



Taronga

Victor Kelleher

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Two years after the Last Days, Australia has become a dangerous place, and a battle-ground for survival. Ben, who has a telepathic ability to control animals, leads a hazardous existence in the bush west of the Blue Mountains. Hopeful of a less brutal life, he escapes to Sydney - only to be further disillusioned. Then, at the heart of the city he comes upon Taronga Zoo, which has been strangely unaffected by the general chaos. Or has it? Is it an island of safety in the midst of so much danger? Or is it really the most sinister place of all?

Taronga Details

Date : Published 1988 by Puffin (first published 1986)

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Author : Victor Kelleher

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From Reader Review Taronga for online ebook

Kirsten Leigh says

yeah, i read it for school..hated it...boring..no fun. way to serious, and half the time i was so confused at what was hapening. Not knowing how sydney eneded and how the 'last days' formed really irritated me. i needed a backround. really dialiked the book. and i could say more, but i don't wanna cause hate, or offend the writer. i guess it just wasn't my type of book.

Lin says

DON'T READ THIS BOOK ITS THE CRAPPEST BOOK IN THE WORLD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Albert Hurchens says

IF YOU ARE READING THIS BOOK, BURN IT NOW AND SAVE YOURSELF THE TROUBLE!!! I am serious. I had to read this book for a school assignment and I found that it spent wayy too much time on stuff you did not want to hear about (e.g. how stripy tigers are and basically just describing things WAY TOO MANY TIMES) and not actually saying much about what you did want to hear about (e.g. what actually happened in the 'last days'??). In general, this book over-dramatized just about everything without even a hint of humour to break the tension.

If you start this book and find that you don't really like it but you think 'oh, its probably going to get better soon', PREPARE TO BE BITTERLY DISSAPOINTED. It just gets even more confusing, what with all these weird new characters and 'plot twist' always coming in. This may have happened because the author might have thought that it would keep the reader interested, but all it does is make everyone even more confused. He never even answered the question we'd all been asking from the beginning... WHAT WERE THE LAST DAYS!!!

In case you're wondering, this book is about post-'Last Days' Sydney where everyone is struggling to survive. The story focuses on a kid called Ben who has the ability to telepathically communicate with and essentially control animals. At the beginning of the story he is with this other dude who gets Ben to 'Call' the animals closer so he can shoot them. Ben runs away and swears that he'll never Call again (and promptly breaks his oath). But I mean, what's his problem with it? Couldn't he just use it for good or something? Because it would save a lot of lives if he would.

Then blah blah blah...goes to Taronga zoo..blah blah blah...attack on the zoo...blah blah blah...brutal fighting back by 'heartless' leaders of the zoo people...ben and friend ellie (no hint of romance, though) set something up...blah blah blah....free the animals... blah blah blah ... run away from Taronga to live a life of happiness with Ellie, going from abandoned house to abandoned house.... THE END.

Now I seriously mean this- If you haven't read the book, don't bother now that you've read the previous summary. Really. Just don't bother.

Camille White says

I didnt much care for this one either

Mel says

When this book was published, it was really the first of its kind. Post-apocalyptic young adult fiction, quasi-fictional? I loved it then and is one of my favourite novels; every now and then I revisit it...20 years later. I've read so many great books in my life but this is a great (pretty quick) read...nice after toiling away on a PhD and parenthood!

Sarah says

I didn't really like this. I found the dark, brooding tone a bit pretentious and felt frustrated by the way the vague armageddon-like disaster that was supposed to have happened to the world was never really explained. The constant, non-stop action got a bit wearing, it was like a blockbuster thriller without any humour or moments of respite to release the tension. I'm guessing this is because the author assumes that the teen boys he's aiming this at will get bored if the action stops for even a second. I didn't understand why the main character felt morally obliged not to use his magical ability to telepathically communicate with the animals, and his whole *struggle* with the mind of the tiger seemed a bit pointlessly melodramatic.

Raven_23 says

Worst book known to man and woman kind I advise to put this book down and run or light a match to it. You think it's going to get better but it DOESN'T! No personality no likeability ABSOLUTELY NOTHING GOOD TO BE GAINED FROM READING IT. It's kind deserves to be destroyed and extinguished! Get it out of my sight right now!!!

Spuurrrnggeeee says

I hearby declare this book...

GGGGGGGGGAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Ellen says

Blah. Had to read this for school last year (2009)... I don't even want to talk about how bad I thought it was!

Leigh says

imaginings of apocalyptic sydney that i read as a kid. probably explains why i get a slightly uneasy feeling anytime i've gone to taronga since then. also nice use of the real life blue mountains big cat myth in the book.

An Aroused Koala says

This book is the most hideious thing ever to enter the world of literature (with the possible exception of Twilight). I had to read it for school and spent every English lesson caught between a state that was somewhere between homicidal and suicidal.

The characterisation was weak (they all blurred together to create a giant 2D personality fail as far as I could see) and there was no explanation for any of the context. And just when you think it has to get better with the introduction of new characters and plot twists (if you can call them that) it just gets even more boring.

The authour is so vague about everything and has this knack for describing all the wrong things (you don't need to tell me a tiger is stripy, I know it has stripes and you've only mentioned it about 50 thousand times already) and not describing what you want to hear about (eg. The characters)

Not only has it got a middle that sags and drags irreparably (mainly because of repeated descriptions of tigers) but the ending is unsatisfactory to say the least as I fail to see how all the loose ends are tied up.

Also reading the other reveiws it seems that the main appeal is that it's set in "post-apocalyptic Sydney". I am not saying that people can't appreciate that but I can't see how location is in anyway redeeming.

In short-

Worst. Book. Ever.

Mark Gee says

I enjoyed this read. I'm a little interested in Australian dystopian fiction. I especially liked how this narrative is connected to the landscape and reflects values of Australia's a First peoples. I'd be interested to read about how this novel works as an allegory for Australia's history / future.

JM says

YA science fiction. Fourteen-year-old Ben lives rough in the bush outside Sydney, surviving in the wreckage of an Australia that fell apart after global catastrophe. Ben has the strange ability to soothe and control animals, and this makes him valuable to the older and crueller boy who hunts the animals Ben Calls. But to Ben, every Call he makes is a betrayal. Trying to escape his own nature, Ben runs away to Sydney - but the city is a worse nightmare, and Ben quickly finds himself betraying again. Still, there's one green fortress of law and order in Taronga Zoo. The zoo's protected by guns and by prowling jungle cats, and Ben's abilities with the cats earns him a place there. He makes his first friend since Last Days in the young Aboriginal girl Ellie, and finds a mission: keeping the zoo's animals safe becomes Ben's way of atoning for the past. But Ben and Ellie soon realise that Taronga isn't a sanctuary for the animals or for anybody else.

I reread this for the *1001 Children's Books* write-ups. I first read it when I was about twelve, and I remembered it being ... well, not nearly this cool. Because seriously, it's cool. This is a menacing world, with

very lightly sketched details. It's understood that everybody is a danger, and Ben frequently has to run from people, without any actual details of what would be done to him if he was caught. This adds to the menace, but also keeps the book safe for a young audience. There are no hints at all of sexual predators, but no sense of a lack of realism from that because, other than the action scenes in which people are shot or torn apart by tigers, the danger is so amorphous in general.

(There's no hint of sex at all, actually, or even of romance. This is quite a mature book in its themes and its darkness, but Ben and Ellie are friends without their being a boy and a girl even coming into it. There's just no consciousness of that element of gender relations in the world.)

I *do* remember some of the philosophy going over my head when I first read this, and I can understand why, because Ben's struggle against and connection with wild animals, and particularly his relationship with the savagely distrustful tiger Raja, is quite sophisticated and subtly laid out. But under that level, it's an exciting, tense adventure, with an ending that - well, I think it left me feeling a bit at a loss when I was twelve, but rereading, it's incredibly satisfying. Open but directional, realistic but with a lot of hope. I really liked this book.

Jess says

I hated the book because I could barely understand it but maybe I was too young when I read it for school.

Swaglord says

Omg don't even get me started on this shit. I mean this book would have never had the honours of having its pages turned by my magical fingers if we didn't have to read this shit for school. Not only did I have to force myself through reading this boring book, I had to do an assessment task on it as well.

Don't read this shit. Don't even let the thought cross your mind. If you ever see this book burn it.

It makes a great firestarter
