

subjects that the poems grapple with, from the mundane to the historical and the national, experiences of Country (Bronwyn Bancroft's *Home*), sickness (Shaun Tan's *Ward*), of marginalisation (Henry Lawson's *Faces in the Street*) and of social interrogation (Omar Musa's *Fireflies*). Alongside the traditional canon represented by Lawson, Dorothea Mackellar, Banjo Paterson and others are the more modern senior voices of poetry; Chris Wallace-Crabbe and Judith Wright. Nestled within are lively voices from children's literature, comforting offerings from Alison Lester and Meg McKinlay (*A Gardener's Guide to Poetry* is gorgeous), alongside the anarchic sensibility of Andy Griffiths.

There are poems that glow in their intensity and two warrant special mention; Leo Barnard's *A Palace of a God* which speaks of homelessness and Elvice Ikuo's haunting *In My Language They Call Me Ume Ibiegi (Bird of Paradise)* which captures the horror of war even as it centres on the bird of its title. Barnard's was written at the age of fourteen, Ikuo's at sixteen.

The structure of layers, the multitudinous possibilities that resides in poetry, is part of its joyous challenge. The book courses with different rhythms and subjects.

Poems for different ages of children and various kinds of abilities are offered together. Categorisation is by theme, some quite broad.

McCartney's vibrant illustrations keep this book in a contemporary mode and there is the sense that she strives to keep it accessible and appealing. The faces of modern Australia are suitably diverse. At times, the employment of more nuance would have better complemented the poems but the use of this simplistic, colourful style best brings out the lightness of tone.

Tali Lavi

**Letters from Australia** (2019)  
Maree Coote, Melbournestyle Books, 32pp. 978 0 9924917 8 9  
**\$29.99** Hb



This unusual illustrated picture book captures various iconic Australiana using stunning, highly detailed artwork, that has been created from the alphabetical letters that spell out their names



e.g. the 'O's in the double-page spread for the 'Barossa Valley' are the grapes hanging on the vines, held up by the splayed 'Y's of the trellis stands. The hair above Albert Namatjira's face is a tangled mass of 'A's, and the nuts on the Banksia branches are all reversed and forward facing 'B's. The artwork within this appealing picture book is executed in bold, bright colours while each illustration is accompanied by a very short, rhyming verse about each topic, which provides a neat synchronicity to the illustrations. The contrasting colours are sharply defined, while the intricate, twirling details of the letters are painstakingly entwined around and within each other.

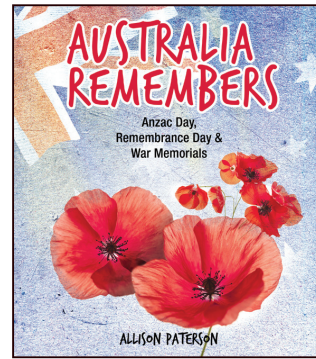
There is a diverse range of topics, including plants, animals, birds, reptiles, and famous Australians, as well as human-made constructions (e.g. the 'Sydney Harbour Bridge').

Some illustrations spread across both pages. Others have dual subjects which share a common theme (e.g. 'turtle' is part of the Great Barrier Reef and a 'Melbourne Tram' rolls across 'Princes Bridge'). The author / illustrator may be subtly giving a nod to older readers who will make deeper connections. The 'dingo' squatting near 'Uluru' prods a poignant memory, while the flock of 'galahs' flying over 'Parliament House' is both topical and hilarious.

A short *Teachers Notes* section at the back, explains briefly each illustrated icon, while the author / illustrator also explains her 'Letter Art', as well as a very short piece about the typography used. Astute, observant middle primary grade students, both girls and boys, old enough to grasp the hidden subtleties, will certainly enjoy trawling through these clever, colourful alphabetical constructions to identify each of the letters used so many times

to imaginatively create the Australian icons described herein. This is an eccentric, stimulating, appealing addition to the body of work by the imaginative, creative author of **Alphabeasts** and **Robyn Boid: Architect**.

Delightfully inventive and highly recommended.  
Russ Merrin



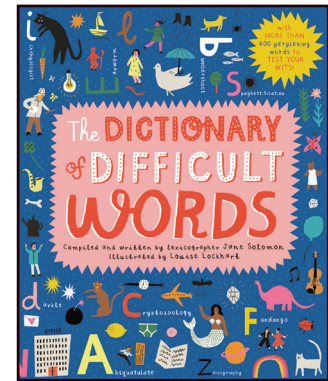
**Australia Remembers: Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and War Memorials** (2018)

Allison Marlow Paterson, Big Sky Publishing, 64pp.  
978 1 92567 577 1 **\$14.99** Pb

With the number of recently published books commemorating Australians involved in conflicts across the world, it surprises me that another has appeared. This earnest book showcases the memorials across Australia as well as the few overseas, remembering all those Australians in past and present conflicts, and includes photos of memorials to servicemen and women as well as Aboriginal servicemen, and the memorial to wartime dogs, all supported with paragraphs of text. With the anniversaries of World War One, particularly Gallipoli, the number of books published has been legion. While attractively presented and certainly full of information, the path is well trodden, although this practical and useful volume could be added to the number being used in a class setting. Using this book, teachers may want to add something about the appalling human cost which still resonates today: the returned soldiers with PTSD, the suicides and breakdown of families. The Invictus Games, held in Australia, are a constant reminder of the sacrifice still being made by servicemen and women. The games are a modern memorial. This would be a useful adjunct to the books already published,

giving readers a summary of the historical reasons Australia was involved in these conflicts, and may impel readers to question why we supported England and the USA in conflicts many miles from our shores. A world map details the places our servicemen and women have fought, while a helpful glossary and brief index round out the book.

Fran Knight



**The Dictionary of Difficult Words** (2019)

Jane Solomon, ill, Louise Lockhart, Frances Lincoln, 112pp.  
978 1 78603 810 4 **\$35.00** Hb

This reader-friendly book on what could be a dry subject, is a road map for any budding reader who takes language seriously or indeed anyone who enjoys the unusual. It succeeds in its aim to make interesting what many may conceive to be 'dry' by the words it chooses to highlight: for example, Triskaidekaphobia (one of the highlighted 'long' words). There is a 'how to use this book' including some fun word exercises. Each letter is allocated four pages—on the left-hand of the first double-page a large uppercase letter is accompanied by its lower case version. Opposite are examples of words beginning with that letter accompanied by a definition followed over the page with an illustration and a sentence that together describe the word. Each word is presented in upper case with a pronunciation guide and a note as to which sub diction it belongs: Cantankerous [kan-tang-k uh-r uhs]. Who wouldn't wish to know the meaning of words like *onerous*, *juxtapose*, *rapscallion* or *umbriferous*?

There is much to enjoy about this book, not least it's light touch and and playful approach.  
Rayma Turton