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August 2006



The magazine for promoting young Australian writers

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TO STUDENTS IN PRIMARY
OR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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AWARDS FOR SHORT STORIES

THE STUDENT

Lydia Dobbin, Methodist Ladies' College, Kew, Vic.

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Gillian Mahoney, The American School of the Hague,
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Stephanie Constand, Ravenswood School for Girls, Gordon, NSW.

MEMORIES OF AUTUMN

Stephanie Constand, Ravenswood School for Girls, Gordon, NSW.

ABYSS

Annie Deo, Belmont High School, Belmont, Vic.

WICKED, WONDER AND ELFIE

Sophie Elliott, St. Roch's Primary School, Glen Iris, Vic.

THE FIRST DAY FEARS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ashton Tselepy, Ballina, NSW.

ANATOMY OF FEAR

Elizabeth Newell, Great Southern Grammar, Albany, WA.

THE WHALE THAT LIVED

Andrew Consolino, Hurstbridge Primary School, Hurstbridge, Vic.

DANCE OUT OF REALITY

Bonnie Forsyth, Walcha, NSW.

THE HIDDEN CHEST

Sarah Shaw, Manly West Primary School, Balgowlah, NSW.

CAN I HAVE A HORSE? NO!

Natasha Medved, Hartwell Primary School, Camberwell, Vic.

JARROD'S LIFE

Jarrod Greig, St. Joseph's Primary School, Alstonville, NSW.

OLD SCHOOL

Gabi Flynn, Trinity Catholic College, Lismore, NSW.

METAMORPHOSIS

Susie Nguyen, Mentone Girl's Grammar School, Mentone, Vic.

THE THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM

Jamie Cameron, Guardian Angel School, Tingalpa, Qld.

RENOVATIONS

Jordan Cunningham, Corrimal East Public School,
Corrimal East, NSW.

STORIES FROM THE AIRCHAIR

Jack Downe, Ashgrove State School, Ashgrove, Qld.

THE PHANTOM'S LAIR

Samantha Dowling, Clonard College, Geelong West, Vic.

ROUND HILL SHACK

Kaiya Ferguson, Fairholme College, Toowoomba, Qld.

SURVIVING THE GREAT TUNNEL

Anna Xu, Manly West Public School, Balgowlah, NSW.

AWARDS FOR POETRY

SYDNEY WEEKEND

Kiri English-Hawk, Manly West Primary School, Balgowlah, NSW.

LIFE

Acacia Clark, Fairlight, NSW.

ANTARCTICA

Heidi McCulloch, Langwarrin Park Primary School, Langwarrin, Vic.

THE PIG

Kate Benington, Orchard Grove Primary School, Blackburn, Vic.

MY GRANDMOTHER

Claire Peoples, Sienna College, Camberwell, Vic.

WHAT MAKES ME AUSTRALIAN?

Jess Brown, Manly West Public School, Balgowlah, NSW.

ICE-CREAM

Stella Trounce, Yarra Primary School, Richmond, Vic.

MUSIC

Julia Calabrese, St. Francis Xavier Primary School, Ballina, NSW.

GROWING UP IS TOUGH

Kayla Wakefield, Snowtown Area, Snowtown, SA.

MOUNTAINS OF GREEN

Stephanie Baroudi, Mt. Waverley Primary School, Mt. Waverley, Vic.

STORMS

Jane Eller, Crescent Head Primary School, Crescent Head, NSW.

NIGHT

Thomas Barlow, Ashgrove State School, Ashgrove, Qld.

POWERFUL LIGHT

Jane Eller, Crescent Head Primary School, Crescent Head, NSW.

GOING TO THE ZOO

Nina Le, Mount Martha Primary School, Mount Martha, Vic.

I AM AUSTRALIAN!

Emma Bennis, Manly West Public School, Balgowlah, NSW.





From the Editor's Desk

Since the last issue I have had the opportunity of being invited to the Williamstown Literary Festival on the 13th of May. One of the features of the festival was the book launch of Paul Collins' Quentarus series. Also enjoying the occasion were other Author Patrons Meredith Costain and Anna Ciddor dressed appropriately with the theme. My children and I couldn't resist dressing up either.



Hazel Edwards has offered her book 'Antarctic Dad', and the opportunity to meet her and the book's illustrator Kevin Burgemeestre, as a prize for using your artistic flair in drawing or writing. Read more on page 7 and see the review by psychologist Judy Parker.

Also included in this issue is a story sent to us from the Netherlands. These are sent from an Australian student currently living overseas with her family. It just shows how far the Internet can reach and how far your stories and poems can travel.

KEEP ON WRITING!

Carol Dick
Managing Editor



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Antarctic Dad

Author	Hazel Edwards
Illustrator	Kevin Burgemeestre
RRP	\$27.95 HB
ISBN	0734408501
Publication	February 2006
Category	Picture Book
Publisher	Lothian Books

Families in Transition: Relevance of 'Antarctic Dad' by psychologist Judy Parker

As an educational psychologist, I work with many families in transition where a parent may be away from home for extended periods, and the family has to make special adjustments to retain regular contact.

- Third Culture Kids e.g. European families in an Asian country where the child attends an international school.
- An international household with a parent who may be flying to other Asian countries and maybe home only a couple of nights per month.
- Some Asian students in Australia live with grandparents here while their parents are in business in Asia.
- Third Culture kids preparing to shift to another culture with an additional language.
- School of the Air students often have parents working for extended periods in the outback or remote regions. They may be mustering, flying or even sailing. Plotting the parent's GPS locations can be a link.
- Oil rigs and mining camps often have two week on/off rosters, so working parents may be away for concentrated weeks and then home full-time.
- Travelling fathers constantly on overseas trips are the norm for some transitional families.
- Families where servants cook children's meals and they eat separately, missing out on family conversations with a parent about daily 'good' and 'bad' things.
- Shift workers with changing rosters.
- Some families have to prepare to move to a new country or travel for extended periods. To reduce the alienation and dislocation, having the students research on the Internet, get pamphlets and do family projects on their destination are useful strategies. Often the parent without a work permit can be more involved.

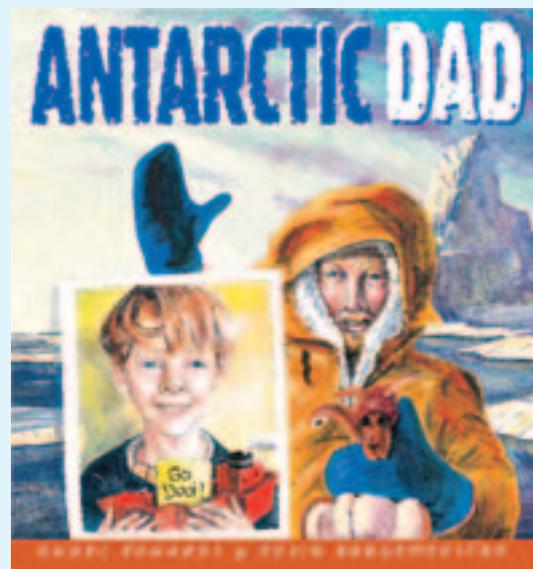
The family issues and electronic contact portrayed in 'Antarctic Dad' are realistic. The Dad is not a remote 'Disney' father but the immediacy of e-mail means fast accessibility, everyday. 'Real' family issues such as homework, readers, projects, footy games and celebrations such as birthdays are illustrated as part of the story.

The parents are modelling interest in a wider world by making Dad's work real and accessible with digital photos. Dad is involving his family in his work in an intimate sense, like young children going to his office each day. Involvement of the class in the project related to the absent parent's destination makes it into 'virtual school'.

In some client families in transition, the Dad takes the kids to school and does the reading THAT week he's home and then they cycle home together and chat about daily news. Some families write notes in envelopes for the Dad's suitcase and he opens one per day when he is away.

Nightly mobile contact or e-mails and digital photos such as in 'Antarctic Dad' are realistic ways in which families in transition retain contact by discussing homework or school news. Families often send a soft toy to travel with the father or be photographed in his changing workplaces.

'Antarctic Dad' provides global modelling of compassion for people in different lands and for environmental issues on a wider scale. That is relevant for all families.



ABOUT ME

By Meredith Costain

Meredith Costain lives in Melbourne with her partner, fellow children's author Paul Collins, three chooks, a cat, a kelpie and a red heeler. Her work ranges from picture books through to popular fiction and non-fiction for older readers, and she is the editor of national children's magazine, *Comet*. Meredith's books include *Freeing Billy*, *The Sandpit War*, *Rock Raps* and *Musical Harriet*, which was adapted for television by the ABC. She regularly presents writing workshops for kids and adults in libraries and schools.

Visit her at: www.plasticine.com/mcostain

For some ideas on how to get ideas for your own stories, visit this link:

www.pearsoned.com.au/schools/magazines/yawaTips.asp

Writing Tips

A Strong Finish

by Meredith Costain

www.meredithcostain.com

So you've been ploughing away at your story and the end is in sight. How are you going to finish it off? Some writers don't start writing until they know exactly how the story will finish. They think of a funny or clever last line or paragraph, or what's called a 'twist', and then shape the first part of their story so that it heads towards it. Others take the 'What if?' approach. They start writing without a clear idea of where their story is heading, but have fun finding out along the way.

It's often very tempting to take the easy approach when finishing up your story. 'I woke up. It was all a dream.' Slack. 'Then we all went home.' Slacker. 'And then I died. The end.' Slackest. So how come you could write the story if you were dead?

A more effective approach is to write what's called an 'open ending'. This can be very economical if you're working to a tight word limit, because it leaves the reader to fill in some of the gaps for you, saving you precious words!

Try something like this: 'I'd learnt my lesson. That was the last time I'd fool around with potions and spells. The next day, my brother brought home a chemistry set. Securely locking my bedroom door, I looked up "alchemy" on the Internet...'

Or this: 'Renzo relaxed. Everything was calm once more. The aliens had gone for good. In a corner of the field, out of sight, a slender tentacle quietly pushed its way through the scorched earth...'

Good luck with your writing!

New Books by Meredith Costain

It's True: Hauntings Happen and Ghosts Get Grumpy (Allen & Unwin)

PSST! It's true! This is the best book on the SUPERNATURAL you'll ever read!

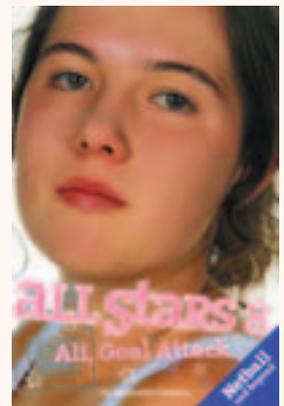
What would you do if your furniture threw itself downstairs or strange faces appeared on your kitchen floor? Or if you saw a festering green hand appear behind you in a mirror? In this engrossing book about the supernatural, Meredith Costain tells some spine-chilling stories and examines the evidence on teleportation, UFOs, psychic detectives, the Bermuda Triangle and many other mysteries of mind, time and space.



Ali, Goal Attack (All Stars #8) (black dog books)

Ali feels like she's been stuck on the sidelines all her life. She doesn't even have her own position on the netball team. What a loser. But then Stephanie turns ups, and everything changes . . .

Ali, Goal Attack is the eighth book in the fast-paced All Stars netball series, which tells the story of the team's first season.

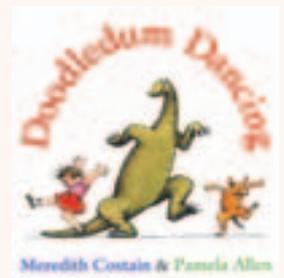


Doodledum Dancing (Penguin)

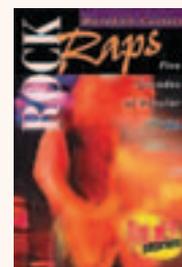
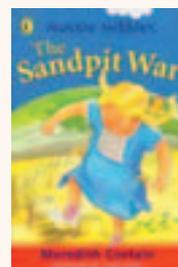
Here's a book of giggly, wiggly, squiggly poems
You can munch them for breakfast

You can crunch them for lunch
You can gobble them for dinner

But most of all –
You can read them out loud
And share them with your friends
Again and again . . .



Doodledum Dancing is a delightful book of action rhymes written by Meredith Costain and exuberantly illustrated by Pamela Allen.



SYDNEY WEEKEND

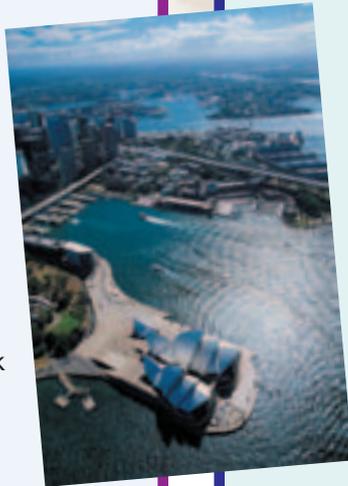
Boys out on a Sunday
Hit the cricket ball afar
The girls are playing softball
Slamming balls across the yard.

The kids are getting heated
sweat pouring down their face
Parents getting restless,
it's getting really late.

The sun is burning brighter
and the heat, it just won't break
I might go somewhere cooler
maybe South Australia mate!

But Sam's not out for 53
and Mani's hit a homer
I wonder what the South could do

Maybe hit a maiden over?
So I'm packing up my Weet Bix 'n' Vegemite
and leaving on a plane tonight.



By Kiri English-Hawke
Year 6
Manly West Primary School
BALGOWLAH – NSW
Teacher:
Mrs Elizabeth Bernasconi

LIFE

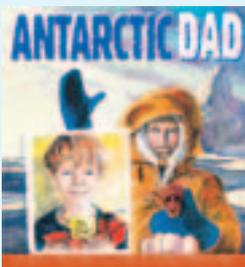
The soft cool water flowing, falling
The otter
The otter has come
He is playful, he is young
He darts here, he darts there
He is gone
The soft cool water flowing, falling

The dark, black, lonely cave
The devilfish
The devilfish has come
Long arms here, long legs there
Nothing can stop him,
nothing at all
Black, dark, murky water
He is gone
The black, dark, lonely cave

The crisp breeze, whispering, shouting
The cormorant
The cormorant has come
His feathers all shining in the sun,
All shimmering like mirrors
From a black to a aqua,
to a green to a purple
Colours
He is gone
The crisp breeze, whispering,
shouting.

By Acacia Clark, FAIRLIGHT – NSW

ANTARCTIC DAD CHALLENGE



Prize:

Personally autographed
copy of the book and
opportunity to meet and
interview the illustrator
Kevin Burgemeestre and
author Hazel Edwards
who will judge the entries.

Read and study the illustrated flaps of picture book
Antarctic Dad (ISBN 0-7344-0850-1) (Lothian Books)
and visit www.hazeledwards.com for further
information.

Design a new flap for one of the pages, which
links with the story.

OR

Write and design a page to follow the last page
of the book.

Send entries to: Antarctic Dad Challenge
Oz Kidz In Print
P.O. Box 267
LARA VIC 3212

Conditions of Entry

1. To be eligible to enter each individual entrant must be of school age as at the 1st February 2006.
2. Entries close last mail on Monday 2nd October 2006.
3. Entries will become the property of the Australian Children's Literary Board and will not be returned. Unsuccessful entries will be destroyed.
4. The Winner will be notified by phone/mail or email and posted on our website (www.ozkidz.com.au).
5. Entrants warrant that material submitted during the competition is their own original work. Entrants may enter more than one idea but each different idea must be submitted separately as a complete entry.



The girl and her mother haggle with the woman; “\$40 is too much” the mother says, laughing. The girl fingers the soft leather of the wallet and smiles. The woman in her little stall on the narrow street looks at the mother and daughter, so alike when they smile.

“OK \$30, \$30 is final” she says in heavily accented English as she grabs the wallet and puts it into a plastic bag. The girl smiles and pulls out some battered notes. The girl and her mother have been shopping all day. They have bought two new coats for the girl and some shoes for both of them.

“You should have enough for the winter back home”, her mother says, taking the girl’s arm. ‘I’m exhausted’ the girl says as they board the ferry back to Kowloon. The water laps at the side of the boat and the neon signs light up as night falls. They sit facing backwards and watch Hong Kong Island move away from them. “I’ve booked us into that lovely Cantonese place by the harbour for dinner, is that OK?” the mother asks. The girl nods and lays her head on her mother’s shoulder. She knows everything will be OK but she blinks away tears. The mother speaks to a friend she has spotted on the boat and doesn’t notice the girl’s silence as they disembark and walk to their apartment block. They ride up in the marble fitted lift and arrive on the 27th floor. The large lounge room faces the city and the buildings wink into the room. In her bedroom the girl goes through the last of her packing and finds a dress she had made two years ago, before she left for Australia. She showers and dresses. Her mother plays Brahms on the stereo and speaks in French on the telephone. The girl hears her mother saying that it will be OK, it is just this time before she leaves that’s so painful. The girl shuts her eyes.

The girl’s father is waiting at the restaurant when they arrive. He hugs his daughter tightly, when he lets go the girl knows without looking that his eyes are moist. The table is laid with a white cloth and candles. They

sit outdoors with the smell of the ocean in the breeze. They order chicken and duck, green vegetables and a plate of bok choy in oyster sauce. They order beef in blackbean sauce and fried rice. They order more than they can eat. “You won’t be eating like this back home”, her father says with a forced smile. The girl nods and her mother puts her hand on the girl’s arm and whispers “I should be used to it, I know, but it never gets any easier – does it?”.

The girl is already awake when she hears her mother’s alarm. She pulls the sheet over her head and lies still. She breathes deeply and keeps her eyes closed. She knows her mother won’t

have slept and will be trying to hold herself together.

Her father sits silently at the breakfast table. He plays a Wagner CD. Her mother changes it to Bach. The girl burns some toast. Whilst her mother makes her a fresh piece the girl watches out the window. She sees the harbour and the restaurant where they ate last night. In the street below she sees people walking to work, waiting for buses and riding bikes. She sees couples, families, groups of friends and work colleagues. She sees Chanel open its doors and next door at Louis Vuitton a man in a white fur coat stops to look in the window. “Honey, we better go”, her mother says.

“Are you OK sweetheart?” the girl’s mother asks in the taxi.

“You know we are always just a phone call away”, she says as she brushes her daughter’s blonde hair away from her face. The mother smiles as she speaks but her eyes glitter and her voice wavers.

The girl squeezes her mother’s hand and presses her lips together.

As she waits to board her flight the girl feels numb. She blinks away tears and listens to her iPod. On the plane the girl tells herself it will be good to see her friends again. She tries not to think of her parents. She sleeps erratically and wakes with her neck aching.

The taxi pulls up outside her apartment and she pays the driver. His eyes linger over her body as she hands him the money. She grabs the change quickly and hurries inside. Inside the apartment is stuffy; she opens some windows and puts her bags in her bedroom. She turns on all the lights in the apartment. Silence is everywhere. She wonders if it is too late to call Hong Kong. She switches on the TV and turns it up loud.

Cont’d...

THE STUDENT (Cont'd)

The girl hears the phone ringing in her dream but doesn't wake up. She sleeps on and when she wakes she sees there are three messages on her answering machine. She feels itchy all over her body and realises the apartment is full of mosquitoes. She closes the windows and starts to turn off some of the lights. The phone rings again and she jumps.

"Hello?" "Honey, I have been trying to call you for hours, are you OK?" It is her mother's voice.

"Yes, sorry, I was sleeping", the girl says.

"Oh, OK, I was worried darling, anyway are you home safe, is everything OK?"

The girl undresses and returns to bed. She wakes and the clock says four am. She can't sleep and gets up. She looks out into the street, it's empty except for a man picking through a garbage bin. He wanders off and a street light flickers. She thinks she hears someone out in the hall and goes to look through the peep hole. The hallway is deserted. She shivers all over even though the night isn't cold.

"Mum", she says out loud and listens.

She hears the fridge humming and begins to cry. She goes into her parents' bedroom and touches the cover of their bed. She leans into the pillow and smells the scent of her mother. She pulls the sheet up and wipes her tears.

The next morning she drinks orange juice and watches TV. She calls her friends and arranges to meet them for lunch.

"Oh, my God! You missed the summer of the century!" they say, flipping their long hair back and flashing their teeth.

"Don't worry, we'll fill you in on everything that happened!"

They order chicken salad with no dressing. The girl listens to their stories and wishes she could tell them about her own summer holiday. Afterwards they return to the girls' apartment. Her friends marvel at

the clothes she has bought them. They shower and get ready to go out. They listen to Madonna then her friend's mother calls, wanting to know if she is coming home for dinner.

The girl and her friends go to a party; everyone is happy to see the girl. They say they have missed her. The girl imagines she is not there. She imagines she is back in the bustling streets of Hong Kong. She imagines she smells the scent of fish being gutted at the fish market; she feels the humidity and tastes the smog in her mouth.

When the girl arrives back in her apartment she calls her parents.

"Hello, we're not here to take your call..." her mother's voice says brightly.

The girl hangs up angrily, *"Why aren't you there?"* she shouts, her voice breaking.

She listens to herself breathing and watches the reflections from the street against the wall of her apartment. She looks out the window and notices the sky starting to turn a soft lilac colour as the sun begins to rise. The phone rings.

"Honey, are you OK?" It's her mother.

"We missed your call earlier."

The girl hesitates and then answers, *"I'm fine".*

Her mother says *"Have you decided on your subjects, when is enrolment?"*

"Tomorrow", the girl says.

She goes into her bedroom, slips off her dress and gets into bed. She lies still. She gets up. She goes into her parents' bedroom and gets into their bed. She pulls the doona up around her chin and breathes in the scent of her parents. She closes her eyes.

By Lydia Dobbin
Methodist Ladies' College
KEW – VIC.





FEET IN THE SAND

Sunrise. A child's feet step into the drenched sand. It gave way beneath her and moulded to fit her foot shape. The grains were each different shades of blond, honey, flaxen, ochroid, tan, straw. Each one was uniquely impressive and stood out exclusively beneath the callous, ebony feet of the slave runaway. The girl must have been no older than seven, yet she was exceedingly aware of the special moment. She heard the faint crunch of the sand compacting as something intruded her solitude. She turned. It was only a seagull, cawing as it devoured up a minuscule shrimp. She was alone; a solitary figure feeling at one with the world.

Her serenity was interrupted by the roar of the sea as yet another wave crashed in. The slave girl felt all its yearning as the wave glided out as far as it dared, then retreated. The strong salty aroma drifted up her nostrils and her feet drowned in the cold, calming seawater. She looked down and saw the turquoise water froth pearl white bubbles, many of which burst upon tickling her toes. A few drops of sea spray landed on her tongue and her tastebuds relished the taste. The sea mesmerised her and she was filled with a craving to just swim away and let the sea wash away all her doubts and fears.

The sky was a kaleidoscopic work of art to which none could compare. Oranges and blushing pinks raced across the sky, cerise made its presence known with an angelic glare. Saffron dabbed itself here and there while azure dominated its empire in the west. The slave girl shared the brilliance of the rising sun and celebrated along with it the exultation and rapture of its blessing upon the world.

*By Gillian Mahoney
Year 7*

*The American School of the Hague
WASSENAAR – THE NETHERLANDS
Teacher: Mrs Kathy Spradling*

ANTARCTICA

Antarctica, a land so white,
Antarctica, a place so bright,
Mawson is a research station,
tourists visit for a vacation.

Pack ice has a rounded edge,
huskies pull you along in a sled.

In Antarctica there are trees and moss,
if you didn't know that, you'll have a terrible loss.

In Antarctica the weather is so very cold,
in Antarctica the animals are so very bold.

The Weddell seal is one of many,
but where in Antarctica do you spend a penny?

In Antarctica there are leopard seals,
penguins are their favourite meals.

In Antarctica there are lots of different whales,
most of them have really big tails.

The whales come to feed on krill,
the scientists come with a heavy drill.

Penguins multiply thick and fast,
standing in the icy blast.

The Aurora Australis lights up the sky,
visible to the naked eye.

At the bottom of the world is the South Pole,
to research the land is the scientist's goal.

Icebergs tend to float around,
they are not found on the icy ground.

Underneath the snowy mould,
who knows? There could be gold!

The ozone layer is getting thin,
so please put your rubbish in the bin.

Antarctica is made of gold,
but it is not the kind that can be sold.

*By Heidi McCulloch
Year 6, Age 11
Langwarrin Park Primary School
LANGWARRIN – VIC.*



I COULDN'T HAVE WRITTEN IT WITHOUT YOU!

A message from author Anna Ciddor

My latest book, *Prisoner of Quentaris*, is about to hit the shops, and I want to thank all the students around Australia who helped me to write it!

When Paul Collins and Michael Pryor (the people who created Quentaris) asked me to write a book for the series, I was a bit reluctant. When I wrote my Viking Magic books, *Runestone*, *Wolfspell* and *Stormriders*, I based the plots on real history, but Quentaris is a fantasy place. All of the story had to come out of my imagination. I was about to say 'No' when I had a great idea. I knew, from visiting schools, that you kids always have lots of terrific fantasy ideas. I decided to call on you for help when I got stuck. So, while I was writing *Prisoner of Quentaris*, every time I had writer's block, I asked the students in the schools I was visiting to rescue me!

The idea for my story came from an old Irish folktale about little folk called leprechauns. I decided a group of leprechauns would visit the city of Quentaris. Leprechauns are as small as a normal person's hand. Instead of riding horses, they ride on rats. To them, the people of Quentaris are giants.

In my story, the Archon of Quentaris captures the leprechaun king. The tiny warriors decide to win their king's release by annoying the Archon and the other giants. But how could they do that? That's when I called on you, and here's how you helped me...

Plot idea number 1

'Get the leprechauns to push things off their shelves and make a mess'.

'Get them to drop slippery banana peels on the ground'.

Thanks, guys, you inspired a bit of the story where the leprechauns attack the market in Quentaris:

Up the stalls and barrows they swarmed, and the next moment giant rounds of cheese were rolling and teetering off the counters. With thud after thud they toppled over the edges and splattered on the ground. Sacks of grain wobbled and sagged as leprechauns tore at the hessian with their swords. Corn, wheat, barley and rye flowed out on the cobblestones. Piglets squealed and shot away to freedom as their bonds were cut away, and hens flapped free, clucking in excitement.

On the fruit stands, the tiny figures danced and yelled in triumph, slashing and stabbing till fountains of red and yellow juice spurted in the air. The rats, joining in the frenzy, ripped, bit and tugged.

Angry stallholders tried to fend off the attack, but when they chased the leprechauns they only trod on their own

produce. They slipped in the rivulets of milk, slithered on the scattered grain, and fell onto the slimy pulp of squashed fruit and vegetables.

Idea number 2

'Disturb the giants by tickling their feet, making noises under their beds, pulling their hair...'

Another great idea! Here's how I use it in the story (Heaney and Tola are leprechauns, and Sharpfang is the name of a rat):

As they passed a gate, a baby let out a shriek. Heaney turned to look and saw a wooden cradle wobbling in the sunshine, and chubby feet and fists flailing the air.

Tola popped up on the side of the cradle, caught sight of Heaney, and waved in triumph. He launched himself off the side of the cradle, setting it pitching wildly, and came pelting out the gate on the back of Sharpfang.

'Quick!' he panted.

Glancing over his shoulder, Heaney caught a glimpse of a distraught girl giant trying to soothe the baby and a dog at the same time.

'What did you do?' he called.

Tola was chuckling. 'Sharpfang nipped the dog while I scattered thorns in the baby's sheets', he answered with glee. 'Come on.'

Even when the book was finished, I still called on you to help me. I couldn't decide on a title for the book, so I came up with four choices and asked classes all over Australia to vote. These were the choices:

Prisoner of Quentaris

Giants of Quentaris

Prisoner of the Archon

Kidnap in Quentaris

As you can see from the title of the book, the one you chose was *Prisoner of Quentaris*.

So, once again, thanks for all your help, and I hope you enjoy the book!

You can find out more about Anna Ciddor and her books at www.viking-magic.com and www.quentaris.com.



DAS HOFFNUNGSSCHIFF

I traced the outline of her hands, one, two, three... four... five. They were wet and soft on one side, but dry and tough on the other. They reminded me of the leaves on the *Buche* tree we had planted in the spring time back in my country. The ridges between her fingers were damp with sweat intertwined with dirt. "*Schnell, beeil dich*" I remember the hushed voices that pleaded for haste. I blindly followed my mother, my favourite blanket flapping after me like a seagull.

Amongst the thousands of groping arms, my mother pulled me into the belly of the boat. Strange sounds of breathless groaning filled the empty shell of the hull. They echoed, craving to be heard in their despair. The familiar sound of creaking wood forced memories into my mind. I remember the loose floorboard outside my room, squeaking sounds of familiarity and comfort.

"Don't be afraid, you are not alone when you hear your floorboards whisper. Hush, your mother is coming."

The smell of rotting wood hung in the air, cigar smoke riddled the opaque air like thick curtains. A still, sleepy silence prevailed.

The wind began howling.

"Can you hear the sob of the breeze? It is crying for all the children."

A hand pulled me to a seat above. The safest place in the world for me was sitting on the rocking chair with my ear pressed against my mother's chest. I loved to listen to her heartbeat and the creak of the chair. If I was lucky, she would be talking to someone while I was sitting there, and I would hear her voice from the inside of her chest. But now all I could hear was the creaking of the boat and the sobbing of the breeze.

Strangers stared emptily through me. I felt small as I let my feet hang off the seat, fumbling in the dim light for my mother's hand. I pressed my face against the window. I stared past the reflection to the shrinking dock, twisting around in my seat until the very last glimpse of green specks knotted with grey smog had vanished.

In the velvet haze, I turned to my mother, seeking that familiar rhythm of home. I heard her carefully turning the pages of my fantasy world, with each flick, licking her finger.

I descended into the past. The *Grillen* are chirping outside my window in the balmy summer air. I hear humming. I wait for her to enter in her starched apron. I wait in anticipation for her to read me a bedtime story. I hear her smoothing over the cover of the book, licking her finger as she turns each page. Those familiar sounds of home.



I pulled my blanket over my head. It smelled like lavender. It suffocated the aura of unfamiliarity and instilled a feeling of safety and soothing comfort. Many nights were spent under this very blanket, filled with the dreams of fairytales when my mother read me legends of magic and dragons.

"It all started a long time ago. A group of creatures called pirates dwelled on a small boat, they called it *Ladon*."

The rocking waves gently soothed me to sleep and flung me into a world of fantastical creatures where I find myself taking watch over the seas like an eagle in a ship's crows nest, tasting the salt in the air, feeling the wind brushing against my face like a million grains of sand, and smelling that familiar lavender fragrance.

"Can you hear the sob of the breeze? It is crying for all the children."

I squeezed my eyes shut, letting the scent of lavender take me back into my magical world.

"It all started today. A group of migrants dwelled on a small boat, they called it *das Hoffnungsschiff* and it was no ordinary boat. It groaned as it ploughed heavily through the seas. It carried a mother and her small bewildered daughter to a promising new beginning in unknown lands."

I could see the ship's wheel turning in the howling storm, the golden spoils of bravery, overflowing seas

Cont'd...

DAS HOFFNUNGSSCHIFF (Cont'd)

of pirate treasure glistening like the night sky, mountains of sapphire and ruby... and gold coins from exotic lands.

In my mind, all the hordes of people on the boat came to life as sailors and pirates. One smiled at me, twinkling his golden tooth. The small glint of light reminded me of the way the sun used to bounce off the ginger coloured window in our kitchen. I used to sit by that window every day after school watching my mother busily flicker between patches of light and shade. I used to smell the faint scent of citrus interlaced with lavender which mother had put on the window sills to ward off the pesty summer *Schnaken*. I used to hear her soft humming against the harsh crackling of the fire.

My blanket fell to the floor. My shield gone.

The threads of safety and comfort of home had fallen as the scent of lavender diffused away into the stifling air.

"Can you hear the sob of the breeze? It is crying for all the children. It whispers for you to be brave now."

The golden spoils of bravery.
Destitute human cargo.

Overflowing seas of pirate treasure glistening like the night sky.
The crowded ship of hopeful exiles drifting into the hesitant future.

Mountains of sapphire and ruby.
Scatterings of meagre collections of livelihood.

Gold coins from exotic lands.
Shaken refugees from war torn homes.

I imagined the fragrance of lavender escaping from my blanket; a shadow cast across my bedroom wall materialising into *Mutti*.

"Not long now, we are almost there", mother said.



Then out of the ship's window shimmered the scene I had not laid eyes on for almost four long weeks; a giant mass of green entwined with specks of white and yellow was nearing us, crawling towards us.

I clutched my blanket. The boat creaked as it sleepily anchored into the harbour.

...squeaking sounds of familiarity and comfort.

"Don't be afraid, you are not alone when you hear your floorboards whisper."

*By Stephanie Constand
Year 11
Revenswood School for Girls
GORDON – NSW
Teacher: Helen Jones*

THE PIG

She sits in front of the fence
where she has flopped,
and stares at you accusingly.
Her pink ears twitch suspiciously
as she focuses on you with her dark eyes.
The ring in her nose makes her look tough.
Her piglets squealing in the background
add to the atmosphere.
She has a brutal and stubborn air about her.
Her stomach wobbles like jelly not quite set.
The black around her ears makes her look
like she was in a fight – and won.
It is alarming to think that her slippery
little pink babies will end up like her.

*By Kate Benington
Grade 5
Orchard Grove Primary School
BLACKBURN – VIC.*



MEMORIES OF AUTUMN

No sooner did I bend over to retrieve a packet of frozen ice cream than a smell invaded my senses, and there it was. There's ice, a smell I remember. A cold that seeps up to the bone. I stopped and scraped off the carpet of white icy fur which encased the ice cream tub, the cold velvety feel revealing the memory of young hands picking grapes in the late of autumn. Each grape enveloped by the same frosty carpet of ice. Frost creeps inside, hardening the fruit's inner flesh, making its skin lucent, revealing two tiny seeds suspended in a green heart.

The neat rows of the vineyard, disguised in the haze, appear in the veiled orange of first light. In the lifting fog, children run among the vines; flashes of red and yellow, performing a dance of shadow and light between the dying branches. Bending under the



weight of overloaded baskets, shuffling towards the large wooden vat, the air begins to thicken with the smell of muddy ice and foul soggy fruit. Hands twisted around the picker's basket, as the smell of half rotten grapes blends with damp and musty wood. It isn't the green perfume of the grapevine stalk or the carpet of fallen autumn leaves; a universe of gold and burgundy, but something more secret.

Red wine spiced with cinnamon, cloves, sugar and the zing of an orange. A fine aroma of sweet tartness tempts the senses. Warm steam from mulled wine dances gently out of the earthen mug, snaking towards the awakening sun like a silvery ribbon. Cold hands wrap themselves around the cup, fingers soak up the soothing warmth. The soul relaxes when warmed a little.

Silhouettes of winged insects – their wings translucent with tiny pulsing veins, caught in spider webs draped with beads of dew, spanning between bare stalks. Grapes once soaked up the liquid sunshine to sweeten, but now in the decline of the autumn, in the Altweibersommer, their sweetness is transformed into a glassy acid. The sun, like a star of morning dew, does not yet warm the frosty layers of the grapes, leaving that carpet of ice still to envelop the autumn fruit.

The memories of autumns past spring into being.

*By Stephanie Constand, Year 11,
Ravenswood School for Girls, GORDON – NSW
Teacher: Helen Jones*

Eyes filled with memories,
Too many a wrinkle to count,
A kindred soul with a thousand stories,
Together there is nothing we cannot surmount.

A gentle face of all eternity,
A smile to part a sea,
Of anything you are worthy,
You mean the world to me.

You tell me tales of wonder;
You teach me riddles and rhymes,
You fill my mind with thoughts to ponder,
And all before my bedtime.

Your voice as soft as an angel's whisper,
A spirit as dazzling as the sun's ray,
An inner beauty that time cannot wither,
A love that will continue to prosper,
even after your last days.

You taught me right from wrong,
Your patience was never lost,
We shared many a dance and song,
And if I met troubles, you would help me at any cost.

You possess the calm of a still lake,
A heart of solid gold,
The warmth of a cookie that you baked,
Even in your years of old.

*By Claire Peoples
Year 10, Sienna College
CAMBERWELL – VIC.
Teacher: Ms Watson*

*My
Grandmother*





WHAT MAKES ME AUSTRALIAN?

Having a barbeque on a Saturday afternoon,
Playing on the soft, sandy beaches,
having a big grin on my face,
Does that make me Australian?

Recognising John Howard,
Going out for an early morning surf,
Helping dad mow the lawn
Does that make me Australian?

Australia is a huge country,
Filled with lots of different types of people,
I was born in Australia
Which makes me a proud Australian.

*By Jess Brown
Grade 6S
Manly West Public School,
BALGOWLAH – NSW
Teacher: Mrs Street*

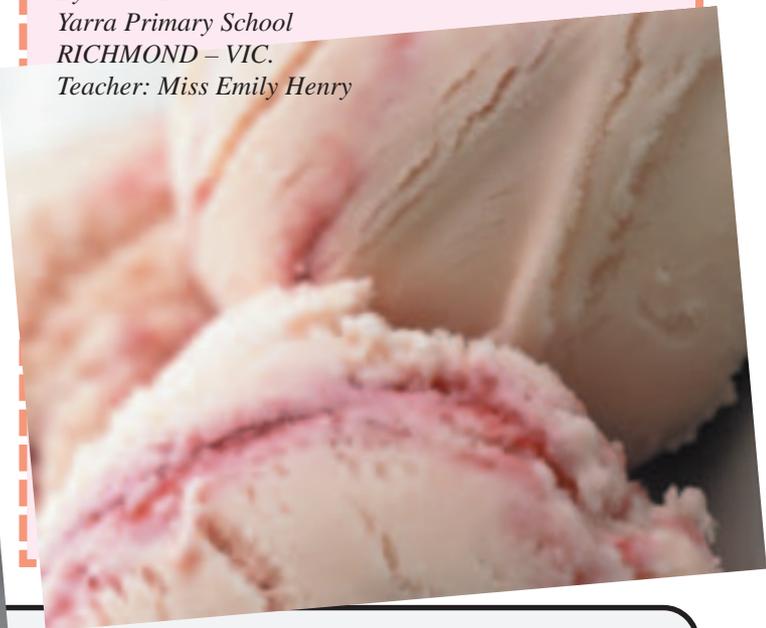
ICE-CREAM

Ice-cream is so good to eat,
For dessert it is such a treat.
There are so many flavours to choose,
When I try I get confused.

Chocolate, strawberry, flavours galore!
Vanilla, pistachio, there's many more.
Try some, try some, it will be a delight,
For I know an ice-cream shop that's open tonight!

Ice-cream is so good to eat,
For it is so delicious and sweet.
Have it in a cone, have it in a cup,
No matter how you eat it, just eat it all up!

*By Stella Trounce
Yarra Primary School
RICHMOND – VIC.
Teacher: Miss Emily Henry*



MUSIC

The sound of music filled the air,
And nobody seemed to care.
I listened to that music,
All through the night.
I listened to that music,
It sounded really light.

Then suddenly in the morning,
Everything was boring,
I listened with my ear,
Nothing I could hear.
Then I went downstairs,
To a room of mine,
To find a box,
That always shined.
Inside I found,
In this box on the ground,
What I heard last night,
It gave me a delight.
It was music.
In other words an acoustic,
Oh how I love music!

*By Julia Calabrese
St. Francis Xavier Primary School
BALLINA – NSW*

GROWING UP IS TOUGH

When I'm grown up? What do you want to be?
Well, sir
Since you ask
I wouldn't mind...
I wouldn't mind being a tree!
I'd like to push my feet
Into the soil,
And stand there
A few hundred years,
Just being... Well a tree.

But if I can't be a tree,
I think I'd just be BAD.
I like chocolate and coke in the afternoon
And eating creamed corn out of a tin,
With a purple plastic spoon;
I'd have handmaidens bringing me sherbet
And a boa constrictor called Herbert,
I'd go to Oxford,
Take my teddy bear,
And dine on oysters and pate, I'd...
But he's not listening
They never do.

One thing I'll never be,
A fat man,
In a pin-striped suit,
Who smiles his big fat smile,
Lays a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder,
And says, Now, young man,
What do you want to be, When you grow up?

Then walks away,
Without listening
With a sneer and a wink
And a burst of loud laughter, Down the corridor.

*By Kayla Wakefield, Year 6
Snowtown Area, SNOWTOWN – SA
Teacher: Rae Gierke*



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MOUNTAINS OF GREEN

Mountains of green with meadows below.
Where flowers bloom, and rivers flow.
Make a pretty painting, a beautiful view.
And a place of adventure for me and you.
We swim in the river beneath an old tree.
A place to run, where we can be free.
We wake up in the morning.
Between the trees we will run.
Now you know mountains, make great views.
but most of all.
They're lots of fun.

*By Stephanie Baroudi
MT. WAVERLEY – VIC.*





Silent black fury pounds within, seizing, tearing, shredding. An internal storm that howls unheard, pure rage and desperation expressed but overlooked, disregarded. No one notices and this neglect feeds the wretched sense of abandonment, fuels the tempest that guides the whirlwind of emotion barely held in check.

Coveting escape, it insists on freedom, seeking sovereignty over the body housing it in shaky containment. Insidious and sinister, its merciless pleas and cunning appeals. So attractive to the barely rational mind that shudders and weeps. Weakly ignoring, unsteadily refusing, the hushed tones continue to whisper to it seductively, lovingly.

Pulse erratic, heart pounding, the breath falters. An ominous spell is woven, the enchantment compelling; it encloses the victim and offers false security, the illusion of safe harbour that woos the tortured mind. It comes to comfort, extending reassurances and placations, a support on which to rely for solace and relief. So gentle, so soothing, attractive to the weary heart.

The crack widens, the fissure opens and gleeful darkness answers the hesitant query. Faith mislaid invites it in, and the self-doubt provides ripe ground in which its malevolent seeds can take root and flourish. Its flowers bloom in hideous glory and now the true war is waged. Disparaging remarks, caustic observations, harmful suggestions flay the body from the inside and the mind cringes in primal fear.

Castigation, reproach, the criticisms hurled at the paralysed mind, bind it inextricably in place, frozen, helpless and defenceless. Every decision, every choice, every mistake is re-examined in painful clarity, the accusing questions thrown out faster than can be absorbed and answered, challenging... condemning.

The mind is to blame, its imperfections are responsible for all that has gone wrong, its flaws have ruined the life no longer worth living. Why could it not have been better, brighter, braver? Possessed more wit, greater charm, sharper intellect? The never-ending inventory of failures have disappointed those around it, burdened them with its incompetence and stupidity, cursed them with the blight of its existence. This litany of blame and condemnation gains momentum, propagates across the

shrinking expanse of the mind collapsing in on itself in subjugated shame.

Keening, breathless, wracked sobs escape. The body has become a prison the mind longs to break free from – or is this the madness triumphantly usurping control? If it wins this battle, the war is lost and all hope of redemption gone with it. Fearful, nervous, the mind whirls around in manic terror, turning on itself in the hope of discovering what it has mislaid, its tentative grasp on control slackens and now a terrifying absence yawns in its centre – there is nothing left to recover, and it continues the downward spiral, depressed, weary and beaten.

Nothing to cling to, no friendly hand to grasp, immeasurably alone. No one to care, no one to hold, no hope of living. Who is to blame but the one who thinks these thoughts? The one who failed to engage with others, who was not suited to friendship or love, who did not deserve happiness or any sort of satisfaction and contentment. Alienated from its own race, unable to reach out and connect – so unbearably wretched and alone.

And with these destructive thoughts running through the mind, increasingly fragile and incoherent, the voice gains corporeal form – a body of shifting shadow and smoke, veiled from direct sight but threatening still. Just as the sudden motion from the corner of the eye vanishes when one rushes to pinpoint its source, this form stubbornly adheres to its own agenda, refuses to show itself – until past the point of no return...

The most vigilant will cannot hold off this monstrous voice, and the forlorn mind has no such hope of resistance. Rising in volume, steadily growing, the voice offers no more suggestions but issues demands; it does not urge, it commands, and hopeless spirit – so weak and defenceless – cannot help but respond. Its helpless downfall provides a forceful surge of power to the parasite that lurks behind, watching, waiting, anticipating the moment of triumph.

It savours this sweet victory, relishing the mastery it wields over the victim. Taunting, provoking, mercilessly cruel. It plays with the mind, forcing it open to see the truth – the crushing self-awareness no one ought to face, the transparency of its actions and ignominy of a life misled. Ruthlessly, it destroys all comforting illusion, sweeping aside remaining shreds of the reassuring cloak of faith and hope. All that is soft, rosy and optimistic is eradicated with surgical precision and leaves the mind with nothing in truth now. That is only the beginning.

Unleashed... it reaches, seizes the mind as a whole, grasps it within a menacing fist – and clenches, ever so slowly suffocating...

*By Annie Deo
Year 12, Belmont High School
BELMONT – VIC.
Teacher: Kaerry Thomson*

WICKED, WONDER AND ELFIE



Once in an extraordinary land there lived two witches and one elf. The two witches were called "Wicked" and "Wonder" and the elf was called "Elfie".

It was breakfast time and they were eating their red rice bubbles with grey milk.

"Wonder", said Wicked. "Where is Elfie?"

Wonder thought to herself. "Umm. Hey look he's flying", cried Wicked.

They both followed Elfie on their electric broomsticks up to high speed but then Wonder bumped into an airplane and lost control. Lucky for Wonder, Wicked had held on to the broomstick, so Wonder stopped spinning around. At last, Elfie stopped flying, but it was only because he dropped his bag.

They all followed Elfie on his Mystery Journey. Elfie was going too fast so the two witches (Wicked and Wonder) put their electric broomsticks up to super high speed!! Elfie was getting tired and stopped for a break.

Wicked and Wonder ate their yucky, mouldy onion sandwiches and Elfie had revolting, mouldy fairy bread. But after a while, they all had to continue the mysterious journey.

Wonder was still eating on her broomstick. Wicked and Elfie laughed. All Wonder did was roll her eyes – that made Wicked frown.

Princess Lucida's castle was coming up in the distance. Wicked started sweating, so did Wonder. It seemed as though Elfie was going to Princess Lucida's castle.

Elfie wasn't looking and bumped into a helicopter and down he fell into a big deep puddle of mud. But luckily Wicked and Wonder were there. If they hadn't been there Elfie would still be stuck in the muddy puddle with his broomstick flying off.

Wonder stopped his broomstick from flying away and brought it to Elfie and Wicked pulled Elfie out of the muddy puddle. After that was

over they all hopped on their broomsticks and away they went.

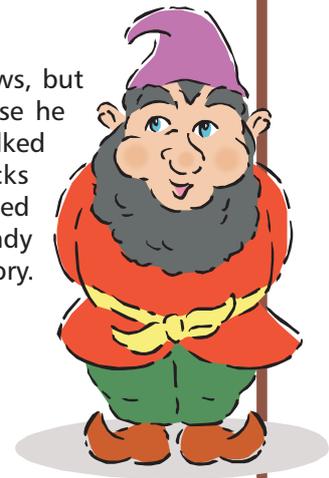
Their journey had been a bad one so far. It was 100 miles until they reached Princess Lucida's castle. All of them wanted a rest, but they had to hurry up before it was too late. Wonder was wondering where they were going. Wicked was nearly asleep.

The Sky Guards who guarded the castle from the top saw the witches and began to charge. Lucky for them a rock was there and they were safe as always. At last, Elfie arrived at Princess Lucida's castle and there right outside the castle was Princess Lucida!

Princess Lucida was cooking marshmallows. They sneaked up behind her and BOUNCED! All of a sudden Wicked and Wonder landed in the fire! Second came Elfie, oh no, in the cooked marshmallows. Princess Lucida ran away screaming. Wicked and Wonder jumped out of the fire in shock and Elfie was lucky.

He got to eat all the marshmallows, but they didn't taste that nice because he burped on them. They droopily walked back to their electric broomsticks hidden behind the rock. They climbed on to their broomsticks and got ready to ride home. But that's another story.

*By Sophie Elliott, Year 3
St. Roch's Primary School,
GLEN IRIS – VIC.
(This was written in Year 1)*



SIZZLE! As the lightning struck the poor tree
BANG! As it hit the ground right next to me
CLAP! As it echoes through the night sky
CRASH! Goes the thunder and I've always wondered why!
WHOO! Goes the wind blowing all around
SMACK! Goes the washing line crashing to the ground

Then silence...
as the storm leaves town.

*By Jane Eller
Year 4, Age 10
Crescent Head Primary School
CRESCENT HEAD – NSW
Teacher: C. Black*

STORMS

THE FIRST DAY FEARS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

I walked into my bedroom and got into bed but I could not get to sleep. I was dreading the morning. I had an emotional breakdown. I felt excited and nervous but most of all I was scared. I finally fell asleep but I dreamt I was at the front gate; I was hesitant and anxious but just as I was about to run away I was sucked into the school. The dank walls smelt and the trees were bare, then the bell went. I woke up, got out of bed...

I'd looked at the clock; it was 4 am. As I ate my breakfast I thought about school. I heard rumours about it, they said it was a prison school with huge, red blood stained gates. I got dressed and slowly left the house. I walked down the road; no cars came down this road. I got to the bus stop and sat waiting for the bus wondering how I got here.

I see the bus, it's coming closer and closer. I don't know what to do. I tell myself to run, get out of there. My mind is racing and still that damn bus is getting closer. This is my chance to run, get away, but my legs won't move: it's like my feet are glued to the sidewalk. I realise I don't want to go to high school. I want to return to primary, my old school, where I feel comfortable, I know what to expect, and I know the teacher, the kids. I know my place there. I liked it there. I want to run, get out of there, my brain is trying to communicate with my legs but nothing is happening and yet the bus is coming ever so close. My chest is pounding. I fight for every breath, my forehead is now dripping with sweat. What am I doing here standing on the side of the road where I have been many times before? Why am I feeling like this? Everyone told me that I would look forward to the changes and new challenges that are ahead of me. I soon realise that my breathing has slowed and the sweat on my forehead is no more and before I even realised the bus door was open and I was taking my first step to high school. As I looked down the aisle, I see faces that have been there before, yes they're all dressed different but the look of pride is written all over their faces – a sense of achievement, a sense of joy, scared maybe, but proud to be scared.

I slowly walked down the aisle and off the bus. My head was looking at the dirt. I kept walking. I finally looked up and there was the gate. It looked different to my dreams. It didn't have blood stains, kids were walking in freely, not getting sucked in. I slowly walked in. I was a few steps away now and I'm in. No going back now. I walked over to some seats and sat down. The bell rang aloud, a noisy voice came through the speaker "All year 7 students meet at the hall" so I slowly ran to the hall. There were hundreds of kids sitting in the hall so I grabbed a chair and sat down.

English was our first subject. I was late by about 20



minutes I think. Anyway the teacher let me off. The maths teacher gave me a map of the school. The bell rang, I jumped for joy. Recess, I thought in my head. I found myself lost in thought at recess. Questions filled my head. Does everyone feel this way? Are they scared? High school gave new things to think about, new subjects to learn, new people to talk to, canteens different, places different and all these things rolled into one school, High School.

I arrive in Science, the study of life itself. We were put in places next to people I don't know yet but still I keep my face brave. I feel as if the world population has

come to at least 22 kids left all in one big classroom, darkness all around me. I get pulled from my daydream by the yelling of the teacher at a boy who (like me) was not listening to the teacher. As the teacher's loud rasping voice lowers down, I too calm down as if the teacher's voice was like my heart, when angry, pumps as fast as a lightning bolt, when calm, pumps slowly in relaxation mode. I learnt a lot about people in Science but still I felt lost. Didn't know many people, yet I was gaining courage as every second ticked by. I learnt nothing about science that lesson but more about people around me.

The guitar strums in my head in music but it is not powerful enough to drain the evil thoughts from returning to me. Why does this happen to me? I started to think am I like a magnet for bad dreams or something? Our music teacher made me play the drums that drained most of the bad dreams out of my head; mainly because everyone was laughing at me... I guess I too, did laugh.

Lunch passed quicker than I expected. I was in History as fast as you could say spaghetti and meatballs. History I thought was the most boring subject in all of high school. Talking about people long dead. I sat idle in my seat thinking about what mum is doing at home. The bell went for us to leave.

Arts was probably the best of all. Why did I have to be smart? Why didn't I repeat? Damn I really need to listen to the teacher. But my thoughts were elsewhere. When I mean elsewhere I mean I was like a veg not listening or talking. There goes the bell. School finished for this day anyway.

As I walked to the bus stop I heard my brother yelling out so I walked over to my mum's car, got in and mum slowly drove home. I told her about my day and my dreams were just dreams, nothing more. All my worries have gone and I can't wait to go back to high school tomorrow. Where I belong.

*By Ashton Tselepy
Age 13
BALLINA – NSW*

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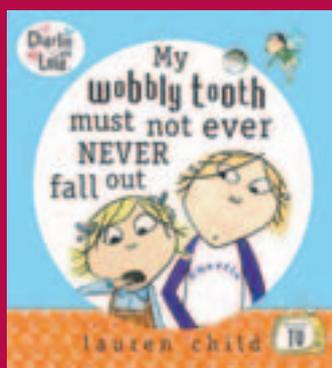
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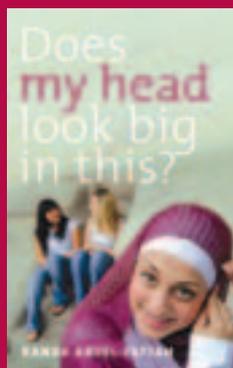
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Paul Collins was born in England, raised in New Zealand and moved to Australia in 1972.

In 1975 he launched *Void*, the first professional science fiction magazine Australia had seen since the demise of the joint Australian and British production *Vision of Tomorrow*.

His first fantasy novel for younger readers was *The Wizard's Torment*. Paul then edited the young adult anthology *Dream Weavers*, Australia's first heroic fantasy anthology ever. This was followed by *Fantastic Worlds*, and *Tales from the Wasteland*.

Paul's recent works include the highly successful fantasy series (co-edited with Michael Pryor), *The Quentaris Chronicles*, to which Paul also contributes titles (*Swords of Quentaris*, *Slaves of Quentaris*, *Princess of Shadows* and *Dragonlords of Quentaris*); The Jelindel Chronicles, in which *Dragonlinks* was the first title, and *The Earthborn Wars* trilogy, of which *The Earthborn* was the first title. Visit www.paulcollins.com.au for more. ➔



☛ **Hazel Edwards** is the author of 150 books including the classic *There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake* (Penguin 2005); *Hand Me Down Hippo* (Penguin – April 2005); *Antarctica's Frozen Chosen*; *Fake ID*; *Duty Free*; *Stalker* (plus audio from Bolinda Audio); *Muscles*; *The Giant Traffic Jam*; *Astrid the Mind Reading Chook* and many more great titles. Visit www.hazeledwards.com for details of her Antarctic books.

Anna Ciddor has always been fascinated by the question, 'What if I lived in another time or place?'. She changed career from maths teacher to author so she'd have the excuse to spend lots of time doing research. She has written and illustrated over fifty books, including the highly popular and exciting Viking Magic trilogy: *Runestone*, *Wolfspell* and *Stormriders*. Bravery, friendship, and a dash of magic are the keys to these adventure stories, which are based on real Viking history. *Runestone* was chosen as a Children's Book Council Notable Book in 2003 and has been shortlisted for many awards. You can find out more about Anna and her books at www.viking-magic.com.

Anna keeps in touch with her readers through school visits and her website, but she is also keen to encourage the writing efforts of budding young authors through the Young Australian Writers' Awards. ➔



☛ **Lorraine Wilson** writes extensively both reference material for teachers and books for children. She has now written over two hundred books including: *Write me a Sign*; *Write me a Poem*; *Bubblegum*; *My Mum has False Teeth*; *Footy Kids*, *The Lift-Off Kids*, *I Have Two Dads*, and *I Speak Two Languages*.

Libby Hathorn is an award-winning Australian author of more than forty books for children. Her work has been translated into several languages and adapted for stage and screen. She was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001 for her work in children's literature. More recently, her CDROM *Weirdstop* won the AIMIA Award (Australian Interactive Media Industry Awards) as Best Children's Product of 2003; her picture storybook *The River* won the Society of Women Writers' Bi-annual Award for Younger Readers; and *Over the Moon* was a Children's Book Council Notable Book in the same year. See extensive booklist and awards at www.libbyhathorn.com . ➔



☛ **Meredith Costain** lives in Melbourne with her partner, fellow children's author Paul Collins, three chooks, a cat, a kelpie and a red heeler. Her work ranges from picture books through to popular fiction and non-fiction for older readers, and she is the editor of national children's magazine, *Comet*. Meredith's books include *Freeing Billy*, *The Sandpit War*, *Rock Raps* and *Musical Harriet*, which was adapted for television by the ABC. She regularly presents writing workshops for kids and adults in libraries and schools. Visit her at: www.plasticine.com/mcostain

For some ideas on how to get ideas for your own stories, visit this link: www.pearsoned.com.au/schools/magazines/yawaTips.asp

ANATOMY OF FEAR

We only fear what we don't know or understand.

I do not know where I am.

I have no idea.

I thought I did but suddenly I turn and see darkness.

My bedroom has left me and I stand in the centre of a beam of light. I look up and am blinded by the source of the light. I cannot understand. This light is not like the light that the sun gives. It is not warm or friendly. It is cold. It is alien. And I am scared.

We only fear...

I am not wearing my normal clothes any more. I wear a long overcoat, trousers and boots, each the same dull shade of light brown. I reach with my hand for my glasses but they are not there. Somehow I can still see. My short black hair feels as if it has not changed, yet I wear a black baseball cap that is not mine. I do not own a baseball cap. I look around myself. The light source above me encircles me. One metre around me is brightly lit. The rest of wherever I am is shrouded in pitch darkness. I cannot see through any of it. The silence deafens me. My own panicked breathing is the only thing I hear. I am a man standing alone in the middle of a place that I do not think exists.

We only fear...

Suddenly I hear footsteps. I cannot figure out where they are coming from. The echo of the steps seems to surround me, envelop me. These steps are not that of a man. They are not menacing. They are not loud. They are not ominous. They are small. They are weak. They are a child's.

As if materialising from the darkness itself, a small boy suddenly appears behind me. I do not notice until my frantic searching brings me to turn back to where I was. I am now disoriented and cannot tell where I was facing originally. The boy is small. His thin blonde hair sits tidily on his head and large light blue eyes look innocently at me. He wears white pants and a white long sleeved shirt with no collar or buttons. His hands are folded in front of him and he is making no attempt to continue walking towards me. He smiles at me. He smiles a grin strangely complete and perfect for a boy his age, being that he could not be older than five. His smile is so very wonderful and I feel as if it has lit up a larger section around me. My mind tricks me into thinking I can see for further because of it. His grin ends abruptly. His face is blank. His face is vacant.

We only fear...

Slowly he takes steps towards me. Seconds after I have registered his movement his position had changed; he is standing beside me, on my right. He looks directly ahead and for a long time does nothing. Then his left hand moves upwards, his hand open. His pale palm is empty. I realise he wants me to take his hand. I look around myself and then down at the boy. Slowly I take his hand. His skin is smooth and soft. Still, he is not looking at me. His gaze remains fixed. I try to follow his line of sight but see only darkness. I look ahead of myself, taking deep breaths. The silence begins to come down of me for a second time and my breathing grows more rapid. I can feel my heart beating heavily in my chest. A bead of sweat runs down the side of my face and I become uncomfortable with the boy's presence. I try to let go of his hand. His grip tightens. I try again. Coaxing him out of it and not moving anything other than my arm. He looks up at me. He has changed. His irises are black. His sclera (the vessel ridden exterior) is pure white. There is no emotion in his eyes. His innocence evaporates with this slight change in appearance.

We only fear...

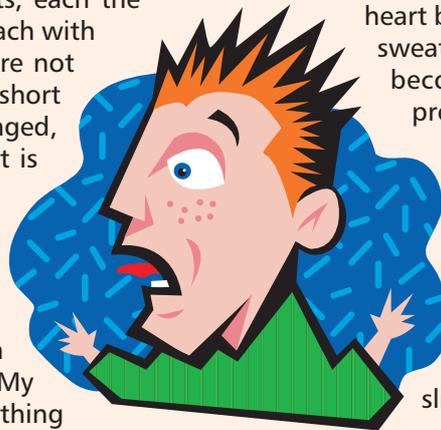
He does not blink. And he lets go of my hand. He moves his hand down slightly, tucking it into the pocket of my trousers. I frown at him. His unblinking gaze does not waver from my face. I reach into my pocket to remove his hand. His presence unnerves me. As soon as my hand touches his I retract it from the pocket hastily, gasping. The skin I felt not the same as before. It was not the skin that should belong to him. It was not the hand of a small child.

We only fear...

And then he screams. A piercing scream that shatters the silence. I stumble backwards, my hands covering my ears, my face twisted into a grimace. He watches me with his disturbing eyes and his scream continues. Then he vanishes. His body explodes into particles that evaporate in the air almost instantly.

Silence.

I stumble over my own feet and crash to the ground, landing in a sitting position on the edge of the light. My eyes widen as I stare at the empty space where the small boy was only moments before. As I do so a young woman appears in exactly the same place. Her long blonde hair falls half the length of her back and she is looking around frantically. She seems familiar.



ANATOMY OF FEAR (*Cont'd*)

When she turns, her eyes wide in worry, I realise she is my wife. Immediately I am confused. I cannot understand why she is here and how she came to be here. But I do not care.

We only fear...

As soon as her eyes fall on me she rushes forward. I spread my arms wide to hug her but then grow frightened. I am cynical and skeptical and disbelieving. I do not want my wife to be in this place. She is but half a meter away when it happens. Her eyes widen further, her irises turn black and her sclera pure white, a perfect reflection of the boy's. Her mouth widens and a vicious snarl erupts from her mouth. Suddenly she is no longer rushing towards me, she is lunging at me. Her mouth widens further as if to swallow me and she comes down on me, over my head. I scream, covering my face with an arm and letting my torso drop to the cold ground. Her figure explodes in an identical way to the boy. She suddenly and silently becomes minute particles in the air that evaporate seconds after creation. I lower my arm slowly, my eyes wide in horror. Whilst I fractionally felt her touch on my arm, no particles have landed on me. I am not covered in a layer as I had expected. All of a sudden, what is happening becomes personal. I did not know the boy. But this was my wife. I prayed this was all some irrational mistake. An illusion of the mind. I wanted to snap out of my daze and find myself in an empty room wearing a straight jacket. I doubted that would happen.

A new figure appears. This time I recognise him instantly. It is my brother. My brother is dead.

I stand very slowly, the thrill of seeing him swiping at my fears and contorting my instincts. He turns to face me and his face lights up in a smile. I cannot smile back. I remember his smile in my mind's eye and am pleased to see it is the same as I remembered. He has not changed. He looks exactly the same he did a week before his death. He was involved in a car accident that never should have happened. None of it was his fault. He was 29 years old. I find myself in front of him. In spite of my shock and confusion, I want to hug him. I want to speak to my brother. I want to know what really happened. But my mind will not form words for my mouth to speak. His smile grows smaller as he reaches upwards. He pulls the baseball cap from my head and puts it on. He speaks but I cannot hear his words. Yet I understand what they are. "My cap". I nod slightly. He extends his right hand, as do I. We shake hands for a fraction of a second before he changes. His irises turn black. His sclera pure white. His grip tightens. His face contorts in rage.

He pulls me towards him and strikes out with his fist left tilt. His aim is to punch me in the stomach. A fraction of a second before his blow finds its mark he explodes. But his movement still continues and his shape still exists. His arm goes through me, his fist coming out at my lower back. The particles evaporate. I am alone. Now I would rather stay that way.

We only fear...

I look down at my feet. I am both terrified and disappointed. My breath clouds in front of me and I realize how cold I am for the first time. I cannot understand. I was not cold and now I am. I pull the coat around me only to have it disintegrate in my grip. I stare down at myself in shock and move quickly from where I was standing. Now I am very cold. I stand on the edge of the light, my mind reeling. I realise I could also say that I stand on the edge of darkness. I blink and as my eyes reopen I see something resting in the centre of the light. It is a piece of paper. It is blank. I do not want to pick it up, yet I am curious as to what it is. I want to know what it is. But I do not want to pick it up. An image appears on the sheet. A photo. It is a photo of a baby. A young baby with a bald scalp and warm eyes. He is smiling. Still I do not want to pick it up. I wonder what the picture means and who the baby is. I wonder if he has a good life or if he needs a better one. I wonder if he is all right. I wonder if he is alive. I do not care. I want to go home. Back to my own life.

The photo bursts into flames in front of my eyes, burns quickly, and leaves a small pile of ash where the photo was moments ago. I am beginning to feel used to this. Used to having everything that appears in front of me disappear just as quickly. A sudden gust of wind brushes the ashes out of my sight. I shiver. The wind is cold.

And then I feel warmth.

A very small fraction of warmth. I do not care where this warmth comes from. I enjoy it and it grows. This warmth is different. This warmth is not warmth from the sun or a fire. I ask myself where this warmth comes from and I do not know the answer to this question. It is artificial. It is alien. Now I do not like it. Now I am scared. I want it to go away. It does. I am left cold.

We only fear...

Another object appears in the centre of the light. Another sheet of paper. Now I do not care. I want to go home and I do not care what that means. I pick up the sheet of paper and turn it over. It is another picture. It is a picture of a sunrise. But it is no ordinary sunrise. It is the most beautiful sunrise I have ever seen. The

Cont'd...

ANATOMY OF FEAR (*Cont'd*)

sun rises over a desert landscape, casting different shades of purple, yellow, red and orange over the early morning sky. I look at this picture and want to smile. The warmth returns. And I do smile. I spite everything around me. In my own mind I have lost a small innocent child I do not know. I have lost my wife. I have lost my brother for a second time. I have lost a baby that I do not know. And I have lost warmth. In my mind, I have lost everything. And yet here I am, a man, standing alone in the middle of a room I do not think exists, and I am still smiling. At what? I ask myself. I have nothing to smile about. And yet I do. I do have something to smile about. I have a sunrise. The beginning of a new day. Suddenly I understand. This place I am in is not real. It is my own mind. It is everything I fear and dread coming to get me all at one instance in the worst possible way. I watched a little boy lose his innocence. I watched my wife disappear. I watched my brother die all over again. I watched a small baby's life go up in flames. Those are the things in life that matter to me. Children and family. Life. The warmth grows.

...What we don't know...

I let it. I am glad for this warmth. I see it as a gift for me. My reasoning and tolerance grows deeper as does the warmth. Suddenly it is a different sort of warmth. It is the warmth that the sun gives off. It warms not only my exterior, it warms my soul. Everything is not so dark any more. I can make out certain shapes. I am

seeing through the darkness. I am not blinded by my fears any more. The photo falls from my hands and I watch it, despair and darkness growing, waiting for it to disappear. To explode.

Everything else has. But this does not. My smile grows and look ahead of me. I see the small boy. His mouth and his eyes are smiling. I smile back. I see my wife. She has her arms folded and is smiling slightly at me. I smile back.

I see my brother. His hands are shoved into his pockets and as I watch he removes the cap from his head and throws it to me. I catch it and put it on. Then he smiles. I smile back. The warmth grows. This is what matters to me. This is all that matters to me. I do not let any of this beat me. I will let my fears and worries grow confused. They have thrown everything at me and yet I am still smiling. I will let them wonder why I still smile. Because now I am not afraid.

...Or understand.

"He who fears he will suffer, already suffers, from his fears". – Anonymous

*By Elizabeth Newell
Year 10*

*Great Southern Grammar
ALBANY – WA
Teacher: Mrs Linda Luff*

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THE WHALE THAT LIVED

Once the end comes you would have read the whole story so let's begin.....

Chapter 1

Once upon a time there was a whale named James. He was a hump back whale who lived by himself and had one friend who was a dolphin called Flipper.

Chapter 2

One day they were playing undersea hockey when they saw bubbles forming on the surface. James and Flipper swam to the top and saw a boat with the name Cliff Hanger. James and Flipper realised that they were in terrible danger!!!!

Chapter 3

Danger.... For the Cliff Hanger belonged to Clifton Jones and his vicious rottweiler Sniper. Clifton and Sniper together both hunted sea life. James and Flipper tried to get away but one of them didn't and that was James!! Clifton had caught him!! Clifton pulled him back with a net.

Chapter 4

James struggles and struggles trying to get free, Sniper scraped, scratched and bit him. James yelled out to Flipper and Flipper came to help but he got stuck in the same net that James was in.



Chapter 5

James and Flipper both realised that if they didn't get out of the net they would be either a wall ornament or made into expensive clothing. Just then Flipper had an idea, maybe if they bite the net it would break and they could escape. So they tried and it worked. But it was only a small hole. So they kept biting until Flipper felt a hard bite. He looked and he saw a shark!!!. James screamed and told Flipper to stop. James wondered why, and then Flipper said this is one of my friends Sharpie, he is helping us out of the net.

Chapter 6

They heard a noise, the Cliff Hanger was starting to move, Flipper and James were scared. Sharpie had to hurry but it was too late, the boat was going fast. So he called his friends to help. When they got to the net they all started biting and broke the net. James and Flipper escaped and thanked Sharpie and his friends. Then they all played undersea hockey.

The End

By Andrew Consolino

Age 8

Hurstbridge Primary School

HURSTBRIDGE – VIC.

Teacher: Ms Sharon O'Neill

NIGHT

Night, night,
Long night
How long is the night?
It is long, very long
Long, long night.

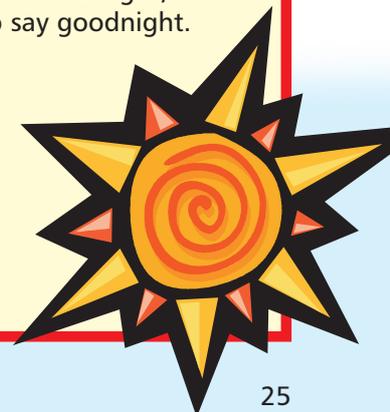
By Thomas Barlow
Year 1, Age 6
Ashgrove State School,
ASHGROVE – QLD.

POWERFUL LIGHT

Its blazing heat scorching my skin,
Roasting and sizzling never growing dim.
Its blinding light flowing down from above,
Gracefully floating just like a dove.
I lay on the sand all burning and hot,
Trying not to look at the strong bright dot.
I look at myself, my skin is all red,
Now I remember why my grandma is dead.
I sit up watching the powerful light,
But its time will come to say goodnight.

By Jane Eller
Age 10

Crescent Head Primary School
CRESCENT HEAD – NSW



DANCE OUT OF REALITY

Lilly was a practical girl. Her head was screwed tightly onto her shoulders. She possessed impeccable manners and was the smartest person her school had ever encountered. Yet this wasn't enough. She wanted to fly high above the standards she had. In fact, Lilly probably wanted to be the smartest person on this earth, more than anyone else.

But, she wasn't creative. Lilly was so practical that if someone even mentioned "Pigs will fly before that ever happens", Lilly would almost burst from trying not to shout "But that's impossible!".

One day during sport the teacher, Mrs. Naomi announced that there was to be a performance at the school assembly based on dancing. At this Lilly almost exploded.

"Dancing! What a pathetic idea." Try as she might at the practices, she couldn't dance one graceful step.

Then she tripped. Lilly landed heavily on her ankle. She gasped. The music stopped and Mrs. Naomi rushed over. Lilly was helped up. She couldn't stand on her left leg, but managed to balance on her right.

An hour later she was in the emergency ward at the hospital. Her eyes were glazed with the huge amount of pain in her leg. But she hadn't cried. Not one single tear. This was how sensible she could be.

Although she couldn't hold it back much longer. As soon as the nurses left her alone, Lilly burst into tears. And while she wept, she wished.

She wished for the life of one of those kids who were athletic and only a little bit smart. She wished that she could be creative and sing a song off the top of her head. But most of all she wished that she could dance. Dance like a swan sailing across the water.

She opened her eyes. Wait a minute, beds don't move. But this one was. It was spinning round and round, higher and higher, faster and faster. Lilly was lost in a world of spinning sheets, flying pillows and her own screams of fear. Then all was darkness.

Lilly woke in a land of fairies. They were crowded around her. Faces sweet and rosy. One with pale brown hair stepped forward. "Would you like to dance with us?" she enquired. "Um, okay but I'm absolutely hopeless at it and I have a sprained ankle." She

stopped and looked down. Her ankle was smooth and whole. No red spots or purple bruises.

She got up. The fairies milled around her and started to dance. Before she knew it Lilly was dancing too. Not stumbling and tripping, but pirouetting and gliding. Never had she felt so alive and joyful. Jump, leap, pirouette. Jump, leap, pirouette.

"Lilly, Lilly, sweetheart, wake up." Lilly opened her eyes. She wasn't dancing any more but lying in the bed back at the hospital. Although she wasn't that good at dancing, from that day forward Lilly learned to enjoy life and respect wishful thinking.

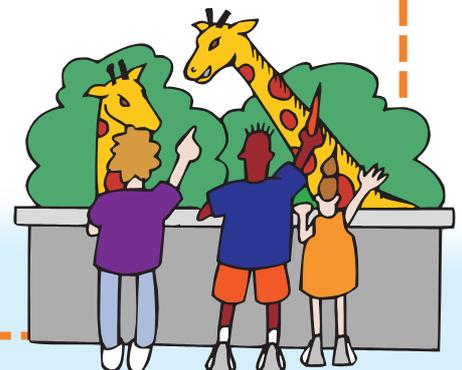
*By Bonnie Forsyth
Age 12
WALCHA – NSW*



GOING TO THE ZOO

Two little people
Going to the zoo
To see a giraffe
And a tiger too.

*By Nina Lee
Grade Prep
Mount Martha
Primary School
MOUNT
MARTHA – VIC.*



THE HIDDEN CHEST

The dirt, the mud and the twigs seemed to stick as Lily slowly mixed them together in an old, cracked bucket. Her long, blonde plaits kept falling in her eyes as she played but that didn't stop her from making a delicious feast for her friends, Mr Flopsy and Mrs Fairy.

Faintly, Lily heard her mum call out from the veranda.

"Lily Bily, Grandma and Grandpa are here."

Lily's grandparents lived in Melbourne and she only got to see them once or twice a year. Lily loved it when they came. She loved how her grandma brought her famous rum balls with her and the thrilling stories her grandpa told of when he was young.

Running as fast as she could, Lily reached the back door at the same time her grandparents put down their heavy bags.

"Cookie, look how much you've grown!" her grandma said in amazement, throwing her arms around Lily.

"How have you been?" her grandma whispered quietly in Lily's ear.

"Good", Lily replied, nearly choking because her grandma was squeezing her so tightly.

"Hold on, let me see her", said her grandpa, slowly making his way towards Lily. He lifted Lily off her feet and gave her a big, loving cuddle. His bristly moustache tickled her face as he swung her around in his arms. Lily smiled as her grandparents made their way upstairs to put their bags in the guest room.

Lily carried the heavy china plates over to the long, wooden table as she helped her mum set the table for dinner while her mum cooked her delicious spaghetti bologonaise. Lily's grandma came down from the lounge room carrying a glass of red wine in one hand.

"Are you sure you don't want me to help Debbie?" she asked.

"No Jane, I told you, you're supposed to be relaxing!" Lily's mum replied as she called everyone for dinner.

In the morning Lily went down to the back of the garden to pick some mangoes and passionfruit for breakfast like her mum had asked. At that moment she glimpsed a silver twinkle out of the corner of her eye. She left the cardboard box filled with fruit on the ground and slowly walked over to where she had seen the twinkle.

Brushing away the crumbly mound of dirt she could see it clearly. It was a chest with a golden "S" on the lid. Bending down she picked it up. It was a tightly shut with a small silver lock and under the chest it had soft, velvet matting with the words, "Property of Sam Hurtung". Leaving the box of fruit, Lily ran inside and placed the chest gently on her special shelf.

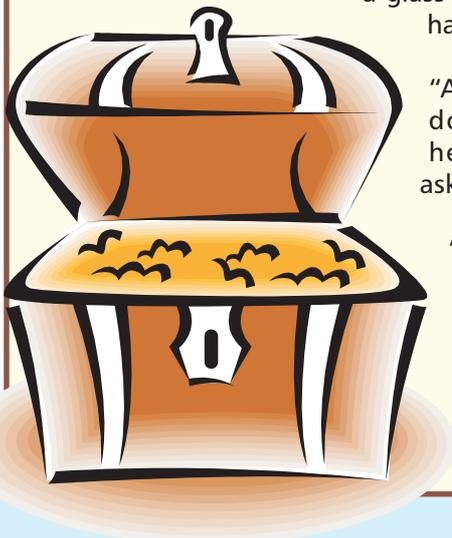
That night Lily searched through her dad's bedside table trying to find something she could play with. She found lots of different things, coins from other countries, a Chinese paper dragon and even a small shell collection but right up the back of the drawer was something Lily found most interesting. It was a beautiful silver key with flower engravings on the handle. Could it be the key that would unlock the chest? Excitement overcame her. She hid the key in her hand and walked quickly and quietly to her room shutting the door behind her. Walking over to her special shelf she lifted up the wooden chest and placed it on her gorgeous beaded doona cover.

Lily's heart raced as she pushed the key into the lock. It lifted and she was able to see what was in the chest. Inside were old toys that must have belonged to her dad when he was young. Then it came to her, the chest was her dad's when he was young and he hid it in the garden for someone else to find.

She slowly stood up and closed the lid again. Pulling the door behind her she ran to the garden with the chest under her arm.

Looking over the small wooden chest, Lily stood up. She carefully kicked some fine crumbly dirt over the chest that was now filled with some of her own treasures ready for someone else to find in the future.

Taking one last look at the chest, Lily ran up to the back door to say goodbye to her grandparents.



*By Sarah Shaw
Grade 5/6S
Manly West Primary School
BALGOWLAH – NSW
Teacher: Mrs Brenda Street*

CAN I HAVE A HORSE? NO!

One day my Dad got a job in the country and we had to move. I helped pack all my books, toys and clothes into boxes, sealed them up, and helped put them in the moving van.

I was excited to be moving to the country because in the country they have lots of horses. I love horses. I've been begging for one but my parents wouldn't let me.

When we arrived at our new home the backyard was huge, filled with lots of trees, shrubs, a vegetable garden, and an old cubby house filled with dust and spider webs. There was also a big paddock with a wire fence all the way around it.

I asked my parents again, "Please could I have a pony?".

But they said "No! We just spent a lot of money buying that karaoke machine for your birthday and horses are very expensive anyway".

Next door an old lady, Mrs Scarlet, owned some farm animals. There was a pen full of pink pigs, a shed with three big fat hens, six woolly sheep, a cheeky goat eating the washing off the clothes line, and a beautiful black and white pony.

I thought I would help her on her little farm to earn some pocket money. One day after school I raked up all the autumn leaves. On another day I collected the eggs from the chicken coop, then I spread new straw for chickens to lay their eggs. When I fed the pigs I made sure that I put on my gumboots so I could squelch through the mud to feed them cabbage and potato peelings. But my favourite job was to feed the pony and give him fresh water and hay every day. I also loved to groom his coat and brush his mane.

A few months later there was a knock on our door one evening. It was Mrs Scarlet. She came to say to

my parents that she was too old to look after all of her farm animals.

She said "Mr and Mrs Medved, your daughter Natasha has been very kind to me and helped me with my animals. But over the past few weeks I've seen Natasha be extremely nice to my pony Magpie. So I'm wondering if Natasha would like Magpie for herself. I would be happy to sell him for \$100".

I jumped up and down with excitement. I rushed upstairs to count my money. A few minutes later I came downstairs very unhappy. I only had \$70, not enough to buy the pony.

"Please, please, please, pretty please", I asked my parents.

My parents had a discussion. They said "Yes, we'll give you the \$30, but you have to clean up after the pony and look after him".

"Of course I will", I said excitedly. "Thank you so much!"

So Mrs Scarlet brought beautiful Magpie over to me. He looked more beautiful than before, a nice black and white coat, and all tacked up ready to go. When I got to Orben South Primary School all my friends, like Olivia M, Olivia J, Hannah, Kate, Madeline, Eliza and Holly, were dying to see him! But only one could come to my house to see Magpie. We played so many games like catch-me-if-you-can, circus tricks and ring-around-the-rosy.

At dinner Mum and Dad had a surprise. They had signed me up for horse riding lessons.

I asked, "When do I go?".

Every Saturday", they replied.

"YAAAAAAAHOOOOOOOO", I said excitedly, "that means I start tomorrow".

Sure enough riding school taught me everything like trotting, galloping and cantering. A few months later came an even bigger surprise – it was a big race and all the schools were competing.

On race day I got Magpie to the starting line. We were both nervous and excited at the same time. The gun went off and we galloped away leaving a trail of dust.



Cont'd...

CAN I HAVE A HORSE? NO! (Cont'd)

Some people were yelling and then I saw that I was winning but then another rider pushed Magpie and I over. He was disqualified for pushing us over, but we were coming last in the race. We kept going and found we were now in the middle and slowly making our way to the front, passing the other horses. Suddenly one horse raced ahead and took the lead and even though we tried and tried we couldn't catch up. We came second. I was happy with second place, but I didn't cheer for myself. I cheered for Magpie because he was the one who did all the hard work.

Mum and Dad were excited for Magpie and I. And even better, we made it into the Hall of Fame. When we visited the Hall of Fame we saw pictures of the terrible accident with Magpie on the ground and then Magpie and I racing to the front.

When we got home I couldn't wait to ring Mrs Scarlet and tell her all about our exciting day. She was so happy to hear our good news and invited us to her new home in the city. To my surprise she said that I could have the last of the animals from her old farm if I promised to take care of them.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you so much for this", I beamed. "You are the one that made my dream of riding my own horse come true."

THE END

*By Natasha Medved
Grade 2, Hartwell Primary School
CAMBERWELL – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Stahle*

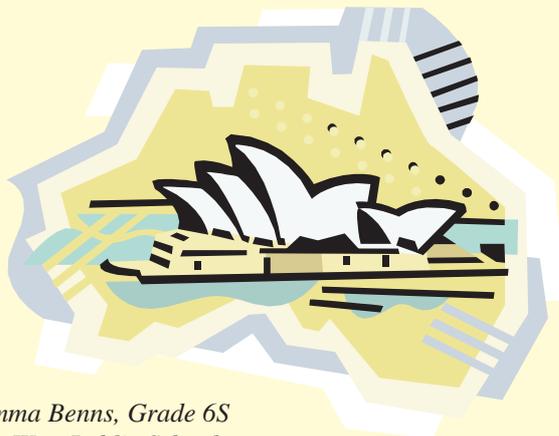
I AM AUSTRALIAN!

Raging fires burning through the bush,
Turning the trees into mush,
Help, is what the fire brigades are trying,
While the bush is unfortunately dying.

The Harbour Bridge, the Three Sisters, Uluru,
I can go there, and you can too.
Twelve and fit, you must be, to climb the Harbour Bridge,
Beforehand, make sure you don't raid the fridge!

White wash, barrels, perfect waves,
You'd better surf before it caves!
It's surfboards galore, as people run down to the sea,
Anyone can surf, even you and me!

I love Australia, because it's always hot,
And the tourist attractions, that's not all it's got.



*By Emma Benns, Grade 6S
Manly West Public School,
BALGOWLAH – NSW. Teacher: Mrs Street*

COMING HOME

Over the stony creekbeds,
Across the sloping plains,
Through the swollen rivers
And beside the granite range.

Up the pine clad ridges,
And down the other side,
Through singing, splashing streams,
And by the river's side.

By sighing, grassy sheoaks,
And silent ancient gums,
Past fields of swaying wildflowers,
Where he could hear the bee's soft hum.

And through the Friesian paddocks,
Where lush green carpets grow,
Past the weary bullock teams
That are always going slow.

Over boggy, marshy land,
And sandy deserts vast,
The shearing is all over,
So he's coming home at last.

Between two emerald ranges,
Beneath the western skies,
And beside a roaring waterfall,
His lonely cottage lies.

*By Caitlyn Payne
Year 6
Burpengary State School
BURPENGARY – QLD.*

JARROD'S LIFE

My name is Jarrod William Greig. I was born in Lismore Base Hospital on 28th February 1994.

When I was very young my dad, brother and I were swimming in a lake. My brother started to drown so my dad went after him then my dad didn't see me and I started to drown. But my brother was actually okay so my dad came after me and saved me.

When I was young my family and I went to Currumbin Bird Sanctuary. All I remember was petting a wombat and I was scared.

When my dog Ziggy died it was one of the saddest days of my life. Ziggy died from cancer in her leg. Ziggy was really my dad's dog but Ziggy had been with me since I was born.

When I was seven years old my family and I went to Thailand for a big holiday. We flew from Brisbane airport to Bangkok. When we arrived at Bangkok we could smell something disgusting. We stayed at a nice hotel. At the hotel I met a porter and he told me to call him A. I also met a valet and Mum took a photo of us together.

Next we flew to Chang Mie. One night we went to a cool restaurant where we saw people dance and one of the Thai women gave me a flower necklace.

After we stayed at Chang Mie we had an amazing motor boat trip to Chang Rie. The next day we went

to a Mini Zoo which had elephants and a buffalo. My family and I had a ride into the jungle on an elephant's back and we also had a ride on the buffalo. The other days we went to different places.

Finally we flew to Phuket and we stayed at the best Resort. We all had a massage and it was so good that I fell asleep half way through it. The Resort had a little elephant and I got to ride it. It had the coolest water feature in the pool and also a water-slide.

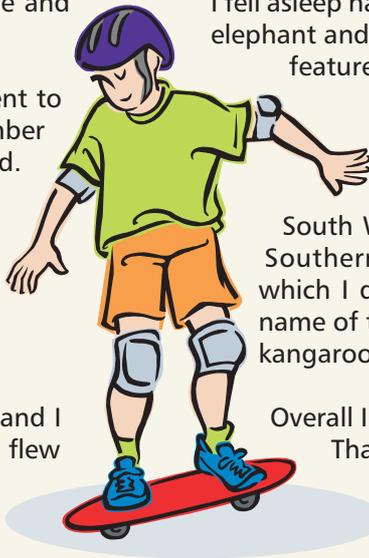
When I was about nine my family and I went on another holiday. We stayed at a really cool resort at inland New South Wales. It had the biggest lagoon in the Southern Hemisphere. You could do archery which I did twice because it was such fun. The name of the resort was Ridges and they also had kangaroos and a golf course.

Overall I have had a great life and when I was in Thailand I even learned these Thai words, sa-wa-ti-crup this means "hello" and "good bye", com-coom-crup this means "thank you", pom-ournow means "may I have?" and pom-racoon which means "I love you".

Thank you for listening to my life story.

*By Jarrod Greig
Year 6*

*St. Joseph's Primary School
ALSTONVILLE – NSW
Teacher: Mrs Gene Trim*



THE WIND'S STORY

I stand upon a hill,
And gaze out to the fields.
The wind breathes down my neck
And tells me a story.

It brings me the smell of hay,
Mingled with the chaff.
And I can hear the low of a cow
Calling to her calf.
I can taste the fresh air,
Plastered on my lips,
While I feel it catching me short
To dance upon my hips.

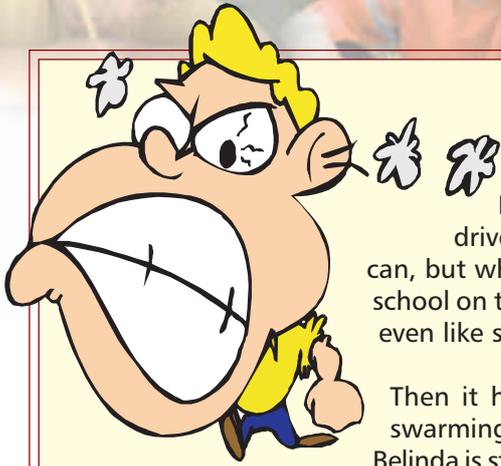


I close my eyes and open them,
The wind has now left.
I see it ripple through the wheat.
And it's gone
To tell its story elsewhere.

I stand upon a hill,
and gaze out to the fields.
All is still.

*By Bonnie Taylor Forsyth
Age 12
WALCHA – NSW*

OLD SCHOOL



I run down the driveway as fast as I can, but why? I never get to school on time, heck, I don't even like school.

Then it hits me like bugs swarming to a light bulb. Belinda is staring right at me.

She's like the sunshine on a rainy day, or the caramel in a caramel crunch; as sweet as ever. What am I saying? All this mush is the kind of stuff that gets you beaten up. I should act cool and strut, that's right. I strut like I'm the coolest guy on the block. All the kids are laughing like an atomic bomb.

"Come on boy!" yells the bus driver, "I still have seven more runs to do".

I slowly walk on the bus with my face as red as a beetroot and my head hung low. Big bad Jonny comes up to me and gives me a whopping great punch.

"You stay away from Belinda, you freak", snarls Jonny. (He has had a crush on her since 2nd grade.)

A great waft of smoke comes out of the bus and there's the squealing of brakes, "We're here", yells Eugene, the class geek who has no sense of style at all.

I drag my feet as I go into class.

English! The worst part of the day. I hate it. I used to love writing, but since Mr Felly started teaching us in

Year 8, I have grown to despise it. He never encourages us at all. He is a grumpy old bachelor dinosaur who hates kids.

A sudden movement takes grasp of my eye. I look at the wall above the teacher's desk. There is a faded black and white photo in a cracked, greying, wooden frame. There are rows of children in each. The children look bored and disinterested – much the same as I do on school photo days. They are Mr Felly's old school pictures. I can see him, a young child in the second row on the left. He couldn't be more than six or seven. His hair is long and slicked back.

Hang on, the children are moving. I can see a bully pulling a young girl's plaited hair. All the children are coming alive. This can't be! I quietly stand and sneak over for a closer look ahhh it's pulling me in.

Where am I? What am I doing here? Help! What are the boys wearing suspenders and old flat hats for?

"Sit down boy!" screams some old crackpot and because of my fear I do. The balding teacher hobbles over with a sneer on his wrinkly face.

"Get out your stories, Wilson Felly." The nasty man moves towards the young Mr Felly. Felly covers in front of the snarling teacher and offers him his work. He looks anxious.

By Gabi Flynn

Age 13

Trinity Catholic College

LISMORE – NSW



FRIENDSHIP IS THE BEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE

One person sat lonely on a river's edge
Another sat crying on their garden hedge
Another was lost in a sea of depression
Another's sanctuary was in his aggression

What those people need is someone to love them, like a parent or a friend.

Someone on which their hearts can depend
So next time you see someone sad or unhappy
Don't think that they are weird or wacky

Give them the gift of friendship, it's the best you can give
They will treasure it in their hearts and it will help them live.

By Mariah Edgoose

Age 11

Village School

CROYDON NORTH – VIC

Teacher: Tania Heine



METAMORPHOSIS

It was a cold but soundless night. Mysteriously, the owl was sitting in its nest; it was strange seeing the owl sleeping during the night-time. There was a full moon and its pearly-white colour glowed in the darkness, illuminating a path for others.

There was only one animal out in the brisk night. A single green caterpillar made its way across a large and stable branch. It began to eat the fresh leaves that the tall tree produced. After consuming many leaves, the caterpillar began to grow fatter, and fatter. It grew so fat that it could hardly move any more. Then, the very chubby caterpillar slowly made its way towards a thin but strong branch that seemed isolated through the night; the caterpillar began to weave its magic. It began to make what seemed like a cocoon. Slowly, the caterpillar became enveloped in its finely spun silk. It worked throughout many days and nights, until eventually, it was covered with the silvery string that it had produced.

After a week or so, the animals of the peaceful environment began to come out of hiding and sat before the tree that was holding the caterpillar's cocoon. They seemed to understand what was happening: before this incident, the caterpillar was an outsider. But now, they realised his future potential. He began to emerge from his cocoon. His thin shape moved elegantly outside of the cocoon. He opened his delicate wings slowly and showed the world how beautiful he truly was. His wings showed an excellent shade of blues and greens. He fluttered them gracefully and began to lift off from the cocoon. He made his way towards the setting sun, adding to the beautiful sight. He was once an ugly and small caterpillar... but now, he was a beautiful, elegant and graceful butterfly.

*By Susie Nguyen
Year 7
Mentone Girl's Grammar School
MENTONE – VIC.*



THE THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM

Jessie Vanguard was the richest man in London and he knew it. Whenever he went to a dinner party he would tell people about his successes. But no one complained because the man had been known to have a revenge symptom. He controlled every business like a hustler. He also controlled most of the children's colleges and private schools. That was why most of the people in London were sending their children to state schools in fear of Jessie. His success was all on his knowledge on financing and mechanics. He was a major technical designer. When he was having a conference he'd talk about the finance side and would not stop until someone managed to change the subject. He thought he could play music yet he couldn't. When people listened to him they were tempted to bite their finger nails to stop the screeching

of the violin. Sometimes they would bite their nails so much that they bled. Sometimes he lectured people who knew more than him. When he played windows smashed and cats screeched yet no one would tell him to shut up. They won't say shut up because they were scared of him.

Once he woke up in a bad mood because there was a school complaining about a haunting and children being scared in the third floor bedroom. So Jessie was going to sleep in the third floor bedroom to prove those people wrong. In the early morning he went to Helton Hill Catholic School, this was the school that the six year and seven year students had been complaining about. He did not believe in ghosts. As he drove down the cracked stone path he remembered the scene of a horror movie called "Call of Hell" where creatures were called from hell and attacked people. He drove into the parking lot and parked his Skyline next to a Toyota Eclipse. He stepped out of the car and felt the freezing cold air which all new arrivals felt and considered going back into his car and driving away. Everything looked dark and black compared to his luxury white mansion. He pushed on the heavy door and felt it shift under his hand. As he stepped in an old lady walked up to him and introduced herself.



Cont'd...

THE THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM (Cont'd)

"Hello, my name is Jackie and I am the principal of Helton Hill Catholic School."

"Oh I don't care, just show me to 'the' room."

"Oh all right" she managed to squeeze out, after the shock of being insulted.

He went to the third floor bedroom and felt the door slam behind him. There was a smell in the air like chicken and mashed poo. Then there was a flash and

he was blown off the bed. There was a voice saying "Go away!". He smashed through the door and ran away with the sound of laughter in his ears.

The richest man in London had just been beaten by his own school.

*By Jamie Cameron
Grade 6 – Age 10
Guardian Angel School
TINGALPA – QLD.*

RENOVATIONS

One morning I woke up and looked out at the ocean. The water was a beautiful shade of aqua and little waves were rolling in. I thought it was a wonderful day and I felt ready to start doing renovations to my home. I knew that when my new renovations were finished I would be able to lie in bed and look out at the water, every morning!

After a quick breakfast I got to work. First I measured the distance between my home and the old spotted gum tree nearby. I calculated the area that I would be able to build in. Then I prepared my building materials and with four pairs of hands to help, my renovations were soon under way.

I worked for hours and my renovations were just starting to take shape. I stopped for a quick snack about lunch time and as I finished eating, I looked up and saw angry black clouds moving across the sky towards me very quickly! The sea was no longer calm, it was raging and grey waves were thrashing on the shoreline.

I shuddered and began to panic! What would I do if the storm hit and I was still building? Would my renovations be destroyed? Would my dream home be ruined?

Suddenly thunder rumbled, lightning crackled and lit up the sky and I realised I'd better find some shelter before it rained. I hurried and hid under a tree nearby and watched my home as the rain fell down very heavily. Finally the rain stopped. Big puddles filled the

holes in the road and lots of leaves lay on the ground. But my home was still there, I was so happy!

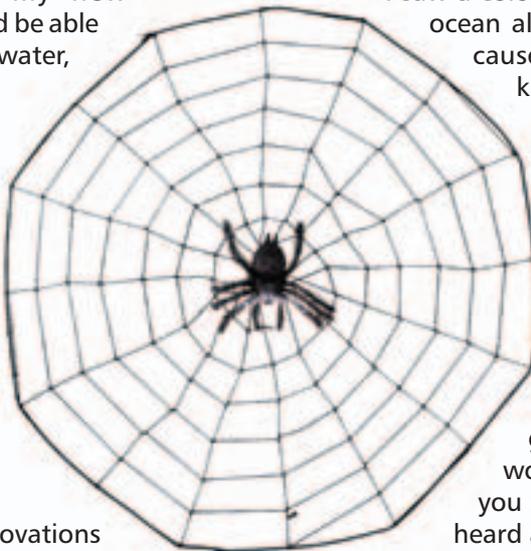
Soon the sun was shining again and as I started work, I saw a colourful rainbow way out above the ocean along the horizon. The storm had caused a little bit of damage to my kitchen but I managed to patch it up. For the next few hours I was very busy building again.

The sun was just starting to disappear beneath the horizon and the ocean had changed to a beautiful orange colour. My home was finally finished. I was very proud and I climbed up the old gum tree to get a good look. I was admiring my work when suddenly the worst thing you could ever imagine happened... I heard a noise that was very frightening. It wasn't the roar of the waves or the rumble of thunder, it was worse! It was a voice. It got closer and closer, and that's when the disaster happened. A man walked straight through my web!

First my new bedroom disappeared, then my kitchen, then soon everything was gone.

The sun was gone too and it was dark now and I knew tomorrow would be a busy day. Tomorrow I had a new home to build – lucky I have eight hands!

*By Jordan Cunningham
Grade 6, Age 11
Corrimal East Public School
CORRIMAL EAST – NSW*



STORIES FROM THE ARMCHAIR

The old furniture craftsman knew that it was time to make the armchair that he had always wanted. He ventured deep into the woods to choose the best timber to make the strong frame needed in his armchair. Next he purchased springs and fabric from the local drapery store in town. With all the odds and ends he needed, it was time to start his armchair. For several weeks the old man worked with all his skill to make the armchair. Once finished, he placed his chair in front of his open fireplace, relaxed and read from his books.

Sadly, the old man passed away years later. When his family came to collect his things, they found the armchair and thought they should sell it as they didn't want nor need it. The family had a garage sale and the armchair was sold for fifty dollars. The man who bought the armchair put it in the lounge room next to their couch. "They like me better", said the couch.

"Well, maybe that will change", replied the armchair. The couch burst out laughing. The armchair decided to ignore the couch. That night the family sat down to listen to their father read stories while he was sitting comfortably in his armchair.

Years passed and the children grew into adults and the parents into grandparents. The couch was replaced, but never the old armchair. The adults left and the grandparents passed away. The armchair was

also showing its age. Its left arm was broken, the fabric was torn in certain places and the springs had popped out.

The house and its furniture were sold. The new owners put the armchair out for kerbside collection, as it did not sell and was too old to be repaired. It started to rain. That night two beams of light pierced the darkness. It was a passing ute. An elderly man saw the broken armchair and decided to pick it up and repair it.

When the old man had reached his home he took the armchair into his toolshed. He took it apart, mended and polished the wood, bought expensive fabric and the best cushioning to fix the armchair. It took a long time and a lot of hard work, but that old man managed to restore the armchair to its former glory.

Just like the armchair's first owner, the old man placed the restored armchair next to his fireplace and sat down to finish the book that he had been reading.



*By Jack Downe, Year 6,
Ashgrove State School,
ASHGROVE – QLD.*

WOLF SONG

Silver silhouette illuminates a black sky.
The Pack, silent in the absolute darkness,
journeying to the high hill's peak.

They breathe in, scents rushing through the night air,
remembrance, recognition, and learning.

They see, with eyes bright as the moon's white surface,
the great boulders, the rocky paths.

Their ears upright and alert,
they hear the many sounds of invisibility,
cloaks of murmuring depths of night songs –
crickets, scuttling rodents –
all afraid to ruin the wall of unsettling silence.

The Pack walks on.
Nothing will stop their venture to the mountain summit.

At last, the White Light is also at its highest.

Silence. And then ...

Song, the most mournful sound to ever hear,
a song of pain,
triumph, whispers, enemies, friends, fear,
confidence and the love for all the Pack.

It is the Wolf Song.



*By Sally Wark
Year 6
Ashgrove State School
ASHGROVE – QLD
Teachers: Darren Waugh,
Penny Benson*

THE PHANTOM'S LAIR

The long, ornate gondola edges through the water, poled forward by a tall, silent figure behind me. Everything is dark beyond the fragile circle of light cast by the two lanterns hung from the front of the gondola and over the ripple of the water, all that can be heard is a steady *drip, drip, drip* echoing around the catacombs under the opera house, reverberating off the walls, which are damp and glisten softly. Under the water, a switch is flicked by the pole, sending a heavy black grille up to reveal a parting black curtain, the movements creating a cacophony of different sounds. I resist the urge to sing, knowing my untrained voice would never reach the lofty notes of the last woman brought here.

Sprawling candelabras erupt, fully lit, out of the lake as the gondola passes under the grille. I duck my head in an attempt to avoid the icy cold drops from the unseen points of the grille above. The damp smell of the catacombs is gone, replaced by a smoky scent, mixed with something unidentifiable as we pass the candelabras, spitting forth fountains of water as the waxy pillars they bear flicker in an unfelt wind. The rocky shore creeps closer and closer until, with a soft rasp, the gondola lands. Erik, the feared and famed Phantom of the Opera, leaps athletically from where he stood behind me to the shore, quickly tying the gondola to a silver mooring ring embedded in the rock. From my seat, I look up into the visible part of his lair and shiver with excitement. After years of longing, I am finally here.

With a dramatic flourish, Erik sweeps off his black cloak, letting it skim across the floor to rest against the uneven rocky wall before looking around his home with a deep, pride-filled breath. He offers his gloved hand and my fingers slide slowly but eagerly across the smooth, warm black leather. Erik helps me to stagger awkwardly out of the rocking gondola and onto the cold, damp shore of his lair, like a shepherd leading a gawky young lamb.

A giant pipe organ, lavishly decorated with winged cherubs and detailed skulls towers against the wall, sheets of music crowded with scrawled notes still sitting on the stand above black and white ivory keys. Mirrors covered in Hessian cloth are huddled forlornly against walls and hundreds of burning candles throw a seductive, secretive light across everything from their seats on ornately carved candelabras and candlesticks. Busts bearing masks and wigs sit on a writing desk, surrounding a small silver wax holder, a sealer sitting beside it. A black edged envelope, bearing the name "Signora Carlotta Giudicelli" is propped against it, containing the latest warning against the

temperamental diva whose voice sounds like nails on a chalkboard.

As Erik and I progress deeper into the lair, incredibly detailed sketches of a curly haired girl with wide eyes – Miss Christine Daaé – can be seen scattered across all available surfaces and pinned to walls. A strong wave of jealousy courses through my very core and my hand twitches within Erik's grip until I find one charcoal sketch of my own face in a dark corner. As we approach a door, Erik halts, bowing elegantly and lifting my hand slowly to press cold, tortured lips to my fingers, turning away and leaving me to go into the famous Loius-Phillipe room on my own.

Hundreds of sweet smelling, perfect dark roses greet me, surrounding a bed shaped like a black swan. The red velvet sheets and black silk pillows look warm and inviting in this "stupid and magnificent" room. I back out of the grand bedroom to a strange, sweet sound as music fills my mind and my soul begins to soar with the haunting music Erik plays on a violin. I hear in this place as I've never heard before.

*By Samantha Dowling
Year 11*

*Clonard College
GEELONG WEST – VIC
Teacher : Mrs Kayler-Thompson*



THE SEASONS

SUMMER

It's a season of drought,
When the sun is beating upon our backs, Railroad tracks buckle,
And the last fragments of Spring's blessings are dried and crumpled,
The vicious draught whips us from behind,
Lands are parched, desolate and bare, Bush fires terrorise the country, Everybody swelters because of the heat, The humidity becomes unbearable, The air becomes thick, Leaves begin to crumble, Becoming brittle and crisp,
As they're crunched beneath the ceaseless northerly winds,
Fires scorch the fresh green colours of the grass,
They turn rotten and brown,
The Season of Plague soon arrives,
And so hence we have the season of Autumn.

AUTUMN

Autumn is a season to mourn,
When weeping willows grieve,
They shed tears that are leaves, Drifting in a cascading stream,
Descending upon the damp earth, Where they crumple and decompose,
Death robs the living of life,
Like a thief, who steals his way into the night,
It leaves a mark,
Flowers fade to shades of grey,
A mist of black and white shadows the world,
The overgrown vines and weeds choke the flora,
Whilst the fauna prepare for hibernation, Reeds drown in the rivers of despair, Thorns of dead roses,
Slit and prick our hearts and veins, Floods wreck havoc and chaos,
Volcanoes erupt violently as earthquakes shake the land,
Natural disasters cause catastrophic events,
Widows clad in jet black dresses and veils covering their faces, Weep upon their husbands' graves, The urns holding human remains are shattered, Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
Prayers for the departed souls are said, Hence we have the season of Winter.

WINTER

The Winter solstice takes place,
The labours of Autumn are paid off,
Animals huddle together,
Hibernating in the motherly sanctuaries of the earth,
Rain and hail pour down from the cold atmosphere above,
Snow blankets the ground,
Pelting softly on the grand mountains,
Storms billow forth from the skies,
Lightning and thunder clash,
Like a sword that is being beaten into shape by a hammer against the gods' anvil,
The seemingly everlasting bitterness and misery of blizzards come, Freezing time itself,
A dense fog clouds the earth's revelations and secrets, In the midst of the veiled forests,
Frost breathes, clinging to natural surroundings,
Leaving all in its path congealed, Hooded monks chant funeral requiems, As the ice that embeds the graveyards,
Statues and tombstones cease to melt, They remain hard,
As adamant as a diamond,
Stalactites and stalagmites,
After thousands of undisturbed years, Have formed like prison cell bars, Within pitch black caverns,

Soon they drip unto the damp grounds,
It's like the universe is confronting the end of time, Armageddon – the Apocalypse has begun, Hell rising up from its fiery depths, Demons creating wars,
The unexpected last battle has drawn near, Despair and horror – weapons that instill fear, Pandora's Box has been opened, Letting loose the terrors inside, On the eve of Spring,
The sky will be lit by the celestial twilight, And from a tiny seed that was once planted, Beneath the snows shall sprout the Spring's rose, Hence we have the season of Spring.

SPRING

It's a season of new life,
When flowers blossom and bloom,
Their sweet scent continues to linger,
The fresh aroma is in the pastures and meadows, In the glen and the glades,
The calm breeze touches my fingers, We walk hand in hand,
So begins the peaceful brotherhood of man,
The fragrance released that's purely divine, Intoxicates the soul,
That rare perfume,
Comes from the flower's plume,
The honey residue drips off them,
Coats the tips of our tongues, Producing a fountain of youth,
To keep us forever young,
The breathing wind caresses and cradles me in its arms,
Its invisible hand strokes every strand of your locks of hair, With the resonance of nature's music, Reverberating through the open air, Animals frolic in the fields,
Graceful swans and peacocks nestle themselves besides rippling streams,
As waterfalls cascade into a royal blue pool,
Frothing at the bottom,
Magnificent stallions and mares embrace the wide paddocks,
Riding side by side,
Hidden jewels and gold glisten in undiscovered mines, Grapes of wild vines are the fruits of mead and wine, Moss and vines entwine,
They grasp the feet of ancient statues, That are no longer weather-worn, The spray of the ocean, Foam of the current,
Kisses the shores,
As the tide draws in,
A full moon and the everlasting sun, Form a total eclipse becoming one, Mother Nature treats us kind, Gives us a new peace of mind, From dusk till dawn, Dawn till dusk,
Glistening stars like sparkling diamonds encrusted on cavern walls,
From time to time again,
Wax and wane,
Oysters prise themselves open,
Revealing their treasured pearls,
A rainbow of hope painted against the sky,
As the world becomes a Utopia,
And doves take flight on God's breath,
Spring is my sanctuary,
My sacred shrine,
It's my secret garden,
Where butterflies emerge from their cocoons,
So this Rose of Spring is in perpetual bloom.

*By Joseph Misuraca
Year 9 B.W.
Mill Park Secondary College
MILL PARK – VIC.*



ROUND HILL SHACK

I can remember the smell of faded pages from books, the sound of squeaking mattresses – like the sound of rubber ducks – and the waves washing and rolling upon the muddy shores. The shack at Round Hill Head, 1770, was very old, but great. The garden consisted of mainly fig and palm trees, though we knew there were probably plants of all sorts entwined under all the tangle of the bougainvillea. The shack had two rooms – one room was a garage full of fishing hooks, lines, rods and crab pots, as well as a shower, sink and toilet. While in the other room there was a double bed, rusty kitchen (often a home to small mammals of all sorts), shelves of old books and shells, and a higher area which had three bunk beds that were solid and had a calming and safe feeling to them, like a doorway in an earthquake.



My grandfather and Uncle built the place when my father was only a young teen. Dad says that when he went there as a boy, there were no shops and the only social place was the harbour, boy has it changed since then!

My first time at the small, 1770 town was as soon as I could walk – in fact I could walk so well then, that I walked right off the veranda! A row of plants were hastily planted so I may distinguish the difference between safety and tears. When I was six I made caves through the garden, pretending to be princesses and dragons with my little brother. I would go searching for wild oranges and pine nuts which I would keep in bark and grass baskets which I had made. When I was ten and for some reason unknown, in need of an adrenalin rush, I climbed the enormous boulder in the backyard, gripping cycads and dead vines to pull me up – I even have the scars to prove it!

But last year something terrible happened – we had to sell the shack. 1770 was building up after more people had discovered its beauty, even the fish were becoming scarce and the crab pots were being stolen. Round Hill Head was becoming so popular and a favourite for tourists that the rates skyrocketed. My grandparents didn't come on the holiday adventures any more, but stayed at home or in hospital instead. The shack was rundown and shabby too, like ancient curtains full of dust – but I didn't care! I loved the musty smell and lorikeet songs, I loved eating fish and crab for breakfast lunch and tea. Even the dogs didn't mind the six hour drive coming up, and besides, they loved running up and down the beaches,

splashing through the waves, and rolling and shaking off in the sand, forgetting all about the world before, ahead and even then! I wanted to keep it, all of it.

But I couldn't win against my family. It had become so traumatic for my grandparents that they just wanted to sell it and get it over and done with.

The auction was a week later – they told the auctioneer to sell at any price – it just had to be sold. My dad and I went up to watch it. I saw the careless

faces of the bidders who knew little of our magical place, I saw the shrug on the highest bidder's shoulders as he bought away my childhood, but most importantly I watched my tears, laughs and spirit packaged in the shack, wrapped up cheaply and tossed away.

I still feel sorrow and loss when I think of my holidays there. I even miss the mozzie bites! But though I lost the shack, I'll never lose my memories of it.

*By Kaiya Ferguson
13 years*

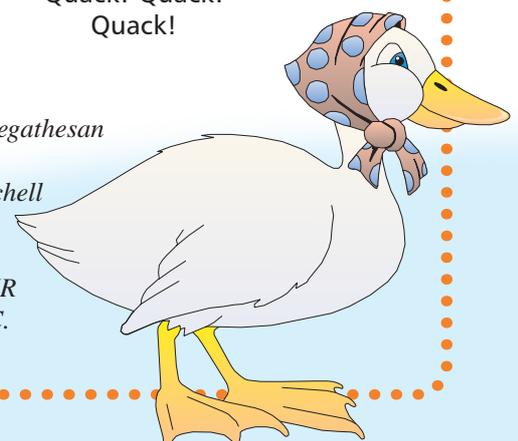
*Fairholme College
TOOWOOMBA – QLD.*

STARLITE

We are a two legged family
We have a two legged pet
Its name is Starlite
And it is a friend to all
It has a soft and feathery skin
It can run and walk and waddle
It is a Duck after all....
Quack! Quack!
Quack!

By Chalini Jegathesan

*Age 7
Thomas Mitchell
Primary
School
ENDEAVOUR
HILLS – VIC.*



SURVIVING THE GREAT TUNNEL

The dirt, the mud and the twigs seemed to stick to my boots as I continued walking through the sombre tunnel. It was as dark as burnt coal and smelt of green vegetables sealed in an empty ice cream container for a week. I was extremely scared and my voice echoed through the tunnel when I called out. I flinched every time I heard something unfamiliar and every few minutes I would jerk my head back to see if anyone was watching me. I thought I would never see light again but I kept on walking hoping to find something other than a ghost. Every so often I would see colours in front of me but they were just my imagination.



I thought back to how I had entered this tunnel. I was playing handball with my friends but little did I know they were mean and nasty inside, only wanting to pull a successful prank on me. The ball flew through a gap and because I had hit it, I was sent to fetch it. I had pushed a boulder aside with some help from the others and once I had stepped in, they rolled the boulder back into place. I desperately tried to wheel it away again but it just wouldn't move. I was too weak! I tried begging to the others through a tiny crack that I would even do anything they tell me to but I heard their footsteps fading, fading and then they were gone. Surely this was all a joke to teach me a lesson but after waiting about ten minutes, still no one came to my rescue.

Tears still rolled down my cheeks and onto my lips. After walking for a long time I was getting desperate. I wondered what would happen if I was stuck here and a creature ate me. I was overcome with fear and worry for I hated slimy, poisonous insects and other tiny creatures like centipedes and millipedes. I knew I was very deep in the tunnel now because there was no water under my thick, black boots. A heart-breaking silence surrounded me. It went for a really long time but finally it stopped when a bird called, so loud that it made me jump up in fright. I stopped dead in my tracks, unable to move. Being curious, I stepped forward but heard nothing more.

Bored to the bone, I walked on. Every now and then I would pinch myself. Was this really happening? I started daydreaming about me being a princess and sitting on a silver throne. I would wear a spectacular, elegant gown with matching jewellery and get my hair tied up beautifully with a real tiara on my head. The servants would wash the dishes and tidy my room.

I wouldn't be doing chores but still get loads of money. One day I would meet my Prince Charming and get married not to mention live happily ever after. If only a Prince Charming would appear and free me from this place but I know fairytales don't come true.

Already it feels like a whole day has passed. I was very hungry and my legs needed a rest. I was out of my daydream and back in the filthy tunnel filled with murkiness and dinginess. I would give anything for an apple pie with cream on top! Hmm, just the thought of food makes me hungrier. I sat down on the cold cement and thought about my parents, worried sick about me. Just then a glint of yellow caught my eye. My heart lifted. It must be another entrance!

I ran frantically, like a speeding tornado towards the light. Yes, it was another entrance. It drew closer to me, step by step. I could feel my legs ache but they still pounded hard against the concrete. An excruciating pain started growing in my body but no, I couldn't stop now, not until I had escaped from this tunnel. The wind blew towards my face.

"Yes!" I yelled, as I made my way to freedom, punching the air. I had made it! I was so relieved and very proud of myself. My chest ached and I could hardly breathe but it was worth it, I had made my way to freedom at last. The sun now shone so brightly I had to cover my eyes but I was overjoyed to see it again.

While I ate apple pie with mouth-watering cream on top, I explained to everybody about my freaky adventure in the vivid, mysterious tunnel and my parents decided to go to the Council and complain about what had happened. After several hours the Council finally decided to block both entrances with something nobody could push aside so that no other person would have to go through the frightening journey that I had to endure. The other girls were punished for I had told my parents about them as well and they were forced to apologise to me and to my parents. They changed their behaviour and now, we're true friends. What a journey?

*By Anna Xu
Year 6*

*Manly West Public School
BALGOWLAH – NSW
Teacher: Miss Lees*

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