



backdrop of a war over water in a precarious near-future.

PONY by R J Palacio (Puffin)

This long-awaited new novel from the author of *Wonder* is a strange, tender, often bloody mix of history, crime and ghost story that the author calls "a book about love ... and the invisible connections that exist between people, both the living and the dead". Superb.

MELT by Ele Fountain (Pushkin)

The award-winning author of *Boy 87* evokes a way of life under threat from commercial greed and the greater spectre of global warming through the characters of Bea, an oil prospector's daughter,

and Yutu, raised by his gran in a remote Arctic village.

THE LAST BEAR by Hannah Gold, illustrations by Levi Pinfold (HarperCollins)

A heartwarming story about a girl and a polar bear. April, grieving for her late mother, stays positive in sub-zero temperatures, helped by crunchy peanut butter, hot chocolate and a collection of Mozart recordings, while her scientist father measures the weather.

THE SONG OF LEWIS CARMICHAEL by Sofie Laguna, illustrations by Marc McBride (A&U)

Another polar bear appears in this more meditative tribute to the beauty of ice and

snow, complete with hot-air balloon and a talking crow – the Lewis of the title. The whole is much more than the sum of its parts.

JULIA AND THE SHARK by Kiran Millwood Hargrave, illustrations by Tom de Freston (Orion)

Another evocative husband-and-wife collaboration, another obsessed scientist ... Julia's mother takes her family to the remote Atlantic in search of the Greenland shark, which grows so slowly it may just help reverse the effects of dementia.

THE SHARK CALLER by Zillah Bethell (Usborne)

Sharks are special in Papua New Guinea where the author

grew up, she writes in her preface. And in a culture with few books, stories are ever-changing. The elasticity of memory and time permeate this haunting novel about two girls who are both outsiders.

THE BOY WHO STEPPED THROUGH TIME by Arna Ciddor (A&U)

On holiday in France, en famille, Australian Perry accidentally steps back into Roman times. Unfortunately, he's now a slave, so somewhat restricted in what he can do to resolve his situation. Entertaining, informative and often very funny.

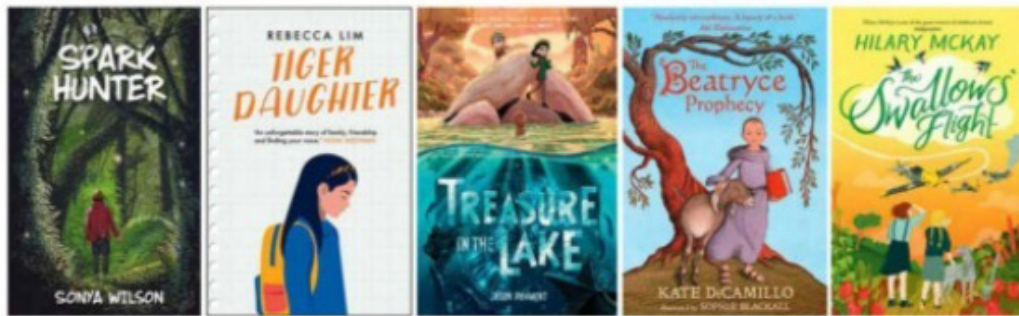
SPARK HUNTER by Sonya Wilson (Ahoy) Nissa's class trip to Fiordland offers the

chance to research tantalising lights that have long intrigued her. This adventure fantasy in the region's untouched wilderness covers a lot of bases, but its richly detailed otherworld will charm lovers of miniature literature of all ages.

TIGER DAUGHTER by Rebecca Lim (A&U)

Two Asian kids help each other cram for the entrance exam to a Sydney college. This gem of "a migrant story for children written by a migrant" describes an empowering friendship that transforms the lives of both students and their families.

TREASURE IN THE LAKE by Jason Pament (A&U) It may be his debut



SPARK HUNTER by Sonya Wilson (Ahoy)

Nissa's class trip to Fiordland offers the chance to research tantalising lights that have long intrigued her. This adventure fantasy in the region's untouched wilderness covers a lot of bases, but its richly detailed otherworld will charm lovers of miniature literature of all ages.