



The Stars at Oktober Bend

Books Reviewed:

[The Stars at Oktober Bend](#) [1]

Issue:

[220](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Lucy Staines](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Glenda Millard is one of Australia's most respected children's authors and **The Stars at Oktober Bend** is so beautifully and so carefully written it seems each word is pure gold. Alice Nightingale tells us she is broken. Following some terrible act of violence, she has been left with stitches to her head, 'crazy electrics', and will be 'forever twelve'. Yet she is an extraordinary and powerful narrator, describing her daily life in the fields and on the riverbank near the home she shares with her grandmother and brother Joey in a voice that stutters and wanders but shines with close observation and vivid images. The prose is interspersed with her poems too, and it is through verse that Alice finds voice for her feelings and ways to talk about what otherwise can't be said. She scatters the poems around her home and in the little town nearby but they seem to fall by the wayside until she meets Manny. If Alice is the girl 'with songs that no-one understood', Manny is the boy 'sad because he had no songs left inside him'. Both are running from terrible experiences but, awkwardly, in a story of stops and starts, together both move towards happiness and freedom. Despite the tragedies in Alice's life, it's a story full of hope and often laughter too. Alice's mother has gone, her father is dead and her grandfather is in prison, yet love holds her small family together, we are never in any doubt about that, and because of that she is able to open up to Manny, to let him in 'though a crack in my heart'. Out of terrible crimes evolves a story of forgiveness and redemption, told with passion, heart and humour; it is unforgettable.

Read a [Q&A interview](#) [4] with Glenda Millard.

Old Barn Books are running a [Facebook giveaway](#) [5] offering 5 copies of **The Stars at Oktober Bend**

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Links:

[1] <http://w2w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-stars-at-oktober-bend>

[2] <http://w2w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/220>

[3] <http://w2w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/lucy-staines>

[4] <http://w2w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/219/childrens-books/articles/qa-interview-with-glenda-millard>

[5] <https://www.facebook.com/oldbarnbooks/posts/1186685744721115>