

Buzz Words Feb 2009

Gang-O Kids by Hazel Edwards (Omotivo)

SB RRP \$11.95

Reviewed by Jo Burnell

Get ready for *Gang-O Kids*. This adventure-packed Junior Chapter book for 8 to 10 year olds is filled with quirky situations and a generous dose of humour. With over 190 published books to her name, Hazel knows what she is doing. She cleverly hooks the reader with characters that might attend their own school; secures interest with intriguing mysteries whose answers don't take too long to find and leaves a lingering wish for more as the giggles fade.

Hazel's childhood orienteering experiences bring an authenticity to the fast-paced navigating world. From the starting beeps that send competitors running, to control points and emergency whistle-codes, the reader really runs with the gang.

Easy-to read character profiles in the opening pages describe personalities as well as physical characteristics. This strong characterization at a glance limits confusion between so many protagonists.

Kate is a bit two-dimensional, but then again, she is the youngest. Perhaps her turn to shine will come in a sequel. 'Brainy Jamie' might have been better named 'Gamey Jamie', as he dreams of creating electronic games when he's not playing them.

Just as the first words include the reader: 'If you want to join our gang, you have to solve a mystery,' so the final page calls kids to leave their comfy chairs, get outside and become members of the gang themselves.

Apart from the laughter and unexpected surprises, *Gang-O* links cleverly with the Victorian Primary Schools Evaluations Levels (VELS). Not only can the book be used as a discussion starter for healthy lifestyles, it also links into Community Organizations (VELS 3-4). With words like 'Orienteering', 'Registration' and 'mega-dangerous', this is not a book for first readers. However, the

engaging settings and characters will keep 8 to 10 year olds turning the pages with glee.

Hazel has begun brain-storming with children from the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland in search of exciting new mysteries to solve. I can't wait to see what antics the gang gets up to next.

Gang-O Kids

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Online ordering.

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www.hazeledwards.com for downloadable activities and teachers' notes.