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Cool Nukes by Des Hunt

Publisher: Scholastic New Zealand

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Once again author Des Hunt has managed the perfect mix of characters, both good and bad, setting and plot. Max, Jensen and Cleo are gifted Year 9 students who are working well above their age group in some subjects, and receiving after school mentoring from Professor Walter Mayhew.

When the prof's life is in danger because of the research he is undertaking and he goes into hiding, their search for him leads to them noticing his research as their topic for their school Science Fair project. Their search for him also leads them into danger as they come to realise the van that was parked opposite the Prof's house is the key.

The adults in these children's lives, both at home and at school, provide the love and support they need to make wise decisions, keep themselves out of danger, and ultimately defeat the "baddies".

There is humour and tension aplenty. Some is incidental to the plot, such as Max's long-winded description of why dogs have such sensitive noses and Jensen's play with long words: *Olfactory bilaterality*. This interplay on just the third page of the first chapter pulls the reader into the story and illustrates the intelligence of the teens.

While the science of cold fusion may seem beyond the understanding of most young teens, the way they reason their way through the science is clear, with disagreements and doubt worked through rationally.

This book deserves to be in all libraries, in classroom book boxes, and bought for the intelligent enquiring mind of 10-14 year olds.

Reviewed by Chris Wright

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