

**Male Order Specials – The Australian. 12-13 Aug 2000**  
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If you can believe everything you read, the latest assessment seems to be that males in their teens need a literature of their own – something ‘lite’ or remedial to lure them into literacy. Having grown up reading both *Biggles* and *Little Women*, I remain wary about gender ghettos in libraries, so I was pleased to come across books by, and about, blokes that push the limits of style and structure.

The first rule for those remedial boy’s books would probably be ‘Never describe the scenery’. In his young adult novel *MAX ...* Michael Hyde breaks this rule gloriously. Hyde describes rivers and beaches like a fast-lane thriller writer; conversely, he describes canoeing disasters and desperado graffiti raids like an artist.

In one sense, *MAX* is the painful but lyrical exploration of a boy whose best friend has just committed suicide. In another, more general sense, the book shines a light on age-old rites of passage where young men test themselves against their environment. Whether *MAX* is running from the cops or falling for Mai, Hyde records his inner dialogues with rare honesty and wry humour.