



The Young Desire It: Text Classics

Kenneth Mackenzie

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A masterful and vivid portrayal of a young boy's awakening to true love in the sensual landscape of Western Australia. Winner of the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal, 1937.

Fifteen-year-old Charles Fox is sent away to boarding school, innocent, alone and afraid. There one of his masters develops an intense attachment to him. But when Charles meets Margaret, a girl staying at a nearby farm for the holidays, he is besotted, and a passionate, unforgettable romance begins.

Published in London in 1937 to wide acclaim, *The Young Desire It* is a stunning debut novel about coming of age: an intimate and lyrical account of first love, and a rich evocation of rural Western Australia. This edition includes a new introduction by David Malouf.

Kenneth Mackenzie was born in 1913 in South Perth. His parents divorced in 1919, and thereafter he lived with his mother and maternal grandfather. Unhappy years boarding at Guildford Grammar School were the basis for his highly acclaimed first novel, *The Young Desire It*, which was published in London in 1937. Mackenzie's subsequent novels were *The Chosen* (1938), *Dead Men Rising* (1951), based partly on his experience of the Cowra breakout and *The Refuge* (1954); he also produced two volumes of poetry. He received a number of grants and awards, including the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal.

'*The Young Desire It* is a revelation: a coming-of-age novel from 1937 that deserves a place alongside the classics in this genre. It's a feverish, fascinating, and surprising look into the mind of an adolescent discovering a sense of self in his quest for love. It's also a remarkably nuanced and moving portrait of the struggles of those around him to come to terms with their own lives and longings.' Will Schwalbe, author of *The End of Your Life Book Club*

'A hymn to youth, to life, to sexual freedom and moral independence.' David Malouf

'A beautifully written story of a sensitive boy's movement towards adult love.' *Sydney Morning Herald*

'*The Young Desire It* is an extraordinary novel, dazzling in its texture, wholly original in its vision, and heartbreaking in the power and freshness of the story it tells.' Peter Craven, *Australian Book Review*

'*The Young Desire It* is one of the most brilliant, confident and unusual instances of a Bildungsroman in Australian literature.' Peter Pierce, *Sydney Review of Books*

'*The Young Desire It* reminds us there is more than a single line of descent in Australian literature...Mackenzie, who died, penniless and forgotten in his 50s, turns out to be a missing link in our literary tradition. The family tree burgeons at his return.' *Weekend Australian*

'Mackenzie's prose is at its most sparkling and most sensuous in this novel, and he evokes the hot Western Australian landscape with rare force...[*The Young Desire It*] is a pastoral charged with the awakening of desire, like spring.' Douglas Stewart

'Sensitive, vital and erotic.' Veronica Brady, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

'The Young Desire It presents the adolescent boy's view with power and poignancy.' *The Times*

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