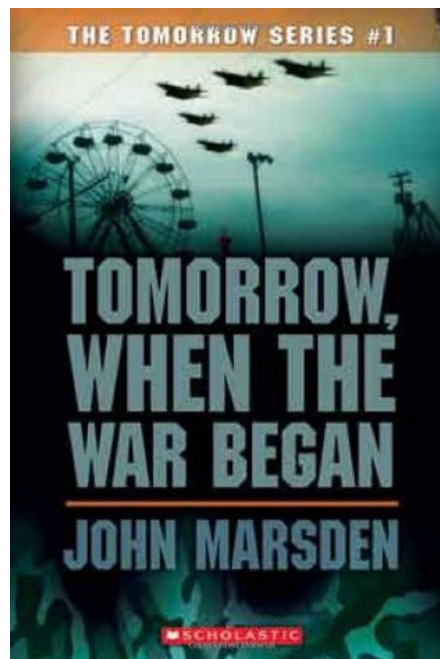




Tomorrow, When the War Began

John Marsden

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When Ellie and her friends return from a camping trip in the Australian bush, they find things hideously wrong — their families are gone. Gradually they begin to comprehend that their country has been invaded and everyone in their town has been taken prisoner. As the reality of the situation hits them, they must make a decision — run and hide, give themselves up and be with their families, or fight back.

Tomorrow, When the War Began Details

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Author : John Marsden

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From Reader Review Tomorrow, When the War Began for online ebook

I a i n e y says

It was unthinkable - but it was very possible

This was a kind of dystopian with plenty of actions and, surprisingly, ample supply of food(!)

Story: their town was invaded overnight. These kids were left free because they were camping in remote mountain area, appropriately or *inappropriately* (up to you really), called Hell.

That sounds promising enough although I kept wondering if it would have been a better book if the group picked someone else other than Ellie to write their story down. That's so meta of me. Haha. A whole lotta exposition here. Like I do understand how it was necessary, it was still not an interesting way to semi-info dump on me though.

See I get that these kids had 'experiences' and a lot more survival skills than city kids. They sure knew how to take care of themselves. They were very self-sufficient almost from the very beginning. It was just that some 'plans' they thought up were too unrealistic I think: they were so minute, down to every last details and these were often last-minute things they need to make up so sometimes they were too jarring.

Whenever Homer gave one of his 'monologues', I got to roll my eyes: he's a teenage boy for christ's sake, not a politician! **People don't go around giving monologues you know, this ain't Aaron Sorkin's script alright?!**

^Point so made.

But I did love that they actually considered (view spoiler)

Now **that** was realistic. For me.

Ps. Shout out to non-stereotypical representation woohoo! (Lee was half Thai, half Vietnamese)

Pps. This had been the last very bottom YA book I had on my tbr shelf for years! Added on April 9, 2013. Felt special somehow finishing it ahhh~

Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

I am so late to this book series but honestly, I am so glad that I managed to track down a copy since my overall reaction to this novel was quite positive. It did scream a little bit of The Hunger Games vibes for me but since that is my favourite trilogy ever, I'm not complaining too much :P

Tomorrow, When The War Began is the first book in a seven book YA series which is set in Australia. It follows a young girl called Ellie and her friends who go camping out in the bush as a sort of last hurrah before heading back to school. However, when they return from their trip, all of their family members and friends have vanished into thin air. A war has begun and lots of unanswered questions start to rise. Due to the settings, I loved the lack of technology and created a refreshing perspective in YA. There were twists and turns at every corner, the ending was a cliffhanger but the next book is currently on it's way to me via public library! Ellie as a character could sometimes be annoying but not so much to put me off from following the storyline.

Yune says

I can't help comparing this to *Hunger Games*, which I read first -- then I came across this one and thought, "Oh! This is what a *really good* YA survival story is!"

Because although Katniss goes about with the doomed air of a tragic hero, *Tomorrow* deals refreshingly with a band of realistic Aussie teenagers, with a believable level of independence. They're trusted to go camping without adult supervision in the bush for several days, and emerge to discover that their homes are empty of people and their animals dying of neglect.

The tension level ratchets up as they discover what has happened, and I was totally riveted. There's rarely a sense that the author's being overly dramatic, the way I found Suzanne Collins's villains theatrical and somewhat laughable. Here, the near-faceless enemies managed to make me physically tense all over whenever they neared.

The characters are never teeth-achingly stupid; they're intelligent but still act their age. Even during war, they're going to be emotional and caught up figuring out their relationships with each other. At the same time, there's a sureness to their friendship that lets me root for the entire group of them.

There's also a distinct love for the rural areas of Australia that shines through, and I don't know of any book that isn't improved by a strong sense of place.

I thought it was pretty much a perfect mix of action, of the practical details that are necessary in any survival/post-apocalyptic tale, of kids being kids and also acting as a brave and clever guerrilla troop. I was glad to see that it's the first of series, because I'm looking forward to reading more about these characters and their circumstances. Highly recommended.

Rachel Neumeier says

Finished it a few days ago! Definitely one of my favorite stories of 2011!

This is the first of a seven-book YA series by John Marsden, and I'm going to let this one review cover them all. Spoilers for Book 4 of the series are included.

I discovered this series via The Book Smugglers' post on hype. Then it was like, where has this been all my life?

I see the first book is supposed to be a "major motion picture." Says so right on the cover. I have my doubts. Can the movie version possibly begin to approach the quality of the book? I don't think I've ever liked the movie version of a story half as well as the real book -- except for *The Hunt for Red October*. But that was at least half due to Sean Connery, of course. What an actor! What a voice!

And, of course, it's voice that makes the Tomorrow series, too -- well, and good plotting and excellent writing, too. But the whole seven-book series is told in Ellie's tight-focused, not-quite-objective point of view. Ellie grows and changes so much through the course of the story, not always in positive ways, but always in believable ways.

Believability is the key to the Tomorrow series. What a job Marsden takes on, getting us to believe that Australia really has been invaded and these kids really are acting on their own, pushing back against the conquest of their home and country.

Here's why it works:

First, Marsden never explains who the putative invaders are, which is important because there just aren't any real-world candidates for a country that both would and could conquer Australia. He's such a good writer you barely notice the care he's taking to avoid naming the bad guys.

Second, the tight pacing keeps us hurtling forward, so we don't have time to worry over implausibility -- but there's not much implausibility to worry over, either. All the action really is believable, and you know what I was particularly impressed by? In one of the books (here come the spoilers), nothing the kids try to do actually works! They try to help a group of New Zealanders take out this super-important airfield, but the Kiwis fail and disappear and the kids have no idea what went wrong. They never find out, either. Then the kids try to hit the airfield themselves, two different ways, and both methods fail, and the kids barely get away, and the book ends with nothing accomplished. And I thought that was great! You know if you're really taking action against an occupying force, you're going to have weeks like that.

Though when they actually do get the airfield later, I mean, whoa. Quite a job. I loved it!

Third, the tight focus on a small group of kids is also very important: we don't get an omniscient view of Australia. We see only what Ellie sees, know only what she knows. Everything's colored by her reactions. That enhances believability AND heightens the tension. ARE her parents still alive? She doesn't know and neither do we. Marsden does such a great job keeping the kids on their own -- it's not like there aren't any adults around, but the kids really CAN'T let the adults take over making the decisions because -- well, read the books! It really works out that way and it's all totally believable.

Fourth, the characters carry the story way more than clever plotting could ever do on its own. Ellie and Homer, Fi and Lee, Robyn and Kevin, Corrie and Chris -- they are really, really believable kids. Far from perfect, but so very real. I particularly love Homer -- what a guy! Nearly a juvenile delinquent when he's bored in normal times, but in a good-natured sort of way. Then suddenly he's got an enemy invasion to face and man, he can really pull it together! The tension between Homer and Ellie is perfect: neither one can stand to let the other be the unquestioned leader. I loved Homer's "Stand back and let a MAN through" attitude, and the way Ellie would roll her eyes and let him through because he had a crowbar and could get the door open -- but then take over again ten minutes later.

And the relationship between Ellie and Homer is perfect, too -- not romantic, and yet Ellie can hardly stand to watch a romance develop between Homer and Fi because she nevertheless feels so territorial about Homer, except she knows she's being mean and jealous and tries so hard to get herself out of the way between them.

That's what I mean by not perfect but very real. I mean, I have a new model for Perfect Teen Characters now. I mean, I feel I ought to take notes.

I kind of like the occasional perfect character -- think Ender in Ender's Game, for example -- but Marsden's aware he's putting his characters through a ringer and he doesn't back off from what that does to them. Like, the small and large nervous breakdowns suffered by various characters -- well, I should think so, given what they're all going through. And the hardening we see in Ellie and Lee as they both do pretty grim things and are hurt by that, in different ways.

In fact, about the only quibble I have is the on-again-off-again relationship between Ellie and Lee. I think it should have been on and then stayed on and deepened. I mean, twice we get moments when Ellie is looking at Lee and she thinks: He will never let me down. When the going gets rough, he will always come through. And yet then then she'll back off from their relationship. Well, at first that made sense, what with one thing and another, but by the end I couldn't see it. Steadfast loyalty and competence and the nerve to go right to the wire when things go bad? And she's at least mostly in love with him, at least some of the time? Well, why is that not all the way in love with him all the time, by the end?

Oh, well!

I think actually there is one more thing besides great characters and clever plotting and great writing that makes these books sink into your mind and heart to stay. That's the touches of philosophy we see, mainly but not exclusively in the epilogues. Like this, in the first book:

"Loyalty, courage, goodness. I wonder if they're human inventions too, or if they just are. . . . We've got to stick together, that's all I know. We all drive each other crazy at times, but I don't want to end up here alone, like the Hermit. Then this really would be Hell. Humans do such terrible things to each other that sometimes my brain tells me they must be evil. But my heart still isn't convinced."

And from the second:

"Sometimes you just have to be brave. You have to be strong. Sometimes you just can't give in to weak thoughts. You have to beat down those devils that get inside your head and try to make you panic. You struggle along, putting one foot a little bit in front of the other, hoping that when you go backwards it won't be too far backwards, so that when you start forwards again you won't have too much to catch up. That's what I've learned."

And, from the last book in the series:

"The old stories used to end with 'They all lived happily ever after.' And you'd often hear parents saying: 'I just want my kids to be happy.' That's crap, if you ask me. Life's about a hell of a lot more than being happy. It's about feeling the full range of stuff: happiness, sadness, anger, grief, love, hate. If you try to shut one of those off, you shut them all off. I don't want to be happy. I know I won't live happily ever after. I want more than that, something richer. I want to go right up close to the beauty and the ugliness. I want to see it all, know it all, understand it all. The richness and the poverty, the joy and the cruelty, the sweetness and the sadness. That's the best way I can honour my friends who died."

That's Ellie. And it's so in character: these are exactly the sorts of big ideas that teenagers struggle with, and

there is so much in the story to prompt a touch of philosophy. I think it adds such depth to the Tomorrow series. I wonder if it's possible the "major motion picture" captured that. The story would be incomparably lessened if it was turned into nothing but an adventure flick, where things blow up with with huge fireballs but where nothing that happens really touches the characters and, in the end, all the sound and fury signifies nothing.

So I may or may not bother to find the movie . . . but the books are definitely keepers.

Benna says

It is a fun read but a bit too unrealistic, I mean a country such as Australia doesn't get invaded in five days. No matter how much planning is done!

Karina Halle says

Recommended for: ANYONE. Especially those disappointed in today's dystopia/Sci-fi/adventure novels and readers wanting a fast-paced, action-packed realistic thrill ride with fantastic characters.

Bonus points: interracial couplings, realistic teen speak, your worst fears realized

Back in 2003, I was a communications student living and studying in Auckland, New Zealand. My newfound best friend Kelly was obscenely obsessed with Lord of the Rings. Like, she needed help (still does). But while I had only a vague interest in reading Tolkein's mammoth trilogy (despite my family's involvement in all three of the films), there was one book she'd occasionally rave about. It was called Tomorrow When the War Began. I'd never heard of it because it was an Australian series and it was published in the early 90's but it sounded like a heap of fun.

Flash forward seven years. It's 2010 and I'm back home in Vancouver, working on my second novel. Though it's fairly chaste, I was concerned about the sexuality coming down the pike, especially since it's classified as YA (or "new adult"). Kelly piped up, "I've read plenty of YA books with sex in it. Like the Tomorrow Series. You should read those books, they are very, very good."

Flash forward two more years and I'm pondering the same thing again. Once again, Kelly pipes up "READ THE DAMN BOOKS!"

And so last week I was at this mammoth used bookstore and lo and behold, I came across Tomorrow When the War Began. I scooped it up, began reading later that night and was immediately enthralled. So enthralled that I brought the book with me to go see my parents...and pissed off my dad because I was being antisocial and reading instead of talking to them. Whatever, dad!

Well, there is no sex in this book (though it's getting there, wink wink) but that didn't matter. Tomorrow When the War Began is gripping and thrilling adventure that's rooted so deep in the teen experience. It's as

realistic as they come with characters you'll love. This book is just so full of win.

In a nutshell, our spunky, tenacious narrator Ellie decides to get a pile of her friends together to go camping during the Show weekend. In Wirrawee, Australia, show weekend is a big deal – farming is everything to these people. But Ellie and her pals are in their late teens and for once would rather be in the bush having fun than parading smartly-groomed sheep around the fairgrounds.

[image error]

She piles her Landie (Land Rover) with the right supplies and camping gear and her friends, the well-manicured Fi, doofus Homer, Christian Robyn, mysterious Lee and the couple, Kevin and Corrie, and takes them STRAIGHT TO HELL.

[image error]

No. Literally. Hell. There's a place called Hell hidden at the foot of the Devil's Staircase in a remote part of the bush. Having experience tramping about the area, they leave the Landie on the road and embark on a trip into the unknown until they discover a remote and beautiful spot where they decide to spend the next few days in camping bliss.

A few crushes are revealed, people's nerves are tested, but it's a successful camping trip. Everything goes swimmingly, except for this one strange thing.

You see, during the night of the Show, Ellie hears a bunch of planes flying low in the sky. Planes without lights. Dozens and dozens of jets, heading in the direction of Wirrawee. Strange, no?

It doesn't leave the crew with a very good feeling and their fears are cemented when they return to civilization and find the whole town has been invaded by a foreign enemy and everyone is being held hostage at the fairgrounds. Everyone except them.

It sounds glib the way I write it, but you have no idea how wonderfully suspenseful Marsden is with his writing, ratcheting up the tension and the stakes and our deepest fears with each terrifying page.

If you went camping and you returned to your hometown and found it was invaded, your friends and family captured or killed, that your whole country was suddenly under siege, you would react exactly the same as Ellie in her friends. Exactly. There's nothing in this book you would role your eyes at, Ellie shows us her

fears and her selfishness and her surprising unselfishness as the book goes on. She finds strength deep inside herself to do the scariest, most heart-wrenching tasks and is equally as surprised by them as we are. There are no instant heroes in this book, these are just teenagers acting as any teen, nee HUMAN, would.

It's utterly compelling and completely fascinating.

Not to mention the characters...how I described each and everyone one of them still remains but boy how they change. But maybe it's not even a change but the hidden sides of themselves finally being revealed. Homer reveals an imaginative and incredibly smart brain, Robyn is more than just a Christian, she's tough, fearless and ruthless, Fi shows everyone that she's braver than anyone pegged her to be. Each page brings more traits to life, showing us just how capable we can really be in such a horrific situation. Each brush with death gives them a new chance to grow and start again.

And can we talk about the action scenes? Holy crap! Explosions and stampedes and reconnaissance missions and shootouts and car chases (with a bulldozer!) – it's got everything.

Yes, Mr. Marsden, I am your newest fangirl.

This is terribly long review. Sorry. I guess the only thing I can say is "READ THE DAMN BOOKS!"

Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

Ellie and her friends Corrie, Robyn, Lee, Kevin, Homer and Fi live in and around a small rural town in an undisclosed part of Australia. They decide to go camping, to "go feral" and spend a weekend over the Christmas holidays up the bush instead of at the showgrounds with the townsfolk. Some of them, like Ellie and Corrie, are close, but not all, so over the weekend they get to know each other a lot better. Ellie and Homer are both from farms and Ellie's family's property is the closest to the trail; on coming home hers is the first place they reach, only to find that the dogs are dead. Not only that, but her parents aren't home, the place is eerily quiet and the power's off. There's nothing but static on the radio.

Homer's farm is the same. With the regular rural life so frighteningly disrupted, they're quick to realise something is very wrong and they could be in danger. They learn that everyone in the town and from the farms have been locked up at the showgrounds, or rounded up and sent there. The big houses in town have been taken over by the invading enemy – an enemy that is faceless and nameless throughout this series, thus adding to the tension and avoiding fear-mongering at the same time. Ellie and their friends hide wherever

they can, eating whatever's left over in people's kitchens that's safe to eat, and trying to locate their families. They find another friend, Chris, in hiding and he joins them, filling them in on what happened.

This is the first book in the Tomorrow series and follows Ellie, who narrates, and the others as they try to survive, stay one step ahead of the enemy, and inflict what damage they can. Together they pool their resources – their knowledge, and create deadly bombs out of lawnmowers, sabotage the enemies ships by putting sugar in the fuel and other such things. Deaths occur, and the death of one of Ellie's friends at the end of a later book is a scene I've never been able to forget. The first enemy soldier Ellie kills face-to-face nearly undoes her. It's not surprising that when, after seven books, the war finally ends and they all try to pick up their lives again, nothing is the same, they aren't the same, and a spin-off trilogy called the Ellie Chronicles adds a whole new level of tragedy to her life.

I didn't read this series until year 11 but it's popular with all ages. It's exciting, it's empowering, and it brings to light the knowledge and resources teenagers possess that they're not even aware of, that are put into a whole new perspective in the face of an invasion (for example). It shows that you know more and you're capable of more than you thought you did. There's a real theme in YA lit of teenagers surviving on their own, using their own resources and growing up too fast in the face of threat, violence and adversity - I love these kinds of books! It shows the strength of friendships, honesty, perseverance and fortitude, and while the premise may be fictional, the reality of what some children and teens must live through in some parts of the world, and the qualities they have that go unrecognised, unappreciated and unrewarded, make this book and the entire Tomorrow series relevant and familiar.

Brianna says

Like many, many others I was captivated by Suzanne Collins's THE HUNGER GAMES. It hooked me with its pulse pounding action, nightmarish vision of the future, and most of all its strong, capable female lead and wouldn't let me go. I finished it in one sitting. Unlike many others I was less impressed with the sequels. Thankfully the books I wanted to read exist. After a very average first instalment John Marsden's TOMORROW SERIES is the series that THE HUNGER GAMES promised to be.

The school holidays are nearly over. Sixteen year old Ellie and her friends decided to have one final adventure before the new term begins. After a week camping in a secluded valley they return home to find their animals dead and their families missing. While they were away their country, Australia, has been invaded. Almost everyone they know has been taken prisoner. Some have been killed. Ellie and her friends decide to fight back.

The first book in the series, TOMORROW, WHEN THE WAR BEGAN, does a serviceable but not spectacular job at introducing the characters and setting up the premise. There's not a lot of action or suspense. The characters spend a lot of time working out how to set up their base camp and generally planning things. Several of the kids fall in love and this leads to a couple of groan-worthy moments.

The second book in the series THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT is a much stronger entry. A short section involving a character that can only be described as Dolores Umbridge's male counterpart doesn't work but everything else is excellent. Like TOMORROW, WHEN THE WAR BEGAN there is less action than you might expect but what there is several magnitudes more violent. It's a darker, more dramatic and more compelling book. By book three, THE THIRD DAY, THE FROST, John Marsden has mastered the art of pacing. The action scenes are longer and more intense. The series hits its stride.

Unlike Suzanne Collins, Marsden never forgets that the thoughts and reactions of the characters caught up in the action can be more exciting than any explosion. This is why the scenes of Katniss hiding in trees and dealing with thirst, starvation and exhaustion in THE HUNGER GAMES are more thrilling than the outlandish weapons, booby traps and genetically engineered monstrosities offered up in CATCHING FIRE and MOCKINGJAY. And like the Suzanne Collins who wrote THE HUNGER GAMES Marsden knows how to construct an emotional roller-coaster. Terror becomes elation which turns to revulsion. Hot anger becomes cold acceptance which gives way to panic. Every feeling is vividly conveyed in the lively and introspective voice of the series' narrator Ellie.

And what a character Ellie is! Fiercely independent, resourceful, stubborn and proud, unsure of herself, her place in the world and her future. A young woman who lives life on her own terms and who will take a stand against anyone who tries to stop her. Unlike Collins's Girl on Fire Marsden's Ellie only burns brighter as her series progresses.

Ellie's indecision over which boy to choose soon ceases. Her group of friends witness enemy atrocities first hand. They start losing members. Those that remain start taking lives close up with knives to the heart and shotgun blasts to the head. The reality of their situation hits home. The relationship that Ellie does end up having is a believably on an off affair. The Katniss Everdeen who survives 74th the Hunger Games can't think of anything better to do than angst over which love interest to pick while her friends and allies plan revolution.

First person narratives usually work when they're about their narrators, not the events that surround them. John Marsden remembers this, Suzanne Collins does not. THE HUNGER GAMES (the book, not the series) is primarily about Katniss. At its core it's a fish out of water story. In CATCHING FIRE and MOCKINGJAY Katniss becomes part of a much larger tale, the story of a revolution, and her narration of it leaves a lot to be desired. Despite spending most of her time interacting with key players in the revolution Katniss is never able paint a clear picture of what is transpiring. Characters regularly withhold information from her. Significant sections of the plot are carried out by other characters off-page. Katniss develops into a character that is often too depressed or self-absorbed to notice and/or engage with what is going on around her.

The TOMORROW SERIES is Ellie's story from start to finish. The books are a coming of age narrative where adolescence is rendered as a literal battlefield. The invasion exists to create rites of passage for Ellie to undergo. Her narration describes her changing outlook on life, the universe and everything. This is the main reason why the series resonated so much with me. For all its apparent scale, for all its gunfights, car chases, explosions and epic treks across war torn landscapes, the TOMORROW SERIES is an intimate story about growing up.

I was captivated by John Marsden's TOMORROW SERIES. It hooked me with its pulse pounding action, fantastically realised settings (I could go on about how rich and atmospheric Marsden's descriptions of country towns and the Australian landscape are but this review is long enough already) and most of all the compelling inner life of its strong, capable female lead and wouldn't let me go. The series takes a bit of time to find its feet but give it a chance. Action/Adventure stories - YA or otherwise - don't come much better.

Kat says

Personally, one of the scariest reading experiences is going back as an adult to read a book I loved as a teenager. What if my 'growing up' has changed my opinion of the book - will I ruin a good memory, or reinforce just why I loved that book so much that the paperback I had eventually fell apart from so many re-

reads?

These were exactly the worries I had when I started listening to the audio of Tomorrow, When the War Began. I read the first book a few years after it was first published, when I was 8 or so (ok ok! So when I was about 14.....whatever) and I read all the available books one after the other. Each time a new one was released, I re-read the whole series again and then the new one - so I've read Tomorrow at least 5 or 6 times over the years. I've also own the movie adaptation on DVD, and although it does cut out some parts of the story, it's actually very well done.

Now I'm done with reminiscing, down to the serious business of reviewing a beloved teen favourite. The setting of Tomorrow, When the War Began is infinitely familiar to me - it literally smacks of Australia in a way that few other books I've read does. It evokes feelings of being a teenager, trying to be independent, first loves, the whole nine yards. It has always amazed me, and has done so again, how John Marsden can write books that resonate with both the teenage and adult audiences.

The plot is pretty straightforward - a bunch of teenagers go camping in an isolated part of the outback/forest and emerge to find that their country has been invaded, their parents and friends taken captive and suddenly they are thrust into a very adult situation, with very real, and scary consequences. Despite the fact they could quite easily hole up and hope for the best, they decide to take matters into their own hands and fight back.

All the characters are so well known to me, it's a little difficult for me to take a step back and see how they would come across to a new reader, but I'm certain they could definitely stand up. Ellie will always be one of my favourite teen characters - outwardly tough and brave, inwardly kind, caring and fiercely loyal. Homer, Fi, Robyn, Lee, Chris, Corrie and Kevin are all unique and lovable in their own ways, and together they make a strong, almost unified team. (I didn't even have to look all those names up, I remember them so well!).

Everything about Tomorrow, When the War Began is plausible, imaginable and well-considered. There's no sudden appearance of weapons and unexplained natural ability to kick arse, it's just simple, believable situations and reactions, both positive and negative.

I loved this book on audio - the narrator is a fantastic voice for Ellie, and the whole story holds up just as I remembered it. This is YA as it should be - it has the appeal for any reader of any age and despite the fact that next year it is 20 years old, it's not at all dated.

Read more of my reviews at The Aussie Zombie

Hira says

Updated since watching the movie *Red Dawn

4.5 stars

Tomorrow, When the War Began starts off with a group of teenagers going to camp out at a place they call Hell. By the time they get back, their country has been invaded and they're the only people left in their town, as their families and friends have been taken prisoner. Now they're faced with a decision - they can flee or surrender. Or they fight.

I was pleasantly surprised with this book, i picked it up because i wanted to watch the movie, since books are

almost always better than the movie. I also had little idea of what the story was about. Reasons this book was awesome:

1. All the action in this. If you love action packed books like i do, this is a must read. Car chasing, dousing with petroleum and setting on fire...the works.
2. Hell. I might just go to hell for saying that but if it's the Hell in this book, i so don't mind. Satan's steps (if that's the right name, it's been a while since i read this) and Hell sounded so interesting and beautiful (in a way), that i just wanted to teleport there while i was reading about their stay there.

"Why did people call it Hell?" I wondered. [...] No place was Hell, no place could be Hell. It's the people calling it Hell, that's the only thing that made it so. People just sticking names n places, so that no one could see those places properly anymore. [...] No, Hell wasn't anything to do with place, Hell was all to do with people. Maybe Hell was people."

3. The protagonist, Ellie, was neither whiny nor lovesick. That's how I'd like strong heroines to be. There's not that much focus on the romance, as they keep it on the war aspect, and I really liked that.

4. The characters stories were all interesting enough, I was especially interested in Homer, he seemed intriguing.

I'll leave it till here for now, need to read the next books in the series to refresh my mind! I hope they're as good!

*So, I recently watched Red Dawn, and while I have to admit that the premise is pretty similar, the way the story is told and what happens are fairly different. You have much more details in this, and you can like both Red Dawn and Tomorrow when the war began for each their own special qualities. Red Dawn felt much more sad, and there was a whole lot of action in it, and as it's a movie you can get through it much more quickly than these books. I like these books better though, because I like detail and you get insight to each of the characters individually.

PattyMacDotComma says

5★ Highly recommended for readers young and old.

I've been late to the party in reading John Marsden. I've enjoyed his interviews and seen coverage of his school, Candlebark, north of Melbourne. <http://www.candlebark.info/>

In this 1993 novel, the kids are in their early to mid-teens and show the kind of resourcefulness that I imagine Candlebark is hoping to instil in their primary school students, without the homemade bomb capabilities, though!

In my girls' rural high school, one of the boys was funny and very well-liked, but he was so noisy and disruptive that he exasperated his teachers and classmates. Early one morning, a mob of local horses escaped their home paddock and went galloping down the local roads. This boy spent a couple of hours chasing them and rounding them up, and he was so well-behaved at school that day that the teachers said they wished someone would let the horses out every morning!

That's Homer, one of a group of 7 Aussie teenagers who go camping down in "Hell", a secluded valley rumoured to be the long-time hideout of a suspected murderer, the Hermit from Hell.

We are reading Ellie's account of their adventure to date, so it is told from only her perspective. She sold them all on this trip, so with their parents' blessings, they take off in her family's old Landrover. They park it at the top of the ravine where they start their descent with heavy backpacks (loaded with goodies, of course!).

They clamber down through bush and nearly impassable boulders (how will they get back?) and find a large, open clearing with a nearby stream.

They're a mixed bunch. Ellie is a farm girl, Homer is from a Greek family who farm next door, Lee is Thai/Vietnamese, while Fi is a sheltered ballet student from town. Ellie and Lee cook the first meal.

" 'What are two-minute noodles?' Fi asked. Lee and I looked at each other and grinned. 'It's an awesome feeling,' Lee said, 'to realise you're about to change someone's life forever.' . . . I'd never met anyone who hadn't had two-minute noodles before. Sometimes Fi seemed like an exotic butterfly. "

While Ellie is sitting alone later, enjoying the bush, she muses to herself about people judging each other for where they live or go to school. She decides that *"Hell wasn't anything to do with places, Hell was all to do with people. Maybe Hell was people."*

Marsden has cleverly introduced young readers to Jean-Paul Sartre's famous philosophy from No Exit that *"Hell is other people"*.

But these are light-hearted high schoolers, not dry philosophers, so there's plenty of good-natured ribbing and a bit of pairing off and earnest early romance.

One night, they hear lots of planes and joke about an invasion. When they see fires and can't get the radio to work, they head home to find dead animals but no people. (No mobiles then, only walkie-talkies and short-wave radios.)

We watch the group organise and see each kid meet the challenges in their own way. Some have lots of practical farm/bush experience, some are inventive, but all are terrified.

These kids are real--I know how resourceful Australian farm kids can be. A lot of them are skilled riders, drivers and hunters and know how to make things work even if they don't have the right tools.

You don't have to be a kid to enjoy this. It is certainly NOT Lord of the Flies. These are kids you'd like to be stranded with.

I knew it was the first in a series, but I didn't realise how much the reader would want to keep going to the next 6 books!

Steve Lowe says

I'm really torn about this one. It's a fairly interesting examination of teens trying to decide what to do when their country has been invaded by a foreign nation. Do our Australian heroes go to war? Do they run and hide? Do they just hook up with each other and get their freak on out in the Outback?

Eventually, they do all three in one form or another, but I never really got attached to the story. It's written as a journal entry by one of the girls, 17-year old Ellie, so it reads as though it's been... written by a 17-year old girl. Not a bad thing in and of itself, mind you, but I grew up in the 1980s. I was weened on *Red Dawn*, the ultimate What If tale of evil Soviets invading America and plucky rural kids (much like those here in *Tomorrow*) decide to fight back and become guerilla warriors.

Perhaps there are cultural differences that I'm not aware of, but there just seemed to be a detachment here. These kids seem more interested in which partner they're going to shack up with, and Ellie even mentions it in her narrative, saying she can't believe she's even thinking about love at a time like this. Yeah, me too. You've seen your families forced into a concentration camp (the local town fairgrounds), one of their homes was blown up by an enemy missile, they've been shot at (and one of them shot), and so on. But a (too) large portion of the story is devoted to Ellie trying to figure out which boy in the group she likes better. I guess I just prefer my teen guerilla fighters to be more Wolverines! and less Sweet Valley High. Maybe the teen girls in our household will appreciate this one more than me, if I can convince them to read it.

The possibility for carnage and sweet revenge picked up toward the end, but it wasn't enough to save this one for me and want to move on to the next book in the series (of which there, I don't know, 8 or 14 books. There's a bunch.) Unless someone out there can tell me that C. Thomas Howell shows up with an AK-47 and an RPG, and whips these pantywaists into a crack fighting unit with a cool catchphrase, then, maybe. Anyone? ...

Regina says

3.5 stars but I am marking it 4 because, well I do love this book.

This is such a fun start to a series. I feel weird writing "fun" when the story deals with a foreign invasion of one's country and home grown gorilla groups responding to the invasion. But it is fun. *Tomorrow* is told from the point of view of a high school girl Ellie, she is one of 8 kids hiding out in the wild and unpopulated area outside of their hometown. The theme is somewhat similar to *Red Dawn* if *Red Dawn* had been done better, told from the point of view of a girl and set in beautiful Australia. Now *Red Dawn* fans, please do not be offended -- for a movie it was done decently. But the character and scenario development is so much better fleshed out in *Tomorrow, When the War Began*. While the book deals with survivalist topics, it also centers around the relationships of 8 teenagers so it has some sweet and fun light moments.

Fans of the apocalypse or survivalist genre, young adult books and Australian authors will enjoy this book.

Ace says

4 stars

Young adult fiction at its best, plus it's apparently book 1 of 7! Lots of reading fun to come.

Some teenagers go bush for a camping getaway and return to find their homes empty, the phone lines are dead, there's no electricity and only static on the radio. Among the fear and survival tactics is scattered that dry Australian sense of humour which I love. Highly recommended for young and young at heart!

Ammara Abid says

It's like I'm reading a Movie into novel. I didn't no while reading it's picturise as a movie or not. But that's a movie stuff for sure.

After reading I have searched and found that it has been picturised and that's great. This thing has been written for a film. After reading the very 1st chapter I'm sure of it.
Not so extraordinary but an enjoyable read.

*"In this life of froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own."*

Alexis says

When Ellie, a high-school senior who lives on a ranch in rural Australia, gets the idea to invite all her friends to "go bush" and spend five days in the outback wilderness, they think it will be fun to get away from everything they know for a short while. But they never expected everything to change while they were gone.

After returning from a fun, successful trip, the group of seven kids - Ellie, Corrie, Kevin, Homer, Robyn, Lee, and Fi - discover that something really bad has happened. Their first stop is Ellie's house. Some animals are dead, and her parents are gone. It's the same at Homer's cattle farm. By this time they know that something is up, and from this point on they tread carefully. Eventually, they discover that there's been an invasion, and everyone in town has been captured.

While in the mountains they discovered a relatively safe place to camp out that also happens to be very difficult to get to. It's known as Hell. Ellie grew up hearing rumors about a Hermit who lived there, and that prompted her to make the suggestion that they descend into Hell and camp there. Since the town is no longer safe, the group makes the decision to hide out in Hell. They're not giving up without a fight.

Of the group, four are "rurals." They've grown up around animals, on farms and ranches, doing things the town kids would never dream of. It's given them an advantage, knowing how to live off the land. Ellie, the narrator, reveals that she spent a fair amount of time roughing it while growing up. And while the town kids don't know much about cattle or crops, they're strong and determined, and their knowledge of the town streets comes in handy, too. The situation brings out the strength in all of them, but this is not to say they take the invasion in stride. Marsden does a great job capturing the various reactions of all the kids, the fear and the nerves and the anxiety. Ellie's voice is believable as a seventeen-year-old girl, as are her responses to the events that transpire. She's also pretty insightful, and watching her friends change before her eyes - and through her eyes - makes for compelling reading.

There are also some romantic subplots, because hello, there are a whole bunch of teenagers camping out together. Hormones! In addition, there is a lot of action and suspense as the kids find it in themselves to not just survive, but fight back against the forces that have invaded their land. They're smart, and they make smart decisions after much debate among the group, but they also make mistakes, which helps the believability of the story.

I gave the book 4 stars instead of 5 because of the descriptions of the town and terrain. There's a lot of it, and I'll be honest, most of the time I had no clue what was happening. The details just did not translate into a clear picture in my head. After a while I started skimming any descriptions that dealt with climbing rocks or crawling through trees or what have you. I just couldn't picture it based on the way it was written. Maybe I'm not familiar enough with the landscape (since a note at the end states that the terrain is based on real places), but I don't have problems with reading comprehension. So that bugged me a lot.

What was really interesting to note was that this was written in 1993. Aside from the lack of cell phones, this does not at all read like a 16 year old book. (And even if there were cell phones in it, they would have quickly become useless, not only in the bush, but because the electricity is off.) Often, teen fiction from the early 90s reads like it. In this case, I feel like *Tomorrow When the War Began* could have been written yesterday. (Granted, I'm not up on Australian slang, and maybe if I was this would seem dated.) Not only that, but the content is relevant within a present-day context. At one point some of the characters try to understand what's happening, and Robyn says:

"We've got all this land and all these resources, and yet there's countries a crow's spit away that have people packed in like battery hens. You can't blame them for resenting it, and we haven't done much to reduce any imbalances, just sat on our fat backsides, enjoyed our money and felt smug."

Then:

"But if you'd lived your whole life in a slum, starving, unemployed, always ill, and you saw the people across the road sunbaking and eating ice cream every day, then after a while you'd convince yourself that taking their wealth and sharing it around your neighbors isn't such a terrible thing to do."

I think no matter where you're from, this is an important theme within the current political climate, to look at how your country is viewed on the global stage, and to view a situation from every angle. It raises an awareness of the world outside of whatever country you're living in, and that is especially crucial right now. Ellie points out, "The Americans don't like getting involved with other countries." The statement is made after remembering a school assignment dealing with isolationism, but when I thought about it, it's still kind of true. America gets involved when America's interests are at stake. *cough*oil*cough* I like to think the political climate is changing, but it is a good lesson to look at things from both sides in order to have a full understanding of a situation. You can't just look at things from your own point of view.

Speaking of context... Interestingly enough, I came across this article that discusses invasion as a theme in Australia, so I'm linking it: <http://www.awm.gov.au/events/conferen...>

While reading, I found myself comparing *Tomorrow When the War Began* to *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, even though the premises are different. HG is set in the future after a natural disaster, and TWTWB deals with a contemporary invasion, but there are similarities. Both are stories of survival and fighting back. There is a female narrator, but in both cases she is a strong character. There is still lots of action and male presence, despite the romantic subplots, so I would say both of these books would appeal to male and female teen readers. They also work as a subtle social commentary. I can't wait to read the next book in this series.

karen says

aussie teens are no joke. if they ever decide to band up and take over new york, we should be very afraid. these kids know how to mobilize and all that outback tends to athleticize a body. our chubby doritos-eating teens do not stand a chance. but i would totally read that book.

i truly love teen survival tales, and this one scratched my itch, and there are SIX MORE BOOKS!! i mean, hells yeah! that is a lot of surviving! american survival stories tend to only go trilogy. oh, you hardy aussies, you can go for seven!

fortress should have prepared me that their country's children are made of flint and steel and endurance. did you know it gets to be 120 degrees in australia? last week it was 80 here and i almost murdered the sun. with my bare hands. and no one was even trying to kill me - if i had been expected to forage for food or build a shelter, i would have probably surrendered to the first person offering me an ice cube.

but these kids - they come back from their camping trip to find the entire town held captive and soldiers on the streets and houses bombed and low-flying jets everywhere. and they take care of business. some will fall in love, some will get shot, some will blow shit up...they are practical and resourceful teens, farm kids mostly, so not too squeamish, and they just...take care of business. and they aren't even vampires! there are some unfortunate things that happen to animals. apart from that - i am looking forward to finishing this series (even the elusive number six) this summer.

come to my blog!

Buggy says

Opening Line: *"It's only half an hour since someone-Robyn I think- said we should write everything down, and it's only twenty-nine minutes since I was chosen, and for those twenty-nine minutes I've had everyone crowded around me gazing at the blank pages and yelling ideas and advice."*

This was very good and had I read it when I was a teenager I know I would have loved it. Back in the day this would have been comparable to The Outsiders or the movie Red Dawn *sigh* young Patrick Swayze. I've actually heard this compared to Red Dawn quite a bit but other than a couple of major plot points it's a very different story.

I loved that this takes place in rural Australia (including all the Aussie slang) and the Australian bush almost becomes a character of its own here. I loved the magic of the teens ascending "Satan's steps" and finding "Hell" Their own private world in all its secluded beauty, far away from civilization, parents and rules. The excitement of their camping trip and the discovery of this hidden place along with the mystery of the hermit were my favourite parts. These are the things I would have loved as a teen reader- well that and all the sneaking around evading the bad guys, driving heavy equipment and blowing shit up -the action scenes are really quite awesome. There's a bit of awkward romance here but for the most part this is just one great action adventure, I just wish I'd read it 20 (yeah, okay 25) years ago.

When The War Began is the first book from the "Tomorrow" series and the author obviously knew from the onset that this was going to be a series because the ending is left wide open without any real conclusion, in fact the reader is left hanging. I just mention this because you might want to have book 2 (The Dead of Night) handy when you start.

This is written from Ellie's POV and in the first chapter she explains why she and her friends felt it important to start writing everything down. For them it means that one day they might be remembered because their world has already changed forever. Then she takes us back to the beginning of their story.

It's the Christmas holidays in an undisclosed rural area of Australia. Ellie and her six friends have decided to go camping for a week instead of attending the annual fair at the showgrounds in Wirrawee. Most of the group was raised on farms, which is important here because they are a tougher breed; able to use a rifle, drive trucks and motorcycles, move stock, deal with a snake bite etc. Anyways, after a lazy week in the bush our group return to Ellie's family property, which is the closest and soon realize that something is terribly wrong. The first things they notice are the dead animals and that the power is out, the radio is only picking up static. Where are her parents?

Heading to the other teens homes they find more of the same, everyone is just gone. Could it have anything to do with the V-shaped lines of jets that flew overhead for what seemed like hours the other night? Gradually they come to learn that their country has been invaded and soldiers are holding everyone from the district POW style at the fairgrounds in town. Our group then faces a startling decision, they can flee to their oasis in the mountains or they can fight back.

The author cleverly never gives a nationality to the enemy. They are just nondescript soldiers, wearing unremarkable uniforms, speaking a foreign language. This I liked very much. Cheers.

307jb4

Jessica says

***I find myself giving weird, abstract, and emotionally-based reviews for books that have billions of reviews saying pretty similar things to each other. So forgive me for this weird, abstract, and emotional review. I do agree with the others—this book is an incredible social commentary on war, and you'll be on the edge of your seat, etc. blah blah*

After reading this book for the first time, I watched the recent movie adaptation. In doing so I realized, with shocking clarity, what the story *isn't* about. It's not about teens defying the enemy and fighting the good fight—music swelling as they gather like a small glorious army in front of the camera, guns cocked and ready. The movie, by trimming the story down to a short 90 min, really tried to push that image, I think. I felt like they had gone down a list and ticked off the “important” events and lines from the book. Tweaked a few things here and there, cut things occasionally, but in the end tried to remain “faithful”. But the most powerful moments in this book aren't the explosions or the planning or the little romances. It's someone crying out “like a wounded bird” after her house is demolished. It's the helplessness that feeds on the characters (“If we do this, if we succeed, I'll be able to feel pride again”). It's the looks that are shared quickly and quietly. It's these brief moments in between the action, the reactions that come from these broken people that feel so startlingly real I have to catch my breath.

I'll admit, the first book of the series seems to be the most “action movie”-esque of the series. The full weight of the events has yet to truly devastate and eat away at the characters. You could still describe them as whole—shocked, yes, and battered, but whole. These teens aren't dumbed down, thankfully, but none of them are typical flawless action heroes either, despite their cleverness and defiance. They feel real and complicated and brave and scared and falling apart all at the same time. John Marsden writes Ellie so convincingly, I never once doubted her voice, never doubted that Ellie once existed somewhere, still exists, will exist. Her faults are painted red and raw and it's sad that some readers dislike her because of that.

I seriously think *Mockingjay* helped prepared me for this series. It's such a heartbreaking relief to discover more YA that doesn't tie things up nicely or have people act and feel in artificial ways. Because actions and feelings are messy, and John Marsden knows that. He wants you to know it, too, even if you don't like it.

If you're looking for an action-packed story about heroes with good guys and bad guys and an ending you can see coming from a mile away, don't bother with the *Tomorrow* series. But if you want a story about human beings in full display of their brokenness, please read this series. It'll rip your heart out and shake you up. And we need that once and awhile, don't we?

p.s. I put this book on my "favorites" shelf as a symbolic gesture to represent the whole series. I feel like all of the books are too short anyway, so I think of them as one giant story.

Jessi says

More like 3.5 stars

I love survival tales and this is an exciting and different spin then I have been reading of late. No apocalypse, no zombies and no little children dying horrible deaths.

Ellie and her friends are in their last year of high school and decide over the break to go on a week camping/hiking trip deep into the outback. This was a great start, I love to read about camping but to be clear I do not camp. Gah! Its the worst, I am miserable the second the word tent is mentioned. Anyway they have an amazing time in an AMAZING place but when they return to their town they realize they have been invaded, not by aliens just another country being a total jerk.

I get that Australia is gorgeous and rugged,

but...

but who would invade them?

The land of snakes, crocodiles

and Eric Bana?

Why risk it?

Dylan Moran one of my fav comedians once said of Australia :

Located three quarters of a mile from the surface of the sun, people audibly crackling as they walk past you on the street. That's why they all barbecue, you don't need to cook somewhere like that, you just bring the shit out, fling it on a grill and it bursts into flames. It's not supposed to be inhabited, and when they're not doing that, frying themselves outside, they all fling themselves into the sea, which is inhabited almost

exclusively by things designed to kill you; sharks, jellyfish, swimming knives, they're all in there.

That sounds about right. If that's what the land is like what are their teens like? That's right they are badass, these invaders had it coming.
