**Books and Publishing**

**Leaf Stone Beetle (Ursula Dubosarsky, illus by Gaye Chapman, Dirt Lane Press)**

7 June 2018

This gentle fable presents a delicate perspective on the cyclical patterns of life in the natural world, where seasons and the weather can both offer adventure and prompt quiet philosophical thoughts. The titular characters (a leaf, a stone and a beetle) journey separately through the same storm, each experiencing its impact in their own way. Dubosarsky’s tale ties the leaf, stone and beetle narratives together using a reasonably sophisticated structure, retelling events from multiple points of view (though it is still pared back, logical and suitable for the middle-primary age group). This is paralleled in Chapman’s three double-page ink drawings, where we see a recurring view of the riverbank throughout the storm, each emphasising a different character’s perspective. For example, the higher branches and foliage are shown in the ‘Leaf’ chapter spread, while from Beetle’s perspective the world is seen slightly closer, at the roots of the tree. This early-readers chapter book makes for a pleasant change from so many others that prioritise a more commercial approach to contemporary issues children face at this age. Instead, *Leaf Stone Beetle*, like any good fable, is timeless. It’s simple yet layered, and it invites interpretation and discussion around ideas as complex as individuality, transition and community. This little hardback would be a welcome addition to a school or home library, and could also make a nice gift for adults, with its woodcut-style images and text carrying allegorical wisdom and comfort.

*Anica Boulanger-Mashberg, an editor and writer, is a bookseller at The Hobart Bookshop*