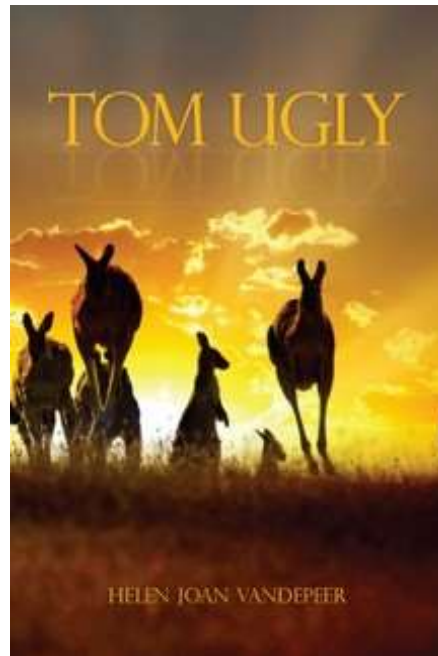




https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=VANDEPEER++TOM+UGLY

The author relates in the Prologue that she drove down the southern loop road that takes you beneath Tom Ugly's Bridge. ... she says, 'the name fascinated me.'

Helen Joan Vandeppeer's **Tom Ugly** begins as Mary, a frightened native girl struggles, alone, to give birth to her baby. She is birthing her baby alone because her baby is thought to be a demon child who would belong-a-no- body.

Mary, an indigenous girl living in Australia, had come to work for Tom Hector in his shack near the edge of the river, because her mother wanted her to learn the white man's ways as a way to perhaps allow her to live in the white man's society. Mary hopes Tom will be happy with the fine son she has produced. He was not.

When Mary is banished from Hector's cabin she returns to her people, who due to illness brought by the prisoners housed at the penal colony in Australia is all but decimated. Mary and her baby, while not welcomed whole heartedly, are allowed to stay.

With skin too dark for the European colonists and too light for the aboriginal Dharawal indigenous people little Tom faces prejudice for simply being. Life spent living with his mother's people taught little Tom that he really does not fit with the native people, his return

at the bidding of the *village elders* at age seven to Tom's cabin following his mother's death to illness; reinforces the lad's understanding that he really belong-a-no-body.

Tom grows to be a young man, always a bit of odd man out, he and his Dah, father, **do** develop a relationship; however Tom is always at the outside edge of all society.

In time Tom's father dies, leaves his shack and land and debts to Tom. Tom hopes to improve his holding, however, there are those who covet the land left to a half white, half aboriginal child.

Writer Vandepier has taken some *historical fact*, formation of a penal colony in Australia, prejudice, as well as loss of life for many of the aboriginal people of Australia primarily due to small pox; *a bridge*, Tom Uglys Bridge actually two bridges, completed in 1929 and 1987, crossing the Georges River in southern Sydney, along with *possible* if not actual events to weave a poignant tale.

I received an ARC for review, the cover, with kangaroos standing and hopping caught my eye immediately.

I found the tale Vandepier has produced to be very readable, settings are richly detailed, the anguish of a sad little boy is palpable, I like the pieces of historical fact woven into the tale.

Man's inhumanity to man is evident, but does not bludgeon the reader. Tom's plight is not resolved by the last chapter of the tale. And, I think that is part of the appeal of the narrative; although Tom is a fictional character the reader is drawn into the tale, and begins to hope that life will become nicer, easier, and more rewarding. I found that leaving the final years of Tom's life as a mystery is more satisfying than would be 'and lived happily ever after' might be.

All in all, I am certain Helen Joan Vandepier's **Tom Ugly** deserves a place in the school and public library and will be a nice addition for a gift package to teens and adults.

Not for everyone, if you prefer a more formula problems solved and such; **Tom Ugly** is likely not a tale you will enjoy. If you like a well plotted storyline set down in good readable prose; I believe you will find Helen Joan Vandepier's **Tom Ugly** a satisfying read.

Interesting Read ... Happy to Recommend ... 4.5 stars

NOTE: Reference to an episode of sexual abuse of young Tom may put off some readers, the abuse is not overly graphic, and fits the narrative, I did not have any feel that it was added for shock value.

Reviewed by: MOLLY REVIEWS BOOKS

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AMAZON BIOGRAPHY Vandepeer is an Australian and a Canadian.

Vandepeer met her husband on a writing site. The pair became friends and he invited Vandepeer to fly to Canada to spend Christmas. Since he never said which Christmas she is still in Canada. Married now and always in love.

Vandepeer says she 'has been writing all my life. Sometimes children's books that adults will enjoy. Tom Ugly is my first published adult book. I am also a playwright having won a prize in the UNESCO playwright competition. My play "After the Fair" has enjoyed readings in America, Greece and Turkey.'

AMAZON PRODUCT DETAILS

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