

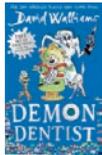


teen reads

SUE BAXALLE & ISOBEL MARRINER

Demon Dentist

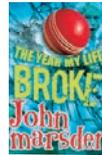
by **David Walliams** (HarperCollins \$25.99)



Another Roald Dahl-style winner from Walliams, this will strike a chord with any youngster nervous at the prospect of a dental visit — and their parents who remember the “murder house” of the 70s. Main character Alfie is understandably reluctant to go — he doesn’t brush his teeth and they are rotten. But there is more to it than that. As any Walliams fan will know, his tales are bound to include a fine mix of evil and funny characters and *Demon Dentist* is no exception. Liberally sprinkled with action-packed chases and clever vocabulary to appeal to the younger age-group, there are also deeper themes of love and humanity. Brilliantly illustrated by Tony Ross.

The Year My Life Broke

by **John Marsden** (Pan Macmillan \$17.99)



One for the younger teen, this book by Australian writer Marsden comes with a warning: It is not a fantasy and contains no superheroes, wizards, dragons, time-travel, aliens or magic. What it does contain, however, is cricket. Lots of it. However, while knowledge of the sport’s terms will come in handy, this is not a requirement, as the plot also contains the story of Josh’s desire to fit in at his new school and coping with his move to the most boring street in the most boring town in Australia, Tarrawagga. An easy read, with slightly larger-than-usual type, about identity, relationships and second chances.

The Last Thirteen: 13

by **James Phelan** (Scholastic \$10)



Yet another series, promising a hunt for the world’s salvation, yet this time it’s a supernatural nightmare-filled battle against an unknown enemy. In this action-packed adventure we meet teens Sam, Eva and Alex, who are thrown together in unusual circumstances. We learn more about their connection as they do. Each has alarming dreams that predict the future. They are

“Dreamers” and discover that Sam is part of an ancient prophecy involving “the last thirteen”, who will begin a race to save the world. But who to trust is a dilemma as all they know of their lives until now has been a lie. A fast-paced read for the younger teen or older reader who likes a thrilling adventure. The end is certainly a cliffhanger. Each instalment promises to find another of the “thirteen”, and the series is due to be completed by the end of the year. Parts two and three (*12* and *11*) are already out (at \$17 each).

Grasshopper Jungle

by **Andrew Smith** (Random House \$19.99)



Phew! What a crazy, funny, scary, sad and exhilarating ride this book turned out to be. It takes the very human story of Austin Szerba, living in a decaying Iowa town and attending a straight-laced Lutheran school, confused because he has feelings for both his beautiful girlfriend and his best friend; combines it with his bizarre immigrant family history that somehow worms its way through the plot and then adds GIANT BUGS! and an UNDERGROUND SURVIVAL SILO! in a persuasively credible way. Smith’s writing is intelligent and irreverent (it’s about teenagers, so there’s plenty of sex and obscenity) and his characters are warm, honest and mostly likeable, except for those who aren’t — and they tend to meet.

The Lost Child

by **Suzanne McCourt** (Text \$29.99)



There are echoes of Tim Winton in McCourt’s coastal small-town coming-of-age/breaking of spirit/triumphing over the odds under a wide sky-style writing. It evokes the same wish-you-were-there, grateful-that-you-weren’t response. Sylvie, the young child of an unloving father and mentally ill mother, is a clever girl. She sees much and takes in more as she makes her way through the minefield of love and loss, hopes and disappointments, family breakdown and the disappearance of her brother against a backdrop that is plainspoken but deftly crafted, laced with both humour and searing sadness. Highly recommended.