

## The Classifier- Wessel Ebersohn

By Leigh Andrews

Books about star-crossed teen lovers have fascinated me ever since I was old enough to read about such issues (yes, I am a huge fan of the tragic *Romeo and Juliet* tale); books with a South African flavour, even more so. Wessel Ebersohn's *The Classifier* intertwines both of these in a story line that had me gripped from the first page.

Fifteen-year-old Chrissie is the book's protagonist, with a head for business and making money. He embarks on a number of semi-lucrative business deals with his sister, Annie, and cousin, Abraham, who is like a brother to him. One of these deals involves selling second-hand goods from his neighbourhood at a weekly flea market stall held between the white area of Red Hill, where Chrissie resides, and Greenwood Park, the coloured area from where Ruthie, daughter of the flea market stall owner, comes.

Chrissie is intrigued by Ruthie and comes up with ways for the pair to meet in secret. There's a sense of urgency and rumours abound, the denial of which leads to the ultimate downfall of both Chrissie and Ruthie's families. At the heart of the drama we have 'the classifier' – Chrissie's father, Bernardus, who takes Chrissie along with him to work during the school holidays to educate him and potentially warn him of the implications of bringing a coloured baby into the political landscape in power at the time.

Ebersohn deftly weaves something for almost everyone in this delicious read, ranging from a discovery of opera music that leads to a lifelong passion; the guilt that lingers when you just can't save someone from death; the constant childhood memories that plague adults; the joy of spending holidays on the family farm; and the heart-pounding thrill of riding a motorbike for the first time and leaning in for that first kiss with a special person.

*The Classifier* is Ebersohn's tenth novel. Highly recommended and such an engrossing read that I'm off to source his earlier novels.

