

## Natchez Burning

Greg Isles

William Morrow | 788 pages

It wasn't necessarily the subject matter that made me pick up this bestseller at Kinokuniya; it was more the ecstatic cover accolades from John Grisham – "a scorching read", Jodi Picoult, Stephen King, Scott Turow and others. Set now, the plot harkens back to a clutch of unsolved KKK-related race murders in 1960s Mississippi.

It's a huge book with a large cast of mostly well-drawn characters. Some of them, now in their sixties and seventies, played various roles in those dreadful 1960s events, as we discover through flashbacks. Young protagonist Penn Cage, whose father Tom has now been accused of the murder of an elderly black woman, starts his own investigation, with the help of a local small-time newspaper editor who is the key to discovering the truth.

Although wholly fictional, *Natchez Burning* does evoke the history of the times, touching as it does on events like the assassinations of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King. It's a real page-turner – all 800-plus of them – with a storyline so interesting that it stuck in my mind for much longer than the average bestseller. So, in this case, judging a book by its cover was the right thing to do.

Tom Lawson

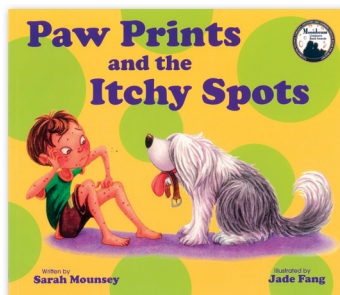
## Tell me a Story!

Guest storytellers at this year's **Singapore International Storytelling Festival** (SISF 2014) include Michael Harvey, from Wales, Katrice Horsley, from England, and Kiran Singh Sirah, from the US.

Expect a rich and diverse programme, with the theme **Translations: Storytelling – From the Word to the Voice**. Highlights include the Asian Congress of Storytelling, workshops for both children and adults, and a master class on Shakespeare to commemorate The Bard's 450th anniversary.

**SISF 2014 runs from 1 to 9 September at The Arts House.**  
For tickets and more, visit [www.sisf.bookcouncil.sg](http://www.sisf.bookcouncil.sg).

## JUST FOR KIDS



## Paw Prints and the Itchy Spots

Sarah Mounsey; illustrated by Jade Fang  
Brindal Books | 32 pages

Eddie is covered from top to toe in lots and lots of itchy, red spots! How did they get there? And how can he stop scratching them? This delightfully illustrated book follows on from Sarah Mounsey's first two works for children – *Purple Paw Prints* and

*Paw Prints on the Magic Sofa*, which won bronze in the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards for their Aussie author, who is both a primary school teacher and the mother of three boys.



## Peng's Fun with Chinese Characters for Children

Tan Huay Peng

Marshall Cavendish | 128 pages

It's one thing to master a few Mandarin phrases, quite another to get to grips with the Chinese script. "Help your child learn Chinese the fun way!" is the subtitle of this little book.

Well-known Singaporean cartoonist Peng introduces more than 100 essential Chinese characters by means of humorous illustrations, with clear explanations and lots of examples. By deconstructing the characters, he shows their fascinating evolution from ancient pictographs and ideographs to their contemporary form. What's more, there's a stroke-by-stroke breakdown to indicate how each character is to be written.

Though it's aimed at children, we'd bet that quite a few adults could enjoy learning from it too.

Verne Maree