

Student book review

All That It Ever Meant by Blessing Musariri

(reviewed by Myla, Year 9)



This book is about a girl called Mati and her family. After the death of their mother they move on (or try to move on) in very different ways. It is such an interesting story and I could read more like it. I'm surprised how much I did enjoy it, as it's not the usual genre/type of book I would read. The father in the book is a little too drawn into himself, but I suppose that is how he is coping with the death of his wife. I would recommend this book to older readers, adults and KS4 students. The story has its mysteries whilst also describing grief and how it affects people differently.

Star rating:



Student book review

Play by Luke Palmer

(reviewed by Jessica, Year 9)



This story follows the life of four friends who get up to no good - especially Mark. I enjoyed the book, as it allowed the reader to get a better understanding of just how damaging drug use is (although I felt as times as if there might be too much drug use in the story!). I like the fact that we saw things from each character's perspective, as it shows how different they are - it highlights their diversity. The novel also promotes boy friendship. I disliked the ending because it is sad, but in real life people don't

always get happy endings. I recommend this book to those who enjoy darker themes and LGBTQ+ issues, due to the gay relationship, but really anyone can read this book and enjoy it.

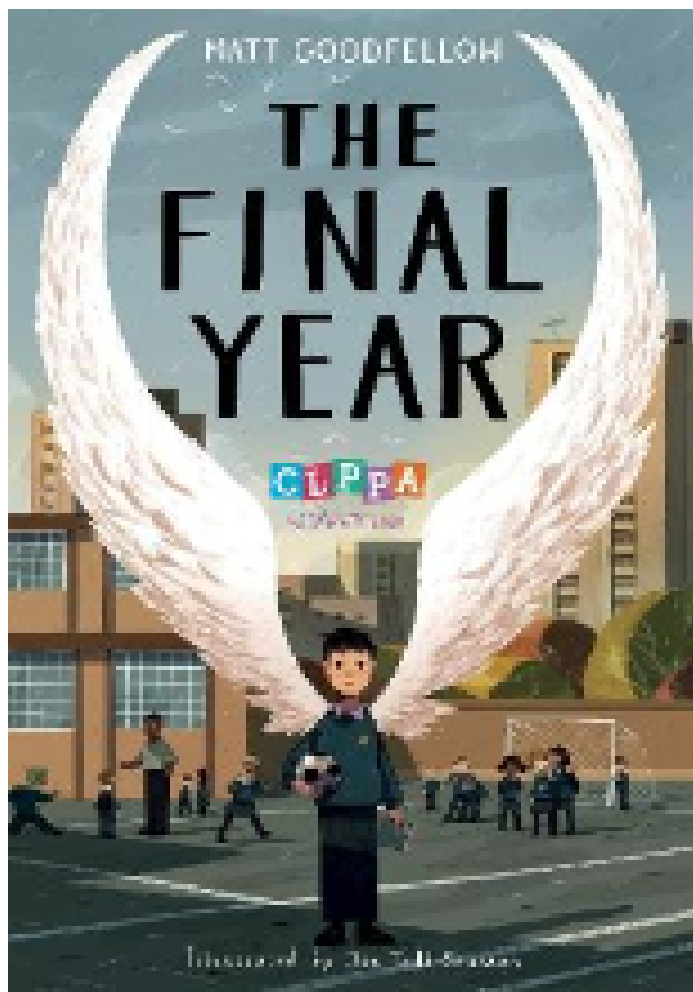
Star rating:



Student book review

The Final Year by Matt Goodfellow

(reviewed by Lyla, Year 9)



The 'final year' in the title is Year 6 is the last year of primary school, and the story follows how Nate, the main character, copes with the difficult transition period. When disaster strikes his youngest brother Nat's final year threatens to spiral out of control...I enjoyed the story but found it a little difficult to read because it is a verse novel, written like a poem. It shows how different families are, and how difficult it can be to prepare and move towards secondary school whilst still in primary. I thought the way it switched

between happiness and sadness was skilfully done.

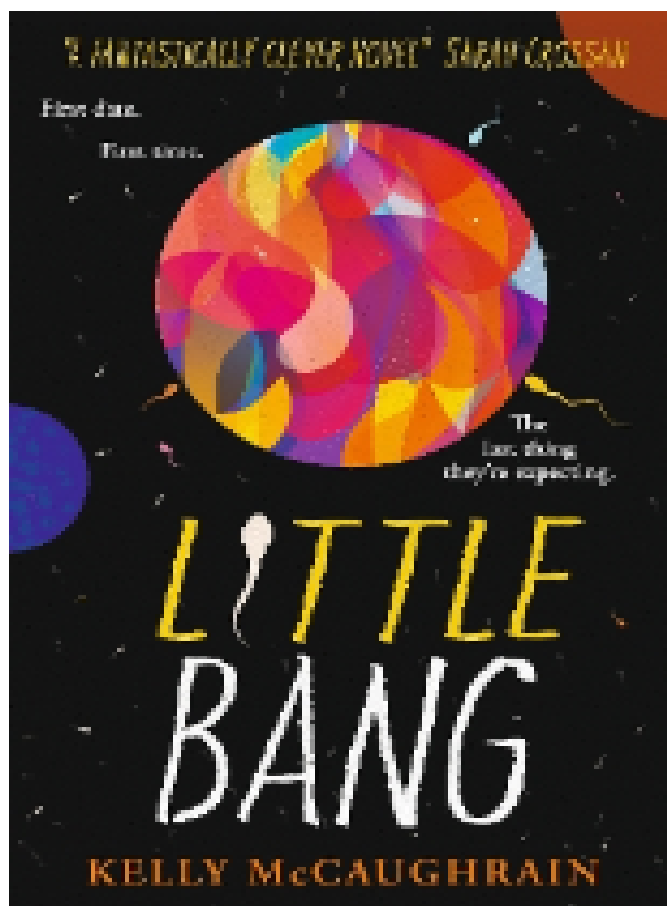
Star rating:



Student book review

Little Bang by Kelly McCaughrain

(reviewed by a Year 11 student)



Shortlisted for the 2025 Carnegie Medal this novel is about the controversial topic of abortion. Set in Northern Ireland when abortion was still illegal, it follows the story of Mel who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant. It is told from the perspectives of both Mel and her partner, Sid, who are both aged 16, and the challenges they face. I found the book to be an emotional rollercoaster, which really makes the reader think about the messages it wants to convey.

Star rating:



Student book review

The Things We Leave Behind by Clare Furniss

(reviewed by Esme, Year 9)



Follows the story of 15-year-old Clem and her younger sister as they travel to Scotland to escape England after a new government imposes strict new laws. I like how the book is set in a dystopian world. The story was really interesting because it is written from the perspective of a teenage refugee from England, which makes her more relatable. I did find the story difficult to follow at times, and when Clem tells the story you can't always tell what is real and what is in her head. I would recommend this book to

older readers (13+) because of the serious themes and strong language.

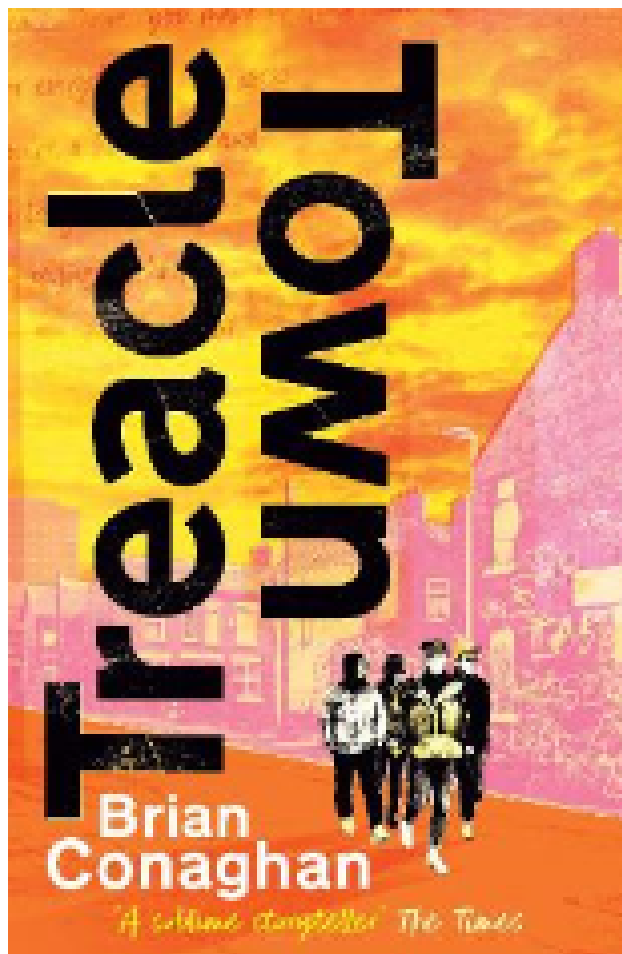
Star rating:



Student book review

Treacle Town by Brian Conaghan

(reviewed by Owen, Year 9)



Although this book had lots of inappropriate language and a lot of violence, I still enjoyed it and found it interesting. It is a coming-of-age story, set in the tough Scottish town of Coatbridge where teenager Con feels trapped in a pattern of unemployment and gang violence. Some of our fellow Carnegie Shadowing reviewers thought that there was far too much bad language in it but I thought that overall it was a decent read and a realistic representation of UK gang culture. It should appeal to older readers who like gritty, hard-hitting novels.

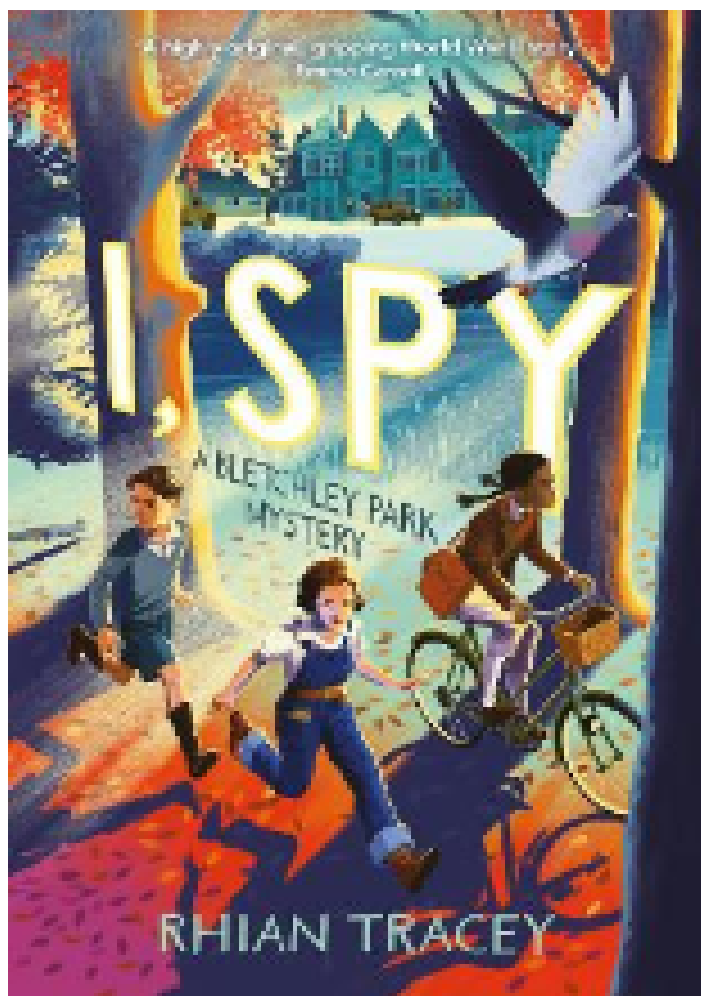
Star rating:



Student book review

I Spy by Rhian Tracey

(reviewed by Niamh, Year 8)



The story begins in September 1939. 12-year-old Robyn has grown up at Bletchley Park, a large mansion where her father works as a driver. Then war breaks out and Bletchley becomes full of people recruited to help with the war effort. Robyn and her friends, Mary and Ned become convinced that something sinister is going on. I really enjoyed this adventure mystery because it is set during World War 2 and I learned a lot about the events of the time, especially how clever mathematicians and engineers managed to crack the Enigma Code. Young people became much more independent and resilient during the war - they had to be - and the teamwork and initiative shown by the three

friends is impressive. Robyn is my favourite character because she is curious, adventurous and loves nature and the outdoors. It should appeal to those who enjoy the stories of Phil Earle and Lesley Parr.

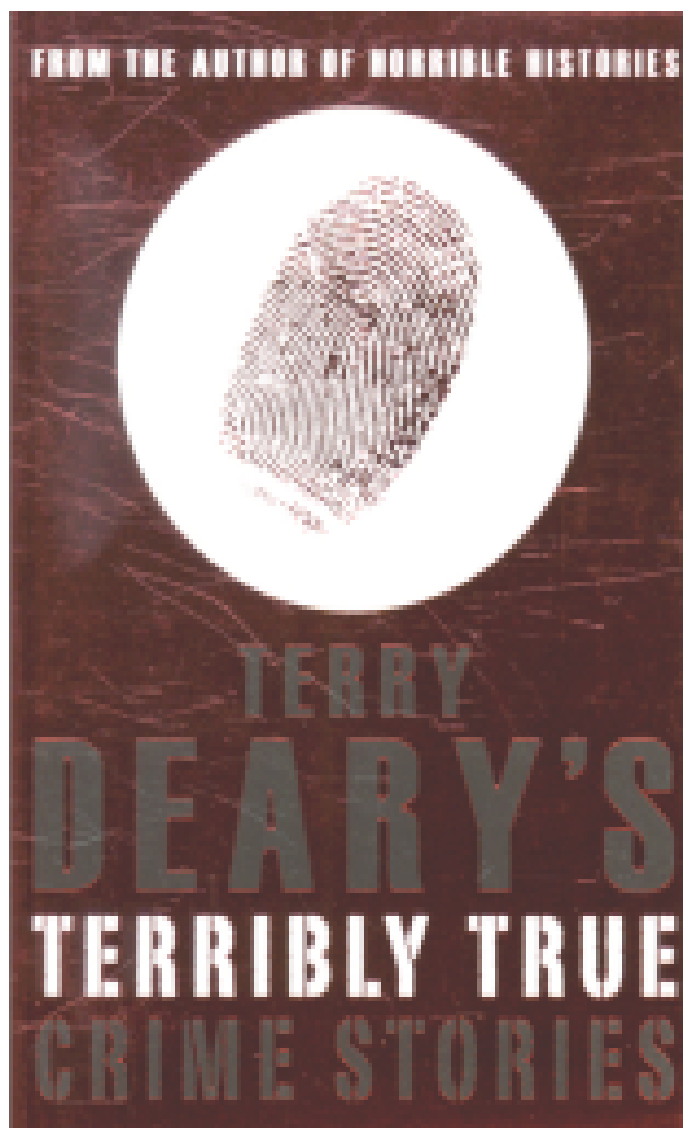
Star rating:



Student book review

Terry Deary's Terribly True Crime Stories

(reviewed by Lyla, Year 9)



A collection of true crime stories, featuring pirates, highwaymen, tricksters and kidnappers. Criminals covered include Ned Kelly, Butch Cassidy, Bonnie and Clyde and Robin Hood. Each story includes a Fact File section, which highlights the fact that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. The stories and accounts of true crime are very interesting, but what really impresses me about this book is that the author makes clear in his introduction that in real life crime isn't glamorous or exciting, and criminals aren't heroes - they are sad people who need help. And the book does not shy away from the fact that criminals leave other people sadder - the victims and their families.

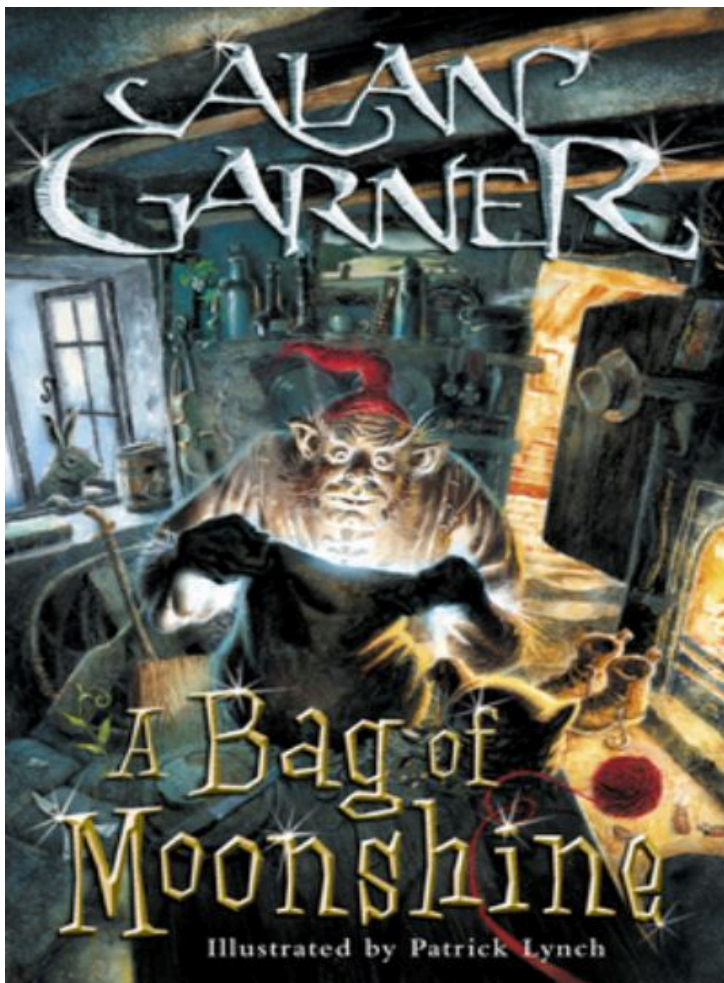
Star rating:



Student book review

A Bag of Moonshine by Alan Garner

(reviewed by a Year 10 student)



This book consists of 22 short stories featuring different mythical creatures from English and Welsh folklore. There are tales of magic and wizardry, featuring witches, boggarts and hobgoblins. I enjoyed the folklore theme and it is extremely well-written by Manchester author Alan Garner. It is not as scary and gory as I thought it might be, however, and I would recommend the book to a younger age-group - perhaps 11-13 year-olds who like the folklore element as long as it isn't too gruesome!

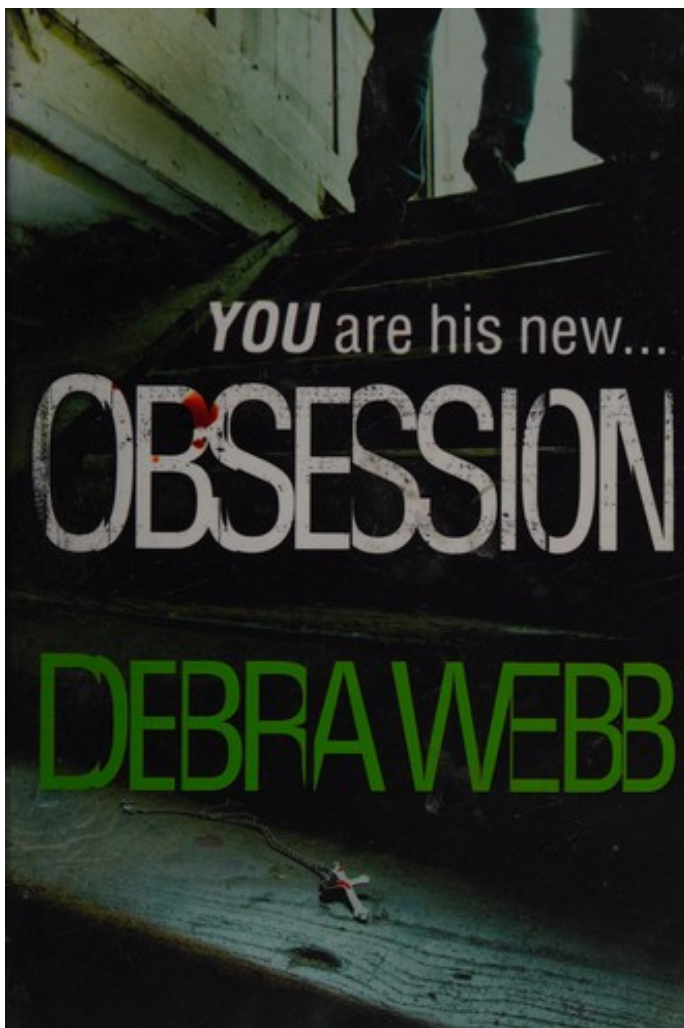
Star rating:



Student book review

Obsession by Debra Webb

(reviewed by Olivia, Year 7)



This is a suspense/thriller story set in Alabama in the USA. It involves several missing young women and the hunt for a possible serial killer. My favourite character was Jess, a Special Agent who returns to her hometown after she broke the rules and ruined her reputation in the hunt for the killer. It is a crime novel, but there is some romance too. The plot is gripping, there is a lot of suspense, and it really kept me turning the pages. It was fast-paced and action-packed. I really enjoyed it, but it is aimed at older readers - Year 9 upwards.

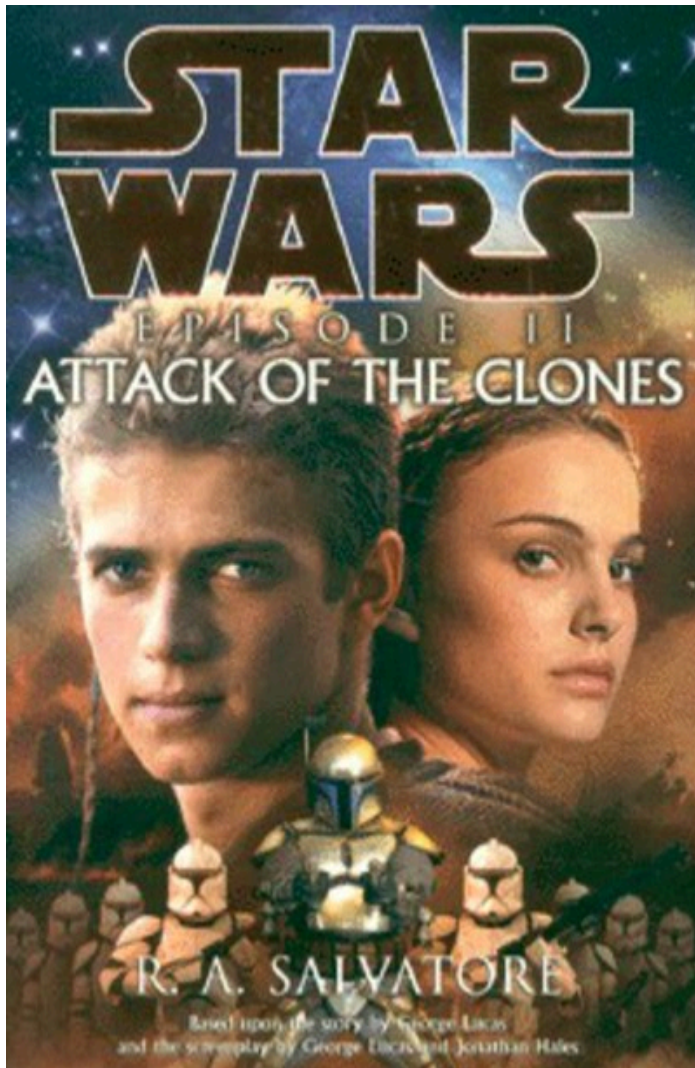
Star rating:



Student book review

Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones

(reviewed by Ali, Year 8)



This book is about Anakin Skywalker, who is now 19 years of age and very ambitious. It is a very challenging time for the republic. It is also about the romance between Anakin and Padme, who are brought together again after an attack on Padme's life. It is a very exciting story, and very realistic. I felt as if I was actually taking part in the story as I read it. The book is a combination of science fiction, romance and adventure. I think it is better if you read it after watching the film first, as it helps you visualize the events and character.

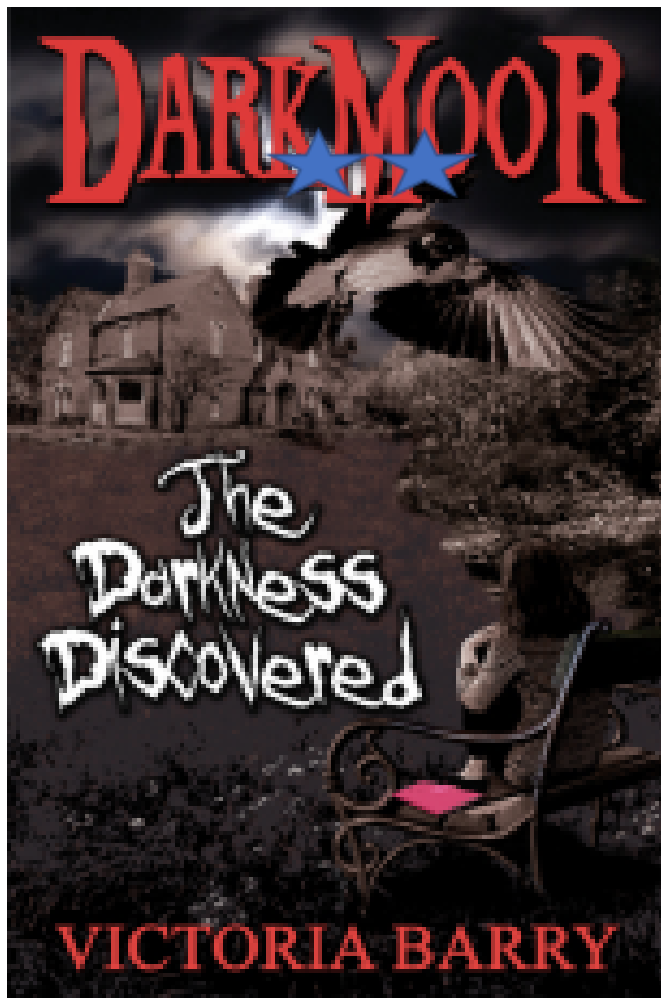
Star rating:



Student book review

Darkmoor: the Darkness Discovered

(reviewed by Alex, Year 10)



This is a gripping fantasy novel that blends mystery, adventure and a touch of romance to create an immersive world filled with shadows and secrets. The story follows protagonist Alara as she unravels the dark mysteries hidden within the haunted land of Darkmoor, a place teetering between magic and menace. Barry's evocative descriptions bring Darkmoor's eerie forests and enigmatic ruins to life, creating a haunting atmosphere that intensifies as Alara confronts both external threats and her inner fears. One of the standout moments is when Alara unlocks the true power of her ancestral heritage, a revelation that shifts the course of the story and sets up thrilling, high stakes confrontations. Barry's writing is suspenseful, atmospheric and filled with unexpected twists, making it a captivating read for

fantasy lovers. Readers who enjoy complex, world-building and morally ambiguous characters and richly woven plots will find *Darkmoor* hard to put down and worth every suspenseful page.

Star rating:



Student book review

Energy Transfer by Robert Sneddon

(reviewed by Ali, Year 9)



This book is about different forms of energy and the way energy is transferred. It looks at a range of energy transfers, including conduction, convection and radiation. There are sections on perpetual motion, the Kelvin scale, the laws of thermodynamics, packets of energy, energy and mass and fission and fusion. I found the sections relating to kinetic energy the most interesting. This book is useful for anyone interested in or studying Science, including GCSE students.

Star rating:



