



Strange Objects

Gary Crew

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The novel's hero, Stephen Messenger, is a sixteen year old who discovers a leather-bound journal and other mysterious objects in a cave. The relics are believed to have belonged to two survivors from the Batavia, a ship that wrecked off the coast of Australia in 1629.

These relics provide Messenger with a direct link to his country's earliest European inhabitants. In this story Crew examines the relationship between the Europeans and the Aboriginal peoples. The author challenges the reader to consider some unpleasant aspects of the European settlement of Australia. The reader is encouraged to reassess what forces shaped this nation and the effect the white invasion has had on the indigenous inhabitants.

Strange Objects Details

Date : Published by Mammoth (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9781863301138

Author : Gary Crew

Format : Paperback 185 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fantasy, Fiction, Cultural, Australia, Academic, School

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Lily says

As a book-lover i try to see the good in most books, even if they aren't exactly to my taste I try to understand why others might enjoy them or what the authors purpose was in writing it, however when writing this review I can only result to absolute honesty and say that this book was TERRIBLE!

As I read it I foolishly searched for reason, purpose or even just an understandable plot-line but it appears to be written with none. Its unique scrapbook-like structure does not work because the whole premise feels outrageously unbelievable and at no point does the reader ever gain a full understanding of the events of the story or the book's overall meaning. The genre also appeared to be a poor attempt at Australian historical fiction mixed with an appalling Lord of The Rings like element that was added with no explanation.

There are seriously large plot holes left unresolved that just left me confused and thinking "i just wasted 3 hours of my life I'll never get back on something that made no sense". It left many questions like "what the hell was the deal with the ring?" and "what happened to the main character who basically turned out to be a murderer?". The lack of decent writing also meant that I found I could not understand how a reader would even draw their own "artistic interpretations" if that was the author's design.

In addition to this lack of logic within the story, the characters were undeveloped, unlikeable and quite frankly disturbing, making this in no way an enjoyable read. I have no idea why this book is "critically acclaimed" as Australian fiction but I would not recommend it to anyone with taste.

Alisonsketches says

Currently using this as a class-novel text with a Year 10 class.

The variety in texts used and methods of storytelling make this a dense and interesting way of studying literature and australian history.

However, many students are confused by the 'strange happenings' in the book, particularly because of Crew's ambiguous style of writing. While this makes for a great text for analysis, many students find reading it tedious and hard to understand.

With the right scaffolding activities, this would make a challenging yet effective text.

As a novel in itself, I found it to be a very interesting way of portraying some of Australia's lesser-known history.

Roxanne says

A weird, creepy but fascinating little story which captured the eeriness of remote Western Australia perfectly.

From the other reviews I can only conclude that this little jewel is completely wasted on today's phone-addicted zombie children.

Tess carlton says

I didn't love this book, in fact at many points in the book i wanted to give up and stop reading. However i had to endure it because I had to write a school essay on it.

I found it hard to read and confusing at many points in the book, the book was written from many different different people's points of view which was hard to follow sometimes.

This book won an award which i do actually believe was well deserved, this is because it is a well written book and it grew on me a bit. One of the best aspects of the books was the allusion. Allusion is references in fiction to factual events or references to movies or books. This was done very well, so well in fact I have had to research what actually happened and what didn't. I think this is why this book won the awards because of how well it was written.

The story was what threw me it was very weird and didn't make much sense. it follows the story of a very strange boy who does some weird things and has hallucinations which makes it extra hard to follow what is happening.

While I have said all these bad things about it I truly do recommend this book because while it wasn't my favourite i still think it was a nice and well written book.0

Anthony Eaton says

This is the book, in many ways, that inspired me to turn my hand to writing. Utterly intriguing, completely untrustworthy, and totally compelling. Crew's blend of fiction and fact, his unreliable narrator and narrative, and his genius for resistant reading make this a work that will challenge everyone who reads it. In many ways, it's a book which helped re-shape the form of Australian Young Adult fiction writing, and which opened the door for a lot of other writers (myself included) to really take their 'adolescent' writing into to new levels of complexity and narrative depth. I'd place it among the cadre of novels which had a significant influence upon the more recent boom in 'crossover' writing.

Julie says

Low Fantasy? Fantastical elements invade the "real world." Actually, this book is more horror? More historical? This story kind of defies pigeon-holing or defining by genre or anything like that. It is in novel format, but the text takes the form of a scrapbook of media files and reports, and is bookended by introductions and conclusions reminiscent of psychology case-studies or other scientific documents.

Some of the major themes or plot points for this book include shipwreck, cannibalism, teenage runaways, archaeology, diaries, and alien abduction.

I wish they had a good picture of the cover. It is very interesting.

Roadside_picnicker says

YA novel that pushes the bounds of what is acceptable for teens, *Strange Objects* pulls no punches. Unusual for its age group, *Strange Objects* is an epistolary novel and utilizes the format well, implying more horror than it gives. A clever game of bait-and-switch runs throughout the novel, starting with Steve, who is our primary narrator and, by most default thinking, the protagonist. It is only when we revisit his actions from another perspective that we truly get a glimpse of Steven not filtered by his self-delusion. So it goes with history present throughout the book. Crew gives an account of historical triumph for colonial whites in Australia, and then revisits it from another perspective and forces the reader to reexamine earlier conclusions. Those looking for a neat ending won't find one, those looking for a haunting ending will be very satisfied. This book is one rug-pull after another, and I couldn't have loved it more.

Judy says

An intriguing and sometimes confusing narrative based around the true event of the wreck of the *Batavia* off the Western Australia coast in 1629. The text moves between past and present, between fact and fiction, and the creative conclusion is open to the reader's interpretation.

Strange Objects challenges the reader to question traditional history reports and to explore history from more than one perspective, notably in this instance, from Indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives. Shaun Tan's forward also promotes this idea. He includes valid questions which history students and readers should consider : What is history? Who is telling it? What is fact and what is fiction?

As many authors conduct thorough research to make their narratives more convincing, it can sometimes be difficult to separate fact and fiction, such is the calibre of their work. That is true of this work by Gary Crew.

Laura says

A fascinating and unsettling book, *Strange Objects* uses an unusual structure to great effect. Set in Western Australia, *Strange Objects* depicts a teenage boy who makes a gruesome discovery and becomes intertwined with a shocking series of events that occurred after a real world shipwreck. Told through newspaper articles, letters, diary entries and other documents, *Strange Objects* asks readers to question the legitimacy of history itself and ponder the very obvious shortcomings and biases of the people writing it down.

What I love about this book is how it presents a real historical event - the sinking of the *Batavia* - in a new light. When reading boring, dry history books, it's all too easy to forget that there were real people living these events. And not just adults, but teenagers and children too. And they weren't just passively witnessing them, they were sometimes actively participating in them too. *Strange Objects* really made me think about what it what it means to an adolescent in such a different, harsh era.

I love that this book is made up of a collection of contradictory documents, as it really forces the reader to pay attention to details and formulate their own interpretation of "true" events. I especially loved the mock letters to the editor objecting to various facts. The author doesn't just permit readers to interpret events as they please, he practically begs them to.

This book is often confusing, as the author doesn't over-explain the supernatural elements in his story. It's also quietly disturbing, as the characters do some shocking things and try to justify them. It's truly masterful how the author can get reader to empathise so deeply with the main character, before slowly revealing his darker side. This slow-burning horror makes the book very memorable. Gary Crew at his best.

Hannah Cathleen says

Where's the 0 star button? This book is terribly disturbing. The worst thing is, it won a childrens award medal and so it is able to be put in school libraries without the librarian reading it first. It is completely inproprate for children.

ambreads says

SORRY JUST RATING BOOKS IM REMEMBERING FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

This was trash. 15 year old me wanted to rip her hair out while reading it and did on several occasions. It's a short book, but it took me 10 weeks to finish it because of how absolutely awful it is.

Burn it if your school gives it to you.

Sophie Martin says

I was forced to read this book for my english assignment in year 8.

This book was 200 pages of absolutely no plot and nothing interesting. It was the worst thing i have ever read including textbooks and schoolbooks.

This book was so confusing to read due to the constant time shifts and confusing plot. It was way to gruesome to be a children's/ YA book.

ALL COPIES OF THIS BOOK SHOULD BE BURNT IN A FIRE.

Tia says

We had to read this book for English at school, and I don't know if the fact that it was mandatory reading put me off slightly, but I did not find this book interesting at all.

The format was interesting with all the excerpts and files, but the story kind of built up to nothing. There was all this backstory and stuff with the ring which could have come to something, but the book just kind of ended, and I was left sitting there like "okay... nothing happened, that wasn't worth my time."

I changed the rating from 1 star to 2 stars just because this isn't as bad as the book that I gave 1 star too.

Colleen Stone says

Macabre, exciting, fresh, challenging.

Perhaps a little demanding of even the most sophisticated of young adult readers, "Strange Objects" is a ground breaking novel . All hail to Gary Crew for his intelligent and ingenious weaving together of time shift, historical reconstruction, multi- genre, cultural sensitivity, sinuous plot, psychological mystery and much more besides. He challenges his reader to make of the events what they will and to draw conclusions based on the evidence presented. There were times that the level of respect Crew accorded me, as a reader, to draw my own conclusions, drove me half crazy. I tried to be brave and do just that.

If the cleverness of the book alone isn't enough for you, consider the tragic events of the wrecking of the "Batavia" of the desolate West Coast of Australia many years before white occupation of the country and the bloody aftermath of that event. What's not to love about that? Consider the supernatural elements that range from Aboriginal spirituality to aliens to "strange objects" - archaeological relics that hold the power to tear a person through time. There's just so much in this book to grab and hold your attention, educate you, amaze you and bewilder you. Read it,

Amanda Wells says

Inspired by a readathon doing the rounds to revisit childhood favourites, I picked up Strange Objects, and was immediately reminded, more than anything, of the feelings I had when reading this book about 20 years ago. The excitement of a mystery, the dark imagery, the dark history, and the seemingly paranormal happenings - I felt an almost delicious nostalgia for the first time I read and become engrossed with this novel.

The first time around I became fascinated by the story of Batavia, and I think it is one of the key influences on my fascination with history, and historical 'detective' work. The second time around, I'm an adult with a degree in history, and I still find the story of Batavia so interesting. This time around, I was able to pick up on the way the book introduces primary sources - presenting the idea of piecing together a story for yourself from multiple sources, for a young audience.

I probably didn't find the ending very satisfying the first time I read it - and I'm sure many young readers would be frustrated at the unanswered questions and suggestions that are made within the book. But reading it now, I can really appreciate the way this book reflects the subjective nature of stories. We will inevitably never know the whole truth, because the truth looks different depending on where you stand. Further, you can never know the whole truth of mysteries from the past; you can never know what happened to abandoned sailors on the coast of Australia in the 17th century, and you can never know what happened in Aboriginal communities hundreds or thousands of years ago. You can guess though, based on evidence. Just that you'll never know the entirety of it.

I also now enjoy the introduction of the unreliable narrator. In the midst of the story, you aren't quite sure what to make of Messenger's experience of events, and you certainly aren't supposed to agree wholeheartedly with a lot of his decisions. Later on, of course, you are introduced to the idea that his perspective may be even more unreliable than previously suspected.

There is so much to this book!

Of course, I cringed a bit in reference to 'Abos', and the stereotypes of Aboriginal people all being deros, drunks, and generally not worth very much in the scheme of things. That is couched, however, in the

perspective of someone who we come to know as not a very good person; and the respect that is given to Charlie in other contexts seems to go some way to mitigate these not so nice remarks and assumptions.

All in all, I think this book stood up really well, and I really enjoyed re-reading it.
