Lovereading Reader reviews of 
Fishbowl by Bradley Somer

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereading members.

Judith Griffith

A thoroughly enjoyable read about the inhabitants of an apartment block, interspersed with Ian the Goldfish's journey to freedom! Funny, moving and a must-read!

‘Fishbowl’ by Bradley Somer tells the story of Ian the Goldfish, and his leap for freedom from his bowl on the 27th floor of an apartment. On his way down, we meet the various inhabitants of the apartment building which had been his home, learn about their lives, and follow the events over the course of an afternoon.

There's Ian's owner Connor and his complicated love-life, Claire the agrophobic, pregnant Petunia Delilah and home-schooled Herman (amongst others), and by the end of the novel their paths will have crossed and there will be births, deaths and not-quite marriage (but definitely a possible relationship).

There is an obvious comparison plot-wise to Maupin's 'Tales of the City', but that's not a bad thing. Don't be put off by the first few pages of the novel either - this is a great read with some great characters. It's funny, moving and even has some flip book goldfish animation as you follow Ian on his downward descent. What more can you want?!

‘Fishbowl’ is definitely worth reading and I'll definitely be reading Bradley Somer's other books after reading it.

You can follow Judith on Twitter: @gogrygbi
Jennifer Rainbow

I loved this book from the beginning. It's an authentic, riveting read with so much going on you won't be able to close the pages until you find out what happens next (especially to Ian the goldfish).

If you want a riveting authentic read this is it. I usually read supernatural/horror/urban fantasy and love to read something different once in a while, something normal, by which I mean a book set in reality. But too often with 'normal' books I can't find anything to keep me interested, however this book did. It's about people and that's what makes a good story, the characters.

'Fishbowl' is a story about the people who live in an apartment building, real people and authentic moments in their lives. This is witnessed by Ian the goldfish as he plummets from the top floor to the ground. The viewpoint is switched chapter to chapter but there's no skipping the pages as each person is worth caring about, each character is interesting and before you know it you will have read the entire book and loved it.

This novel subtly looks at the human condition, by that I mean love, loss and belonging. It's amazing how much can happen in such a short amount of time and to quote the book: "It may take a lifetime for an individual to live, but it takes under four seconds for the occupants of the Seville to live a collective life."

So much happens within this book it is hard to believe that it is just a small time scale and hard to put into words the depth within this book. This small picture of various lives shows so much and it's a brilliant story. I can't fault it. It's put simply a joy to read and I would recommend it to fans of any genre.

I will definitely be looking out for more by this author.

Phylippa Smithson

Be sure to take longer than 30 mins – that’s the period of time the book covers – to read the creative, humorous and ambitious writing of this very stylish book.

Following the lives of some of the residents of a block of flats (or ‘box’ as the author labels it), we get a glimpse through the window of all manner and means of modern life. From the agoraphobia (who prefers ‘extreme introvert syndrome’ or some such title); the disloyal boy-friend who is just about to be found out; the giant of a construction worker who has a most unsuspecting
secret; the maintenance man who works all hours – nothing much else to do in his unexciting single life; the asbergic (possibly?) home-educated 15 year old; the 5 day from full birth pregnant woman who watches the slow escape of first feet and then more attached limbs unless she takes action; and, of course, Ian, the goldfish.

And one so very clever feature of ‘Fishbowl’ is that like all of the major characters, individual chapters are dedicated to Ian’s world and, notably, his plight. However, by adding a graphic of the goldfish in the right hand margin, we are drawn to Ian’s particular situation by the creation of a ‘flip-book’ that shows a visual of his demise when the pages are fanned together.

The text is demanding. This is definitely not a book for flipping through at pace. But to dwell on the oh so clever language that Somer uses is to ensure all humour, smells, sounds and emotions are fully experienced.

Poppy Osborne

Refreshing, funny and warm. ‘Fishbowl’ is a such a brilliant novel that isn't just about a fish, its about us as humans.

The story is such a unique and intriguing idea, I cannot wait to read more for Somer. It was such an easy book to read, both funny and with a deeper meaning that shows us how our consequences have actions, it was a shame for Ian that he had to be catapulted off the apartment balcony. I cannot express how much I enjoyed this book and would definitely recommend it to absolutely everyone.

Gavin Dimmock

Funny, warm and evocative.

A tale of Ian, the goldfish, and his terrifying fall from the 27th floor.

This book exudes joy, life, resilience and hope

Everything, from the gorgeous cover, bright orange and with terrific typography and evocative artwork, to the wonderful fish cartoon that tumbles down the pages as they are flicked, is beautifully presented. And the important thing, the story on the pages contained within, is just as wonderfully fabulous.

I’m a little unsure how to categorize this book or how best to concisely describe the plot. The subtitle of “Fishbowl” is “what the goldfish saw as he fell from the 27th floor” and that, pretty much, is it in a nutshell. Or, in this case, that should be “in a bowl”.
The goldfish, Ian, glimpses brief snatches and moments in the lives of the occupants of the Seville on Roxy as he undertakes his terrifying fall from the 27th floor of the building. The residents, each living separate lives removed from that of their immediate neighbours and often in complete isolation, are drawn together as the novel progresses. Bradley Somer, has created a memorable cast of characters in this whimsical, warm and funny, moving and beautifully crafted book that delights and charms in abundance.

The chapter titles are magnificent in their own little way, each one a tantalizing and charming prelude to the joys that lie ahead. The writing is crisp and sharp, eloquent and provocative, funny and sad. This book is a delight to read.

It is a book to enjoy; I implore you to do just that.

https://themoustachioedreader.wordpress.com

Sarah Harper

‘Fishbowl’ far exceeded all of my expectations. Unique and very clever, full of humour and hope, this is a book you’re going to want to tell everyone about.

I had eagerly anticipated reading ‘Fishbowl’. Everything about the quirky idea of a goldfish’s perspective on the lives of the inhabitants of an apartment block as he speeds past their windows, heading for terminal velocity and certain death, appealed to me. I was not disappointed.

The opening chapter was strange, it may have laboured the metaphor for the high-rise a little too long and took me a moment to get my head around, but once I had tuned into the authors writing style we were off. Ian, the goldfish in question, is our portal into the tiny snapshots of the resident’s lives. He’s sharp, funny, has severely limited brainpower and doesn’t think much of his roommate, Troy the snail, with his interminable, noisy algae munching. The people living in the Seville on Roxy are as disparate a collection of individuals as one would expect in a downtown American apartment block and we love them for that very reason. There’s Connor and his many women, the tragic, home-schooled Herman and Claire the agoraphobic, to name a few. Their stories all weave very cleverly together and, despite such limited knowledge of each character, they will stay with you long after you have closed the book on their lives. As will Ian, without a doubt. I loved the whole concept of this book and it far exceeded all of my expectations. Unique and very clever, full of humour and hope, this is a book you’re going to want to tell everyone about.
**Peter Land**

*A warm, light and amusing book of lives touching each other, as seen through a fish eye lens.*

Imagine a box with lots of holes cut in its sides and lots of things inside the box, moving around and interacting and those goings on witnessed by curious eyes peeping through the holes. That is the premise for this book: the box is the Seville on Roxy, a slightly tired 1976 building of 162 apartments and from down through its 27 storeys we are told half a dozen interlinked stories, glimpsed through the eyes of Ian, a goldfish falling from the top balcony towards an apparently inevitable meeting with the pavement below - snapshot stories of lives and loves, birth and death, friendships formed and undone, telephone sex and sex under the stars, cooking quiche and cross dressing, all seen through a fish eye lens.

Bradley Somer’s book is warm, light and amusing, a story that arouses and satisfies a reader’s curiosity, despite leaving almost every question unanswered and drawing no story to a complete close. But it is also gently profound, detailing the extent to which human lives touch each other and the ways in which the actions of one person have consequences on another. It is not judgemental, presenting the tales under quirky chapter headings and presenting all the characters sympathetically.

I enjoyed exploring these tiny aspects of the subjects’ lives, these moments of decision, of love, death, friendship and betrayal and finished wishing them all well. This is a gentle, pleasing book, a flavour of the City and of life itself.

**Margaret Madden**

*A bright, comedic novel of substance...*

Ian the Goldfish is on a journey of discovery. Falling from a rooftop of a 27 floor apartment block, he catches glimpses of the varied lives through the passing windows. The reader is treated to a deeper look at the lives of the residents of the building. Each chapter has a name (rather like each episode of the TV show, Friends) and each one is filled with the individual stories of a wonderfully diverse range of characters. A young couple whose ideas of a relationship vary immensely, a first time mother in labour, a woman who is afraid to leave her apartment, a young boy who is home-schooled, the lonely caretaker of the building, the construction worker with a secret and a visiting
mistress. There is no connection between these people and they all close their apartment doors without knowing each other.

As Ian floats past each window, he struggles to make sense of what is happening (goldfish memories not being the greatest) and the author cleverly describes the human world through the (dry) eyes of the fish. There are some of the most amazing pieces of prose dotted through this wonderful novel. It reminds me of a modern day James Joyce, with acute observations, wry humour and wit, combined with honest and endearing characters. Like 'Dubliners' without dwelling on the location of the apartment block or separating each chapter into short story form. There is a slight similarity, in style, to Nick Hornby’s works, but this author brings a more literary edge to the table. An absolute joy to read.

http://bleachhouselibrary.blogspot.ie/

You can follow Margaret on Twitter: @margaretbmadden

**Ruth Carson**

‘Fishbowl’ tells the story of Ian the goldfish as he falls from the 27th floor of an apartment block and those of the people that live in the building. A bit slow at the beginning, **this is a charming and quirky novel which I would recommend to anyone wanting to read something a bit different.**

**Angela Rhodes**

What a rollercoaster of a ride ‘Fishbowl’ is.

Ian is the goldfish who lives on the 27th floor of a block of apartments, dreaming of adventure, who with a flick of his tail starts his.

As he makes his downward fall, he lets us glimpse the lives of some of the people who either live or visit the Seville on Roxy.

People like Claire the shut in, who’s afraid of going out and Petunia Delilah about to give birth.

**For me this was a dream of a novel: sexy, funny, sad, and affectionate**, imagine your favourite Soap in book form, well this is it. You can feel empathy for some of the characters, and yes you do care about what will happen to Ian.
Annette Woolfson
‘Fishbowl’ is at times funny; quirky; unbearably poignant but ultimately is an uplifting read – which is strange given the earthward bound goldfish and the dodgy lift.

I really enjoyed this, I liked the short chapters that gave you a glimpse into the lives of the various inhabitants of the apartment block that Ian the goldfish is plummeting past. It really made me think about how isolated folks can be in our modern society but if we could just reach out we might find all sorts of interesting connections. All aspects of life are covered in a very original way. Really, really loved the flip-book cartoon of Ian on each page as well!

This is one book that I will definitely be recommending to my book group.

Edel Waugh
This is the story about a building called The Seville on Roxy. Its residents are a mixed bunch of characters, some more likeable then others but all intriguing. We have Ian the fish who is at the center of the story, Katie and the love rat Conner, the Agoraphobic Claire, the very pregnant Petunia, homeschooled Herman and his grandpa, and lastly Jimenez the lonely superintendent who looks after the entire building. Each chapter is based on a different resident of the building, we see some of their story and sometimes glimpses into their neighbours lives. I really enjoyed the way the book was written, it made me wonder what the lives of other people would be like who live in similar buildings. Loved this!

http://www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com

Kerry Bridges
Ian the goldfish lives in a bowl on the 27th floor of the Seville on Roxy. He shares his bowl with Troy the snail, a constant but not very exciting companion. One afternoon, Ian is given the chance to leap for freedom and as he plummets down the 27 floors, the life of the building unfolds before his eye.

I have to say straightaway that I loved this book. It was a little bit slow to start, particularly the opening chapter which sets the tone of the writing and is slightly confusing because you aren’t really used to the writing style, but after that, I found it absolutely brilliant.

The Seville is a block of flats and Ian’s plummet allows the author to introduce
and return to the stories of some of the inhabitants. The titles of the chapters allude to what is going to happen and I really recommend reading those too as they are equally clever. The way that the stories overlap and interweave and go back and forth from each other is completely absorbing and I felt as though I was inside the mind of every one of them. It reminded me quite a lot of the Armistead Maupin "Tales of the City" but updated and taken beyond even those brilliant stories.

All in all, this is a brilliant book which will engage you, make you laugh and cry and want to turn the last few pages really slowly so that it doesn't end. Highly original and definitely recommended.

http://iamalwaysreading.wordpress.com/

Kathryn Whitfield

Fantastic, clever and original story, I loved it.

Brilliant story and well written. Story mainly about the lives of people who live in an apartment block and a fish called Ian who escapes from his fishbowl and falls from the balcony on the 27th floor. The author narrates the flashes of what Ian sees as he falls past each window.

All the occupants harbour secrets and have challenges in their lives to face and the author kept me interested and wanting to read each chapter until i found what happened to each person.

There was laugh out loud humour and sadness at times, this book had it all. Will definately be looking out to read more from Bradley Somer.

You can follow Kathryn on Twitter: @kathreenieA

Marie Larby

Would you read a book that initially appears to be about a fish called Ian? His personality, his desire for escape and freedom? What he sees in his bid for freedom? Probably not; but if that is your opinion, I would ask you to open your mind. Even the title of each chapter brings a smile to your face.

This book isn’t really about little goldfish Ian, but about a myriad of characters, wonderfully drawn by Bradley Somer. The box they live in is an apartment block called the Seville on Roxy. We are first introduced to two characters, Katie, who is in love with love and also Connor. Love brings her joy and she refuses to allow this trait to be anything other than her super power. We also
meet Garth, who one can sense has a back story worth reading.

The book moves with alacrity introducing us to all the other characters, some who touch each other's lives in a positive way. Conor, the love of Katie, his lover Faye – unashamedly loving sex. We meet the caretaker for the building, “Stoic Jimenez”, a wonderfully named and brave Petunia Delilah; the recluse, Claire and home-schooled Herman. Each chapter on each of the characters, is interspersed by the anecdote of our friend, Ian the goldfish.

Each of the above people are wonderfully drawn. The block of apartments feels like it is just waiting to burst with what happens to each of the inmates. I read it on holidays, and loved it.

Victoria Emerson

I found ‘Fishbowl’ to be an intelligently written, light hearted, enjoyable read.

It is witty and I enjoyed reading about the characters who live in the apartment block. I also liked the physical book. If you flick through the pages you can watch Ian the goldfish making his descent.

The perfect summer read.

Oliver Keating

It takes 4 seconds for a Goldfish to fall 27 floors to the side walk (how do they know?).

But Bradley Somer in 55 chapters tells of lives being played out within the apartments. There are 13 characters within this book - this may seem a lot but the way the writer devotes one chapter per person (or couple) avoids over-complicating the story.

Reading the cover you would be forgiven for assuming the Goldfish to be the main character - far from it, every character seems to come alive as we pass floor to floor.

I enjoyed many of the characters within but the most touching was the budding relationship between the sad Janitor Jimenez and the cross dresser Garth.

Every reader will want to know what happens to the Goldfish, you will have to read the book to find out. This book is a treat in store for anyone.
Laura Nazmdeh

*A unique and entertaining novel told from the perspective of a goldfish that allows you to peek into the lives of colourful people.*

Fishbowl is a unique and entertaining novel told from the perspective of a goldfish, falling out of a window and down many flights of stairs. Whilst he falls he observes the people inside these windows and their various and often contrasting lives. We also see their lives in the minutes leading up to this and learn more about their personal situations, which is like becoming a voyeur and peeking into their private lives!

The characters in this story are all really interesting and made me want to read more about them. I particularly like: Katie, whose boyfriend Connor we quickly learn is being unfaithful; builder Garth who has a secret; and Jiminez the janitor, who seems to be taken advantage of a little by his boss. They were all vibrant, compelling characters.

There are times in the novel when I felt sad, happy, disheartened and uplifted. It took me a chapter or two to get into but once I did I loved every moment. The fact that the characters all live so close together but only a few people actually meet each other, and even that always seemed to be by complete chance, was interesting to me as I live in a city and often think about how little we know of our neighbours and people living around us.

Bradley Somer writes really beautifully- at some points I was blown away by the language he uses and love the way he so perfectly conveys the interior monologue of the characters, so you feel like you really knew them.

I would definitely recommend this novel, especially if you love peeking into the lives of other (fictional) people!

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