



I Wish I'd Written? Junk

Article Author:

[Lesley Howarth](#) [1]

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I Wish I'd Written

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Lesley Howarth chooses Melvin Burgess's **Junk**.

Lesley Howarth on a novel whose characters take responsibility for themselves? <!--break-->

I wish I'd written **Junk** instead of Melvin Burgess! It broke down boundaries, ranged across the divide between children's and young adult fiction and beyond, and broke down many silly prejudices. My daughter took **Junk** to school for a Year Ten or Eleven literature project. 'Does your mother know you've got this?' the teacher asked. 'My mother bought it for me,' she replied! The first-person voices introduced by character names heading each chapter is a device I've wanted to use, also. I came across this very effective narrative tool in William Faulkner's **As I Lay Dying** and immediately started to pinch it, when I remembered that **Junk** had beaten me to it! The power and vitality of the writing jumps off the page. The novel is informed by a strong sense of time and place, authentic background material and a real point, without moralising. Quite the reverse, as its characters take responsibility for themselves. **Junk** also has the strongest cover design I've seen in a long time!

Junk is published by Penguin, 0 14 038019 1, £4.99.

Lesley Howarth's latest book is **Ultraviolet** (Puffin, 0 14 131078 2, £4.99).

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