation of any personal significance to the author), favourite verse, even friendly advice. Stephen King once described a short story as a *kiss in the dark from a stranger*. I have a penchant for short stories; there is something about the careful economy of words that appeals to me. Narrative 'false steps' that are easily forgivable in a longer novel become glaringly obvious in a short story. As would be expected in an eclectic collection of this magnitude, the quality is variable. And yet I feel it is unfair to highlight and compare these stories against each other. They are each a different kind of kiss in the dark, together offering children a veritable 'literary degustation'.  
*Michael Janssen-Gibson*

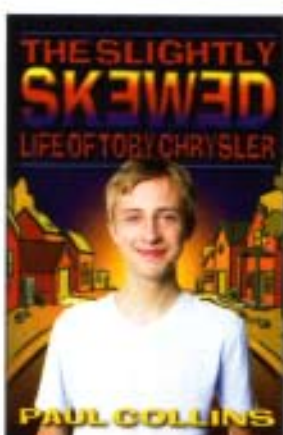


**Tracey Binns is Lost** (2009)  
*Sherryl Clark, UQP, 123pp.*  
978 0 7022 3705 8 **\$16.95 Pb**

In this sequel to **Tracey Binns is Trouble**, the headmaster supported by the dreadful P.E. teacher, Mr Gunning, is leading the school into a new era of healthy eating and physical exercise. Tracey Binns is horrified at the new regime but with a little help from her friend Isabella begins to firm up, not, however, in time for the dreaded school camp. Grouped with Isabella, Justin Zit-face and fat Elliot is bad enough but when Elliot falls off a cliff, as does Mr Gunning when he goes to help, breaking his leg in the process, it is Justin who calmly takes charge and Tracey who sets off to find help. Much here on responsibility and survival tactics, not taking people at face value, friendship and working together.  
*Rayma Turton*

**The Slightly Skewed Life of Toby Chrysler** (2009)  
*Paul Collins, Celapene Press; dist. INT Books; sales@intbooks.com.au, 142pp.* 978 0 9750742 4 4  
**\$14.95 Pb**

Toby Chrysler, otherwise known as Milo, is different; he can instantly analyse a set of numbers, literally interpret conversations, his mother is missing, he has just murdered his neighbor (twice) and the police are hunting him. Did he really cause the death of his elderly neighbour? What message from the afterlife was she trying to tell him? Where is his mother and where is her missing red shoe? So begins **The Slightly Skewed Life of Toby Chrysler** which hooks the reader right from the beginning and maintains a fast action pace through-



out. Toby is aided by Fluke, his proverb twisting friend whose remedy for Toby's troubles is to *lay low for the first week and lull them into a false sense of security*[sic], just one of many creative pearls of wisdom which add humour to the various crises that Toby experiences. Enter Ginger who has lost her dad and realises there is a connection with the mysterious disappearance of Mrs Chrysler. The new friends hatch a scheme that soon lands them in more trouble and endangers Ginger's life—but will their plan work? Family secrets are exposed and Toby and Ginger discover they have more in common than they ever thought. While dealing with serious events, the issues of family breakdown and secrets, this is an easy to read novel with appeal for 10-12 year olds; reluctant readers will respond to the humour, pace and accessible text.  
*Allison Paterson*

**The Magician's Elephant** (2009)  
*Kate DiCamillo, ill. Yoko Tanaka, Candlewick Press, 201pp.*  
978 0 7636 4410 9 **\$24.95 Hb**

Like DiCamillo's award-winning earlier books for younger readers, **The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane** and **The Tale of Despereaux**, **The Magician's Elephant** is written in the formal, poetic style of an old fairytale, a Grimm or a Perrault. Like them it is filled with life's tragedies and relieved by life's warmth and hope; by the courage, compassion, creativity and comradeship that lead to happy-ever-after. At the centre of the story is the elephant, accidentally conjured up by a fading magician in a desperate bid for fulfilment. The elephant was supposed to be a bouquet of lilies, a token of esteem for the noblewoman in whose