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November 2009

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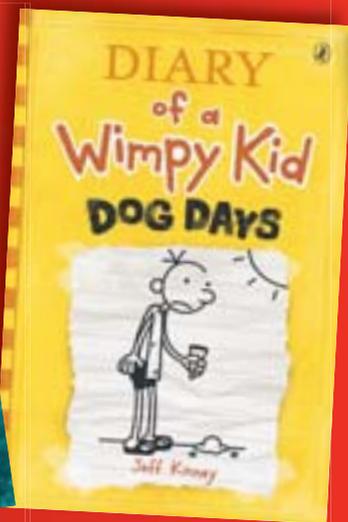
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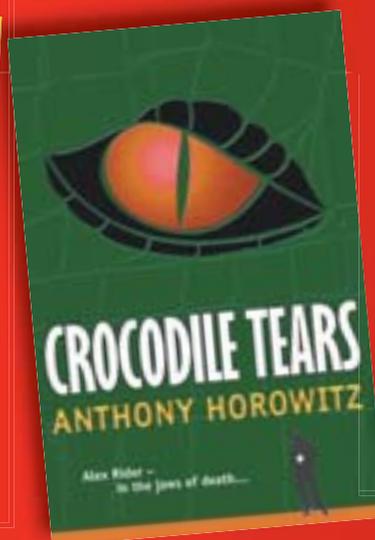
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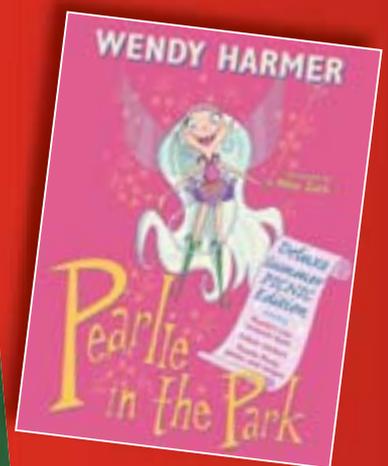
**The 39 Clues #6:
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Jude Watson



**Diary of a Wimpy Kid
#4: Dog Days**
Jeff Kinney



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Crocodile Tears**
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Available 12 November



**Pearlie in the Park
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FOR BOOKLOVERS

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From the Editor's Desk

The year is just about over and for most secondary students the exams will be finished. I don't know where this year has actually gone!

We look forward to even more entries next year. Have a great festive season and always stay safe so you can keep writing in 2010.

Coming up to the season of giving, why not give a book written by one/or more of our talented Authors? I can highly recommend them.



I saw this message somewhere and thought it very appropriate.

"Go safely into tomorrow and give yourself a small challenge every day!"

You have the talent to go places so 'just do it'!

DON'T FORGET THE ENVIRONMENTAL WAY AND ENTER ON-LINE!

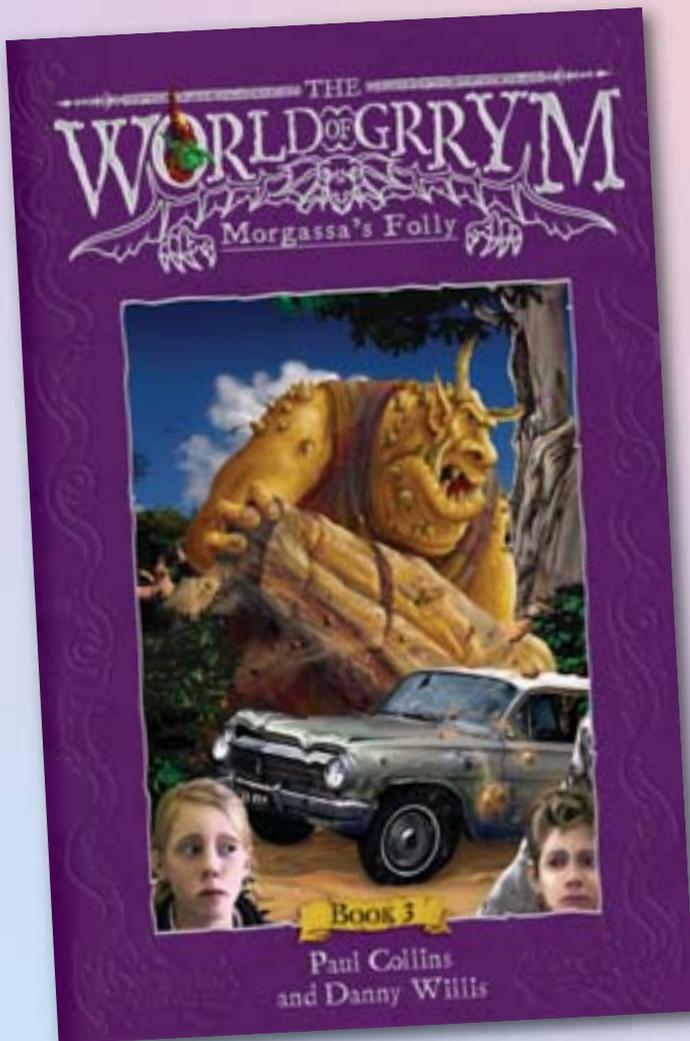
KEEP ON WRITING (TYPING)!

Carol Dick
Managing Editor

BOOK REVIEW

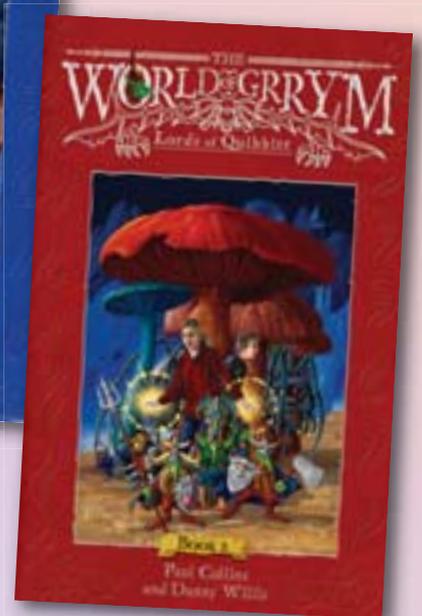
The World of Grrym

Book 3



After reading Book 1 and 2 in the World of Grrym series I couldn't wait for the third book to be out.

I would recommend this book for readers 10–13. With all the magic and mayhem of Books 1 and 2 you will not be disappointed.



CHILDREN'S CHARITY NETWORK SUPPORTS CHARITIES AND ORGANISATIONS WHO SUPPORT US!

Midnight Mare

IT WAS finally here, Brianne's first riding lesson. She had been looking forward to this day for weeks. Brianne sat, playing nervously with her hair as they drove down the country road. Her heart pounded as they turned in at the big stone gates. As they travelled up the tree-lined driveway she looked out over the paddock and saw a beautiful chestnut mare. Brianne crossed her fingers and wished that would be the horse she would be riding.

They pulled up in front of the stable and saw Kathy, the riding instructor. She was standing next to a cute little black Shetland pony.

Kathy said, "Hello Brianne, this is Midnight, she is the horse you'll be riding".

Brianne dropped her head slightly with a sigh, she felt a little disappointed, but tried not to show it. Even though she was not riding the chestnut she was still keen to learn how to ride.

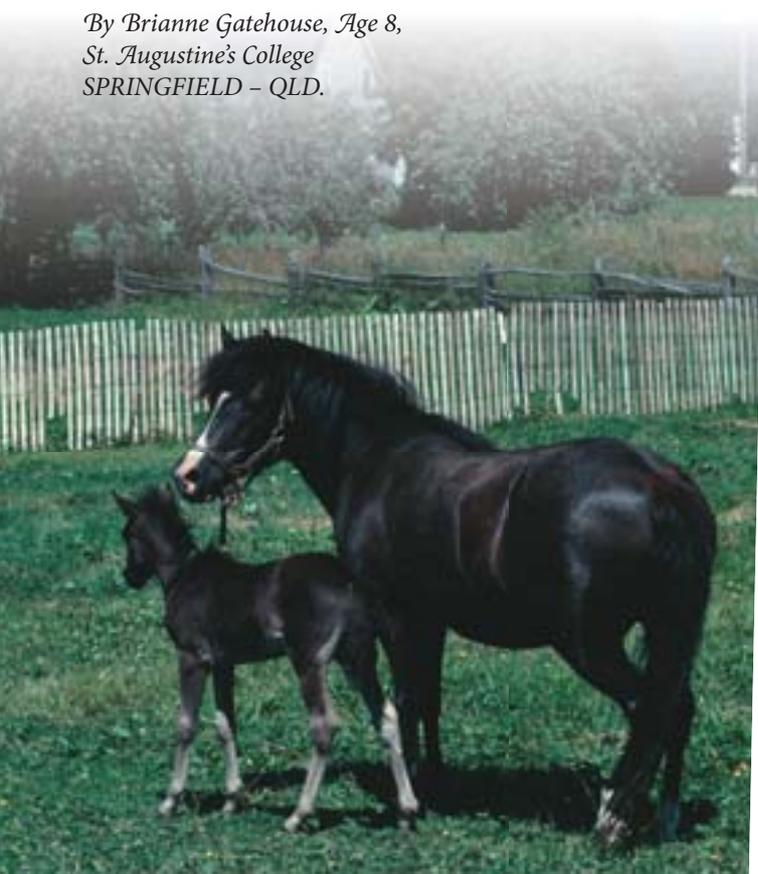
Kathy started the lesson and showed Brianne how to mount the horse, but instead of putting her left foot in the stirrup she put her right foot in and lifted herself up over the horse. There she sat looking at Midnight's rump and everyone laughed. It was a bit embarrassing, but still not enough to stop her from wanting to learn to ride.

After she sorted herself out she learned how to get Midnight into a trot. Her teacher said she was a natural and she had done really well, especially for her first lesson. Brianne had such a fantastic time she did not want to leave.

This was the first of many lessons and Brianne never looked at the chestnut again.

Midnight was her horse.

*By Brianne Gatehouse, Age 8,
St. Augustine's College
SPRINGFIELD - QLD.*



Mr Miss

THIS is the story of Mr Miss.

I will tell you straight away why he is called Mr Miss. It is because he always misses everything!

One day he went out to play tennis. You won't be surprised to learn that because his name was Mr Miss, he always missed the ball. Every time!

He went home feeling very sad and angry.

He said to himself; let's go for a walk in the woods, instead of going straight home. He walked to the woods and he saw a well.

It was getting hot so he decided to have a drink. He put the bucket down, down, down to the water at the bottom.

Little did he know that this was a special well. If you drank deeply from the water in the well your wish could come true!

Mr Miss brought up the bucket. He slurped and slurped until there was no water in the bucket. He wished he could play tennis properly and not miss the ball.

He did not know that he had changed but he did feel a little different.

As he started walking home, he saw some friends. His friends said, "Would you like to play some tennis?"

"Yes of course" said Mr Miss. "But I am not much good".

They walked to the courts and started to play.

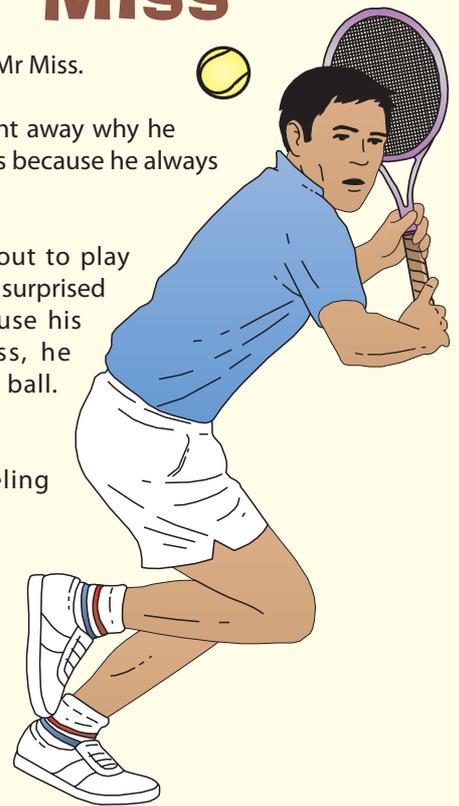
Mr Miss never missed a ball!

All his friends realised that he was much better. Even Mr Miss noticed and he was so pleased.

To this day he and his friends do not know how he got so good at tennis so quickly. But you and I know, don't we?

The end.

*By Isaac Lewis
Year 2-Aged
Home schooled
SURF BEACH - NSW*





The Missing Wig

ONE sunny day, a school not that far away was having an assembly. Their principal, Mr. Fudgcakes, was giving a speech about Athletics Day. Even though the school loved Athletics they were groaning, because Mr. Fudgcakes had been talking for hours.

There were about five more minutes till assembly finished when a very strong wind went over the school, and it was so strong that it blew Mr. Fudgcakes's wig off. Now hardly anyone knew Mr. Fudgcakes was bald so this was very embarrassing for Mr. Fudgcakes! But what's worse is that he did NOT know where his wig went.

A girl nearby called Annabelle, with long blonde hair, saw Mr. Fudgcakes's wig. She quickly grabbed it and hid it in her school bag. Annabelle seemed like a very sweet girl but she was actually very naughty. Luckily for Annabelle no one saw her put the wig in her bag.

Mr. Fudgcakes was very embarrassed so he ran into his office and looked for a spare wig or a hat, but all he could find was a hat covered in fake fruit. He looked ridiculous. But it was all he could wear. He didn't want everyone to see him bald. He went back outside, the whole school was laughing.

The next day a girl with lovely brown hair called Milly was doing her division booklet. Milly was a shy girl but very nice and smart.

She was looking at the board when she spotted a brown wig in Annabelle's bag, it looked just like Mr. Fudgcakes'. Annabelle was a very careless and forgetful girl so she did not notice that the wig was sticking out of her bag. Milly as I said was a very shy girl so she didn't tell anyone except for her best friend Sasha. Sasha was the opposite of shy. So Sasha did what Milly should have done, which was telling their teacher Mrs. Ugellberry.

Mrs. Ugellberry was shocked because Annabelle acted like a sweet little girl around her. Mrs. Ugellberry got the wig out of Annabelle's bag, without Annabelle noticing and went with Milly and Sasha to Mr. Fudgcakes's office.

★ ★ ★

The school was now starting to get used to Mr. Fudgcakes's new hat.

Mrs. Ugellberry knocked on the door of Mr. Fudgcakes's office. "Come in" said a cheerful voice. Mrs. Ugellberry showed Mr. Fudgcakes his wig and he just laughed. "Haa Haa I can't believe you went into so much trouble to find my wig", laughed Mr. Fudgcakes. "But I thought you hated your hat", asked Milly with a confused look on her face. "I'm actually very happy with my new hat, sorry for all the trouble" said Mr. Fudgcakes. "It's OK", said Mrs. Ugellberry, Sasha and Milly at the same time.

Mrs. Ugellberry knew a friend of hers that was bald and didn't like being bald, so she gave the wig to him, he was very happy!

Annabelle was a very careless and forgetful girl as you know, so she forgot all about the wig, and never found out it had gone.

★ ★ ★

The End

*By Ishka Yugani de Silva, Age 9,
Coatesville Primary School
BENTLEIGH EAST - VIC.*

INDEPENDENT

You could have been a dream
for all the blurriness
that's there,
but I know
that you're a distant memory.
Photographs of moments
that used to be so clear
are torn around the edges,
blurred
in sheets of dust,
in sheets of time,
in sheets of letting go,
moving on,
freeing myself,
living.



You're not forgotten,
just a torn,
dust covered
memory,
lying underneath
my desk
where I threw it
when I was sick
of needing you.

*By Sarah Merry
Year 9
MELTON WEST - VIC.*

Nights Dawn

Sunlight caresses my back
Shifting slowly to where the light is lost.
Tall I stand as the sun warms my soul
Setting me alight,
So bright, I am blinding.

Sunlight morphs to shadows;
Our world's single evil.
Yet the sun surrenders
At the dawn of night,
For the battle was lost
Before it ever began.

Lurking behind the shadows watch
As day surrenders to night,
Shadows overwhelm the peace
For waiting, hiding, running is the sun.
The sun slips away
And takes my soul with him
So my spark is lost.

Darkness pulls at my tattered sanity
Yanking, twisting, dragging me
Down into the depths of despair.
Knees buckled beneath my feet
The weight of the shadows pushes me down
And my body surrenders, the burden too large.

A pinprick of light
Brightens the endless darkness,
As the sun reclaims his throne.
Squirming shadows burning alive,
Writhing, squirming, screaming in pain
For the sun has returned;
My candle alights again.

*By Danika Jade Allday, Age 15
Mater Dei College
EDGEWATER - WA*

Fifteen



When I'm fifteen
I'll wash off
insecurities,
be myself,
and have a lengthy
conversation
with a familiar faced
stranger.

I'll fall in love,
be fallen for
and let that poor sucker
meet my dad.

I'll get good grades,
a job,
money,
piano lessons,
a piano.

I'll win a running race
and write a novel,
go shopping with my friends
and eat ice-cream
at an amusement park.

When I'm fifteen
I'll open my heart
and let it all pour out,
work hard,
have fun,
love,
and be loved.

*By Sarah Merry, Year 9
Mowbray College (Patterson Campus)
MELTON - ACT*

Retrieving the Sword

"No! Put it down! Look... the ruby eyes are glowing!" Josh cried in alarm as Michael picked up the shield.

"Run!" screamed Mitchell.

But it was too late. There was a flash of light and a blast of heat.

"Where are we?" asked Michael.

"I think we're in a medieval village. I read about one like this in a book", said Mitchell.

"How do you think we got here?" asked Michael.

"It might have something to do with the shield we found in the garden under the bushes. Remember the figure of the dragon carved into the middle of the shield? The ruby eyes glowed before we ended up here", said Josh.

Soon a man with a long thin beard came up to the boys. He was wearing a very pointy hat with a picture of a dragon on it, just like the one on the shield.

"Hello", he said in a very deep and gruff voice. "I see you have the ruby shield. Zantorian must have worked out how to summon the shield. It will be very powerful when put next to the sword."

"Err... do you know how to get us back home?" asked Mitchell.

"Mitchell", whispered Michael, "he won't know that."

"You've come from 2009 AD, August 23rd, 3 Wantfell Boulevard, New York", the man said.

Mitchell turned white. "How... how do you know that?" he asked amazed.

"I teleported the shield to that time and place to keep it from the evil dragon Zantorian", he sighed. "The only way to get back to your time is to get the emerald sword and right now Zantorian has got it. Once you have the sword, position it next to the shield, then all the jewels will glow. To ensure you get back home safely, keep hold of both the sword and the shield when the jewels are glowing. If Zantorian has both items, he can change the future and then dragons will rule the earth."

"So... do we have the ruby shield?" asked Josh.

"Yes and sorry, I'm so forgetful", the man said, "my name is Cedric the Wizard." He shook their hands. "And you are?"

"Josh, Michael and I'm Mitchell."

"Notice the shield has a pattern with a dragon in the middle",

explained Cedric, "That's the map of the maze leading to Zantorian's cave."

"So we must retrieve the sword", said Mitchell.

"One more thing", called Cedric, "Zantorian is a very powerful, fire breathing dragon. Take these emeralds, you may find them useful."

The three brothers made their way to the maze. The opening to the maze was overgrown with vegetation, but there was a well-worn track, lined with carvings of strange beasts.

"I know what these are", Mitchell said excitedly, "I've read about griffins. They have the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. Their powers are of strength, courage and sight."

"Let's check the shield for directions", said Michael. "Hey... look what's written on the shield!"

'Only the brave, bold and the smart will succeed.'

They walked through the maze and found the dark cave entrance.

"WHO DARES ENTER ZANTORIAN'S CAVE!!" a voice boomed.

Mitchell turned to run. "Um... guys, the griffins have come to life and are coming this way", he said fearfully.

Swiftly the griffins ran into the cave. There was a lot of noise, after a while, a griffin came out carrying the emerald sword.

Mitchell shouted, "That's right, I remember, griffins are attracted to and guard emeralds. Quick Josh, throw the emeralds Cedric gave us, over there to distract it."

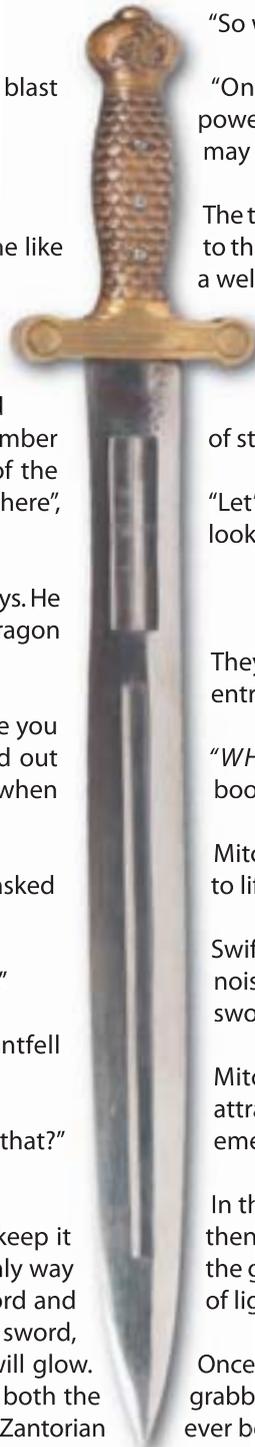
In the confusion, the griffin dropped the sword. The boys then sprinted to the sword. And, just as Cedric described, the gemstones began to glow. As before, there was a flash of light and a blast of heat.

Once they were safely home, Michael said, "It's a good thing I grabbed a souvenir of our adventure, because no-one would ever believe what a day we had."

He then pulled a vivid blue stone from his pocket. As he put it down, the rock started to shake and glow. Then it cracked open. The boys all looked at each other and realised, it was an egg... Zantorian's egg!

THE END (...or is it?)

*By Harrison Nathan
Grade 4, Age 9, Highbury Primary School
HIGHBURY - SA*



SNOWBALL

"Keith! Watch out!" yelled Ben.

"Oof!" I groaned as the snowball hit me in the back. I bent down and gathered as much snow as I could and threw it through the air. It hit Blake Smith right in the back of his head.

"Oi, who threw that?!" he yelled, spinning around. Blake Smith was a big, beefy boy in our year. We were puny next to him. He started chasing us.

"Quick, run!" I yelled to Ben as we ran around the building, hiding from Blake.

We were in the school playground in the middle of a snow field. It was winter and an epic 'battle of the blizzard' was taking place. Snowballs were flying everywhere. Girls were making snow men and 'nerds' were trying to make snow forts. Classes had finished for the day, but the teachers had allowed us to stay, while monitoring us from their warm staffroom – only because they were waiting for their cars to be dug out of the snow!

"Phew!" Ben said, as we sat panting on the frozen ground behind the Admin block. Blake had given up; last seen sulking away, rubbing his big, beefy head.

We sat there until my stomach grumbled.

"I'm hungry. Let's get something to eat", I said.

"Yeah", he agreed. "My bum's frozen anyway!" he added. I laughed at him. We walked around the edge of the playground to the bike racks. We hopped on our bikes and pedalled gingerly into town. We arrived at the bakery and tried to look through the frosty window.

"Let's go inside. It's probably heated in there, Keith!" Ben said. We walked through the door and the little bell tinkled.

"Hello boys. What can I get you?" Mrs Green asked from behind the counter. She looked a lot like her daughter Katie, a pretty girl in our year with black hair and freckles. We peered at the rolls, scrolls, buns, bread and Mrs Green's speciality, chocolate donuts.

"Um, two chocolate donuts please", we asked and handed her the money.

"Here you go!" she said, giving us two brown paper bags.

"Thank you." We waved goodbye and left the bakery.

"Hmm. These are delicious!" I said to Ben. He nodded in agreement.

We finished our donuts and rode home to my place.

"Let's play on your computer when we get in", Ben said as we parked our bikes in the garage. We walked through the door and just when we were about to go upstairs to my room, my Mum called us.

"Keith, Ben! Come down to the lounge room please", she said. We groaned and went to the living room. My Mum was standing there smiling at us, with a cardboard box at her feet. Inside the box, there was a white puppy.

"Oh, she's so cute!" I exclaimed, lifting the yapping puppy from the box. We sat there stroking her until mum said, "Well? What are you going to name her?"

I thought for a moment.

"Snowball" I said, smiling.

*By Sophie Elise Unsworth
Year 6, Age 11,
Shoalhaven Anglican School
MILTON - NSW*



SPRING into SPORT

ONCE there was a kid called Leon. Leon was what you and I would call skinny. Leon did not really eat much. He only had one friend called Wilson. Wilson was kind of like a nerd. 16 hours later...

Leon loved to play sport but he was not really good at it. In fact he was bad. Anyway, he kept on not eating and his mum got cross.

One day Leon was at school and he crossed the road. He was so skinny the driver didn't see him. The car hit Leon and he got rushed to hospital.

The doctor's name was Phil. Phil looked at Leon for at least 15 minutes and then he said, "You need spring surgery."

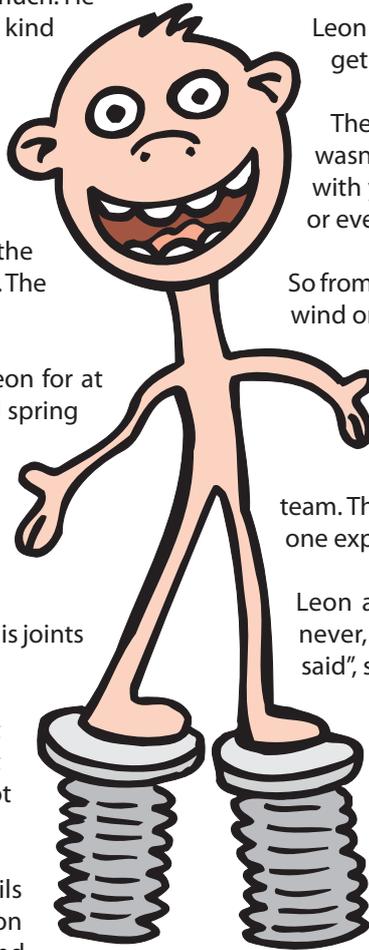
The next day Wilson strangely heard about it and gave Leon flowers. Leon was still at the hospital.

Leon did get his surgery and they replaced all his joints with springs.

Leon saw Wilson at school. Leon walked past Wilson like he was not even there. Leon went up to the oval with the cricket team. He was not good at cricket.

Leon took a huge run up and **BAM!** The bails went flying up in the air. Everyone thought Leon was a megastar! No one knew about Leon and his surgery.

Leon was the star of the cricket team. Everyone loved him. But Leon thought "Do they like me or do they like that I am great at cricket?". He thought about Wilson who liked him even when he wasn't good at sport.



Leon called the hospital and made an appointment to get his springs out and artificial joints put in.

The surgery went well. The only problem was Leon wasn't good at sport any more. Wilson said, "I can train with you. We could train on sunny or rainy mornings or even after school!"

So from then on they practised every day – rain or shine, wind or flood. Wilson had heaps of injuries to start. But after a few months they got the hang of it.

A year later...

Wilson and Leon tried out for the school cricket team. They got in! Wilson and Leon were very happy. No one expected Wilson to get in. Even Wilson didn't.

Leon and Wilson got a slushie to celebrate. "Never, never, never give up. That's what Winston Churchill said", said Wilson.

"Did he play cricket?" asked Leon.

"You're a funny guy", said Wilson.

THE END

*By Liam John Pierlot
Year 4, Age 9
Radford College
BRUCE – ACT*

SMOKE

Smoke
Emerging from the end of a red-hot stick,
Twisting, turning,
Always moving,
Ribbons of ghost-like silk,
Floating on the air,
Soon to evaporate,
Into nothingness.
Magical.

*By Jamie Hile
Grade 6, Age 11,
CAMIRA – QLD.*



the swimming pool

I WAS standing there, shivering in the thin lining of my bathers; watching, waiting. I could hear the small ripples of water softly lapping against the walls. I could feel the air, thick with the smell of the chlorine, setting fire to my throat.

Then I realise that my mother had disappeared. Where had she gone? She must have left for a coffee next door. I peer down into the murky depths of the swimming pool, entranced by the difference of it in the night. Who knows what could be lurking in its dark pits; maybe there were monsters of the deep... the unknown.

I start to panic; dark thoughts flood my mind and overwhelm my brain. What if I died drowning, after all I couldn't see anyone around. I gaze back at my reflection, like a shining beacon light against the black water, and for a moment, I think something looks back. I step up to the pool's edge and take in some deep breaths.

How do I know that the water is not an illusion and is actually glass? If it is glass, won't it shatter into a million pieces? If I do dive in and it does shatter, won't I die? My pulse quickens and my breath is in short rasps, so I take a huge breath and take the leap, plunging into the icy cold water. The frigid water was suddenly surrounding me, like one army in a war would do to the other.

Something suddenly jerks me underwater as I struggle to remain afloat. Down I go like a sinking ship, into the core of the pool. I look downwards with blurred eyesight, kicking and thrashing in the meanwhile. Nothing, there was nothing dragging me down to the belly of the monster. I need oxygen, my lungs were screaming for air and I was almost bursting out with a need to reach the surface. I jerk and thrash the slippery liquid even harder and more frantically than ever.

I must have managed to slip away from the grasp of the Thing, because the next thing I recall is coughing the revolting chlorine-filled water out of my oxygen-deprived lungs and replacing it with fresh, pure oxygen.

As soon as I recover, I see a familiar figure running toward me. My mother has come back to pick me up. I hastily dry myself and change into my clean clothes in the changing room, hoping I am able to leave quicker by rushing. As I leave, I cast a quick glance back towards the pool and I could have sworn that two yellow, beady eyes stared back at me and vanished back into the unknown.

*By Melissa Traeger, Age 13
Academy of Mary Immaculate
FITZROY - VIC.*



Thursday Night

The sun starts to fall and the oval lights turn on.

The air is cold and the clouds are low.

There's children madly throwing lacrosse balls around to each other, dropping the ball at almost every attempt to catch it in their sticks.

Coaches setting up the goals and parents catching up with each other and chatting about all the 'hot gossip' that's been happening since last weekend's match.

Dogs are barking and running around like crazy, chasing balls.

The older boys covered with armour from their kneecaps to their heads, doing drills.

Lacrosse balls are flying everywhere.

It's almost dark as the first star for the night appears, shining onto the field along side the moon.

Cars pull up and more kids go to the separate groups and teams.

House lights flicker on, stars doing the same.

the clouds start to fade into a clear night.

Screams, yells, laughs, cries, voices.

Radio blaring out sound.

It's a Thursday night at the Surrey Park lacrosse ground.

*By Brooke Mounsey
Year 9, Vermont Secondary College
VERMONT - VIC.
Teacher: Karen Toomey*

Whalestorm

CAPTAIN Maloney didn't like it.

He had woken to a red but cloudy dawn, which usually heralded a storm. Worse, he had woken with a pounding headache and a hangover, which was never a good sign either. *The Cassandra* had weathered many of the sea's tantrums, but Captain Maloney felt a tingle in his beard that always signalled doom.

Captain Maloney grunted and inserted the blunt end of his nib pen into his temple. It was bit paranoid of him, he reasoned, to worry.

It was then that Captain Maloney noticed something odd.

The Askov Narrows led over the Schaeda Sea from the southern coast of the Roundhouse Headland to the Ragoff Peninsula on the land of Paln. The Narrows at this time of year should have been turbulent. But Maloney felt no slight rocking under his feet. It was deadly calm.

The Captain jumped up, knocking his inkpot to the ground. He rushed out onto the deck and found all of his crew hanging over the rail of the ship.

He joined them at the rail, scanning the sea. The water, calm and cheerfully blue, was so still that a tuna-bearing albatross was perfectly reflected in it. On the eastern horizon was a mass of grey clouds. In the centre of them was a black dot – growing bigger by the second. It was the eye of a massive storm.

The Captain knew what that dot meant, and so did every other member of the ship's crew.

"Cap'n", growled the second mate, breaking the silence, "there's one heck of a storm coming, and we'd better do something fast".

Captain Maloney snapped out of his trance. "Jones! rig up! Smith, get out the lifeboats – you people, caulk the poop deck – deckhand, turn the flag upside down!"

"Never thought I'd hear you say that, Cap'n", remarked the first mate. "You're a proud man."

"I know what a thrasher this tempest is going to be, now steer for your life", snapped the Captain.

It only took the crew a few minutes to carry out their Captain's orders. But by then, the storm was upon them.

The sky could only be described as black. The clouds rolled and thundered, and reflected their darkness into the pitching sea. Lightning made jagged rifts in the sky.

"Bosun!" he cried. "Throw down the lifeboats!"

In no time at all, the whole crew was shivering in the boats. The Captain led them. But then the wave swamped them. It was massive, taller than the ship. The Captain suddenly found himself in the water.

Maloney had no clear memory of the following hour or so. It seemed that it was nothing but an endless struggle with the sea – a battle to survive. But his strength finally failed him, and he surrendered to the sea.

His thoughts got hazier as he sank. He was going down – down, to 'full fathom five', where his father did indeed lie, and he would turn into a rich, strange thing of coral and pearls – he would lie in the only place where he truly felt free, the place he loved.

He heard a sound, a haunting, echoing sound, deep yet quite clear – a little like a bugle, but with more expression and tone – whalesong.

He didn't need to open his eyes. Though he was almost unconscious and he needed air, he knew what the whales were saying.

Be still. The Master is giving you a second chance.

So he obeyed.

★ ★ ★

His body felt warm and a little wet, but comfortable. He was dead – he knew.

I wonder what Heaven looks like, he thought. He opened his eyes.

He was on a beach – golden sand cushioned his body. He was facing the sea, which was a crystalline blue-green, like a rare sea jewel. The western horizon was blazing in glory – like a foaming aquamarine basin cupping a brew of fire and light.

Captain Maloney stood up, and walked towards a new beginning.

*By Jessica Jinhan Zhang, Age 11,
Matthew Pearce Public School
BAULKHAM HILLS – NSW*



Little Words

NOBODY in Kiltania could remember when the first book was written or who wrote it but there it was leaning on that old dusty bookshelf. Its ripped pages blew in the wind, its square-shaped figure just sat there watching people walk up and down the corridors, casting a long dark shadow across the other stories, across the book itself.

On a stormy winter's day, on the first of July 1872, two girls by the names of Emily and Rachel were sitting in the library reading quietly. Emily, being the older of the two, was looking at books for her mother while Rachel researched some old fiction books. As she was looking at the books, she found a dusty old book with no name. "This is a strange book", she said to herself. Anyhow she picked up the old book and flipped through the pages. There was nothing, absolutely nothing on any of the pages, except for the last page: there it was, tiny as ever, a sentence. It was so small Rachel couldn't read it.

As she quietly slipped the book into her book bag, her sister called out for her. "It's time to go, Rachel", Emily said very quietly, but Rachel was nowhere to be seen. "Rachel, stop playing games, it is time to go", Emily said in a quivering voice. Rachel couldn't understand; she was right in front of her. Rachel called out to Emily, but Emily didn't hear.

After a few moments of silence Rachel decided to put the book back on the shelf. As soon as she did that, Emily exclaimed, "There you are, where have you been?". Just as Rachel was about to explain, Emily cut her off. "Anyway it's time to go!" she said in a hurried voice.

Rachel decided not to take the dusty book. "I'll come back tomorrow", she said under her breath.

The next day she went back to the library and went straight to the strange old book. There it was, covered in cobwebs, which was strange because yesterday Rachel had dusted it off. She carefully took it off the shelf and put it on the table; she opened it up and started to write.

By the end of the day she had written on every page. It was getting late so she decided to go home.

She placed the book carefully back on the shelf and hurried off home.

The very next morning she went straight to the library. She was going to look at the book every day. She sat at the old rusty desk and opened the book. It was gone. All the writing was gone! Except for that last page. There it was, that little sentence reading: "Tomorrow I will write again".

*By Meg Grealy, Year 7
Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School
TERRANORA - NSW
Teacher: Mrs. Makepeace*

I Love Christmas

I love Christmas,
Tinsel on houses,
decorated trees,
a mad rush for presents,
I love Christmas!

I love Christmas,
Roast turkey, chicken wings,
Ice-cream cake,
Families getting together,
I love Christmas!

I love Christmas,
Carols echoing around the world,
No grumpy faces,
all smiling with excitement,
I love Christmas!



*By Holly Haines
Year 4, Lauriston Girls' School
ARMADALE - VIC.
Teacher: Miss Edmonds*

Wretched Rapture

I found euphoric white doe, and dove
Cupid and cherub so, wretched in their rapturous love
Cerebral, callous to act from above; I sought her
Duped as love led hearts like lambs to slaughter
Truth belied grasping love akin to caressing water
Beauty's shine shamed heavens light away
For hers; mine own heart from angels stray'd
Though shining light, hid boon and hellish flay
Hapless eyes led hopeless heart to fall where true devils lay
Lies enthralled eyes of lambs, who no prayer to sent to save
Would-be righteous winds of change that would blow false light away
No more than a breeze whispered from the distance calling her name
Weapons reeking weeping lay arrayed
In bloom, fine tuned
Well strung; I'm swooned
New found want to waste on unrequited dooms
Whose very ends wholly doomed before their starts
Of gentle lies that harshly lie on broken hearts
Though to only grip shadows strewn
Of things once faintly possessed, from you
To force haunting sounds aged, anew
Cries denied truths, be confessed
To you

Hearts keep aching for
Long after love
Of life is no more



*By Sam Hickey
Year 11, South Grafton High School
SOUTH GRAFTON - NSW
Teacher: Ron Hunt*

The Final Movement

No one was allowed in.

I told them that he was working on a new piece and didn't want anyone to hear it until he was done. But I didn't know what he was doing.

He keeps the doors shut except when he needs me to clear the room of scrunched up paper or bring him more paper. On these occasions he stands watching silently until I had finished, then he would shut the door. That was how we spent the day.

I used to think about getting him to talk, but I know the reason I was not shut out like everybody else was because I don't ask questions.

"You're too simple, Rueben. Think about what the composer heard, not what you see on the paper", he said.

One evening I was practising in my room when I heard the crashes and bangs quieten down the hall. I hurried to his door and he gestured me to come through. He sat down at the piano.

He started with a sad, sweet theme I had heard for a good few hours four days ago. It continued, rising and falling and then he was raging with it in the bass. It abruptly changed to what would have been a pleasant melody but he leaned in closer to the keys and played with angry, syncopated accents then with louder, shriller accents, like screaming. Before he shut everybody out and was still teaching, he shouted whenever I used force with the piano.

"Are you trying to play the piano?" he had demanded, "Or are you trying to destroy it?"

I didn't know what to do. The piano was screaming. He was smashing the strings. When he finished, he turned to face me for the first time.

"*Ist es nicht schön?*" he said loudly. Is it not beautiful?

I didn't answer.

"I'm leaving. You know what to do with these. Copy and publish."

He looked at me, as if daring me to speak, to ask him why he was leaving and where he was going. But I only nodded and took the sheets from him. He seemed to struggle for a moment, then clapped me on the shoulder and walked out.

I did what he told me to do. I sat in my room and tried to decipher his notes and indications, neatly copying it onto new lined paper. I picked through the screaming and the anger and tried to make it like how his music was before.

Two weeks later his brother arrived, storming into his room. I hurried to it and the moment I stepped in, a sheaf of paper was shoved in my face. The title read *Heiligenstadt Testament*.

"He sent me his will!"

I regarded him silently.

"Is he not here?"

I shook my head.

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know."

I took the sheaf of paper, looked through it and my eye caught a passage, *I was compelled early to isolate myself, to live in loneliness... and yet it was impossible for me to say to men, "Speak louder, shout, for I am deaf"*.

After his brother left, I returned to my room. Think about what the composer heard. I threw away the copy I had neatly written and laid in front of me new blank sheets.

I wrote in his notes, his chords. I wrote in the *forte* and the accents and the screaming. When I finished, I wrote in the top right hand corner, 'Ludwig von Beethoven, 1802.'

And it was the music that he never heard.

By Joanne Bui

Aged 15

The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School
MELBOURNE - VIC.

The World Might Be Different

The World Might Be Different?
What If

Religion didn't matter and we did not judge others
Because of their beliefs
The world might be different
There may be less hatred
And less terrorism
There would be less war
And less killing
There may be fewer assumptions about others
And not such a big divide between cultures

What If

People could accept other religious beliefs
The world might be different
There may be more peace
And open-mindedness
There would be more religious acceptance
And less persecution
The world might be a fairer
And more tolerant place

What If

Modern man believed in humanity
And not the many faces of God
The world might be different
Then all the peoples of the world
Could accept each other's beliefs
And be united
Living in respect and harmony

What If...

By Sam Loughlin
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE - SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

Same Race Same Face

Tears trickle down my cheeks
Fists balled up at my sides
I don't understand why
Black skin, white skin, green or blue
We are still the same race
We still have the same face.
I know I look different
But they will never understand that
We are still the same race
We still have the same face.

By Katerina Frangos
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE - SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

VENOM

Venom

Discrimination is like a snake
Its fangs are poisoned, prepossessed,
Inflicting the pain.
Discrimination sucks all warmth and hope
And returns with new hate,
Savouring its induced agony
No thought of delay.
But hey,
Discrimination's the new norm
Iron clad and stony
Square without feelings
Like the bars
Across the window frames,
In Guantanamo.

Why are we so obsessed with White Purity?

By Tyrrell Chase
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE - SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



इंदर वंद्युइ

DAY 1 – January 1st

The city is preparing for the marriage of Ranji and Lady Sari.

Ranji is my older brother. He is 4 years older than me. I am 17 and he is 21.

Our father chose Lady Sari for him and my father will have to choose someone for me when I turn 18 and we will get married when I am 20.

It is really lucky for Ranji because he loves Sari. I hope I will be lucky too and don't have to marry someone I don't love.

In our house we all have to wear stupid clothes. I am wearing a purple top and puffy pants. I hate it!

DAY 2 – January 2nd

I thought you might want to know more about me. My name is Dashdi. I live in Mumbai, India. My father is a ruler. He gave me this diary for Christmas and I wanted to start writing on the 1st of January.

I love the city. It smells like a mix of perfume, spices, ox dung and people. But it is always noisy.

My brother is getting married tomorrow and that means he will be leaving the city to live in Chennai where his new wife's family lives.

I will miss him so much. He is my best friend. It won't be any fun without him. We used to play together in the house and it was always so much fun. But it did not last long, for we grew up!

DAY 3 – January 3rd

Today is the wedding! I am excited but sad at the same time. I can't write now.

Later:

I decided to go for a walk to clear my head. I took you, diary and an ink bottle so I could sit under a tree and write. I knew I had to be back in plenty of time for the wedding. I searched for the right tree to sit under and wrote.

Then, after writing, I got up and looked around. But I had forgotten which way I had come. The trees around me seemed to close in on me. I sat there for hours, thinking about which way to go. I knew I had missed the wedding!

All of a sudden, the sun left the trees and it was dark. I began to feel terrified. Then my eyes adjusted to the dark and I began to

calm down. But then I heard the cry of a wolf and felt terrified again.

I ran and ran as fast as I could. I was looking behind me then I looked in front of me and, out of the blue, something appeared, jumped straight from the sky. I crashed into it and everything went black.

When I awoke I was in this cave with a cow-skin blanket over me. I think it has only been a couple of hours but I am shocked and don't know what has happened. But high on a cliff in this cave, I feel safe enough.

But what I am going to do about food? And how will I get back to my family? And what was it that jumped out at me? Did it put me here? And if so, will it come back?

DAY 4 – January 4th

This morning I awoke, starving. I knew wolves did not come out in daylight so I ventured out in search of food. I made sure I was in sight of the cliff at all times.

After walking for a while, I found a blackberry bush covered in fruit. The berries were delicious, so juicy and felt like they melted in my mouth. I collected a supply – enough to last for a few days – but I hoped I would not need them.

It is getting late so I will call it a day.

DAY 5 – January 5th

It is so exciting and scary at the same time; I have to write this down!

This morning I went out to look for more food when I heard talking in the distance. I hid behind a bush in case it was dangerous.

Three people walked by. They weren't from the city. One of them was saying something about me:

"Two days ago, near here, I heard a wolf. I jumped down from the tree I was sitting in and there in front of me was a beautiful young lady". I blushed at that.

"She must have been from the city", said another.

"She was terrified" said the first man. "She hit me and knocked herself unconscious. I fell back and only just in time, grabbed my bow and arrows and shot the wolf. I carried the lady to a cave on the cliff where she could be safe and ran home with

June 2008

जेठ/असार २०६५

Oz Kids in Print

SUNDAY

1 १९

8 २६

15 ३

MONDAY

2 २०

9 २७

16 ३

TUESDAY

3 ३१

10 ७

17 १४

इएचएन वॉयज़ (cont'd.)

the wolf so we could skin it. I took a cow-skin blanket to the lady and left her there."

"Did she see you? Is our secret safe?" said the man that had been quiet until now.

"I think our secret will be safer with her. She is too beautiful to give us away" said the first man.

But then they were too far ahead for me to hear any more discussion. What is their secret I wonder?

Later:

Were these men I had heard, good or bad? Could I trust them?

I thought that because they were not from the city, they must have their own village out here. So I went to find them.

On the way I saw the first man again. I tried to hide. But he saw me and called out.

"Don't run, I am coming to bring food to you".

That made me think he was a good man. After all he had rescued me from the wolf.

His name is Jehan and he is 19.

He said he was on his way to see me and bring me food. He opened a bag and it was full of the most wonderful meal I had ever tasted. He took me to his village and I ate on the way. It was a long walk.

On the way, I asked him if he knew the way to the city.

"Yes" he said. But it is noisy, smelly and unsafe".

"That's true", I said.

He told me that he had been born in the city but he and his two brothers, four sisters, mother and father all came here, stumbling on the village. They had never left.

Jehan is nice, strong, brave and handsome. I like him and I hope he likes me too!

Then we came to a tree and he said "Here we are".

I did not see any village and did not believe him.

Then a rope ladder came down from the tree. I must have had an open mouth as he said, in a fun sort of way, "Keep your mouth closed or you will swallow a fly".

We went up the ladder. There were houses and everything.

I fell in love with the place as soon as I saw it. Jehan took me to a house and showed me inside.

"Here is your room", he said.

I thanked him and he left.

I saw him later at dinner. The village is small but homey, that's why I like it with everything you need.

We had a feast for dinner. I had forgotten how tasty good food was. My mouth watered at the table.

After dinner, Jehan introduced me to everyone (there are not that many people up there). I told them all how I had become lost in the forest and saw Jehan jump out of a tree but didn't know what it was.

There was one lady who was particularly nice to me. Her name is Ewaso. She had been born in the trees and never seen the city. But she would like to. I said that when I went back she could come and stay with me.

Ewaso showed me some of her clothes and said that some might fit me while the clothes I had been wearing for three days were being washed. I chose a tiger skin dress. It is the most comfortable thing I have ever worn.

DAY 6 – January 6th

They are taking me home today!

Ewaso gave me an antelope top and skirt. I thanked her very much. Before we left Jehan said he didn't want me to go; he wants me to stay and marry him. I said I had to go. Ewaso came with me and Jehan to the city. On the way Jehan and Ewaso told me not to tell anyone where they lived, unless it was someone who could keep their secret. I promised. Jehan said goodbye at the gates and gave me a kiss on the cheek. I blushed and I said I would visit. Ewaso decided to stay with me for the night.

She is now my best friend, besides Ranji. When we entered the city, everyone was cheering and clapping – they were happy

Cont'd...



इएरएन वऱयुइ (cont'd.)

to see me alive and well, as I had been missing for four days. No doubt they thought that I was dead.

When I got home I asked Lusima, a maid, if she knew where my father was. She said he was in his study. I entered and my father was talking with a young man. When he saw me he ran over and gave me a big hug. He began to cry. When he had settled down he said "I was just telling Seapo that you will not be betrothed to him as I had planned".

I could not help it and shouted, "Betrothed! No! I don't even know him!".

I left the room and Ewaso followed behind. I went to my room and sat on my bed and cried. After crying for a while I apologised to my guest.

"That's all right" she said, "I am sorry for you".

"Thanks", I said in between snuffles.

We were quiet for a while.

"I should show you around", I said.

But before she could answer there was a knock on the door.

In came Ranji and Lady Sari.

"I thought you would have left", I said.

"No", said Ranji.

"We aren't even married yet – we have been waiting for you to come home safely first", said Lad Sari

"Did the soldiers find you?", asked Ranji.

"No", I said. "Ewaso brought me back".

"Who is Ewaso?", Ranji said, not noticing her sitting on a chair.

"She is my friend", I said, pointing to Ewaso.

Ranji and Lady Sari went over and thanked her.

Then, I gave Ewaso a tour of my home and we celebrated my return with a feast.

Later:

It is midnight. I can't sleep. It is so noisy in the city. I miss the quietness of the tree village. And I miss Jehan. I realise that I love him and he loves me to but it is not to be. I will have to marry Seapo.

DAY 7 – January 7th

Today Ranji and Lady Sari were married. I am so happy for them. They left after the wedding feast.

I will miss Ranji.

Ewaso was there too. She enjoyed herself. I avoided talking with my father and made sure I did not catch his eye. When Ewaso and I went to my room, I sat on my bed. There was a knock at the door and in barged my father. I turned my head away. He came and sat next to me.

"I felt as if I had lost everything when you went missing", he said. "I don't want to lose you again – so to help you feel found, I have decided to let you choose your own future".

I started to cry with happiness.

"If you would like to marry Seapo and fulfill your destiny as a ruler's wife you may. Or you can make your own decision and find someone else. I have changed the law. No longer will a father choose the future for his daughter. I tried to tell you at the feast but you were avoiding me", he said.

I cried even harder. My father gave me a hug.

When I had settled down I said "I want to go and live in the trees with Jehan".

"Live in the trees? This is something new" he said. "We have to tell the world".

"No" I shouted. "Don't tell anyone, it is a secret, special place."

So I am writing this now in the trees. Jehan and I will be betrothed in a year and will marry when I am 20.

★ ★ ★

This is only a little of my diary but it is my favourite 7 days.

*By Kate Lewis
Year 5, Age 12
Home schooled
SURF BEACH – NSW*

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from
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Impress

If I were a Queen,
Royal and grand,
I'd eat plums
(Sugar coated)
And rule over the land.
I'd impress all the people
With my diamonds and jewels
and my 56 freshwater,
Gold swimming pools.

If I were a celebrity,
Skinny and tall,
I'd be on celery stick diets
Or eat nothing at all.
I'd impress all the people,
With my tiny tum,
My swizzle stick arms
And my wee little bum.

But if I were just me,
Determined and strong,
I'd achieve lots of my dreams
Before very long.
I'd impress myself,
Knowing what I could do.
I don't need to impress all the people,
Do you?



*By Sarah Merry
Year 9
Mowbray College
(Patterson Campus)
MELTON - VIC.*

HALLOWEEN NIGHT

THERE was a loud knock on the front door.

"I'll get it", I cried.

I lived in a two storey townhouse with the front door being down a long, narrow hallway. I ran along the hallway to the front door.

"Hello, do you have any children who won't eat their vegetables?" asked the figure at the front door.

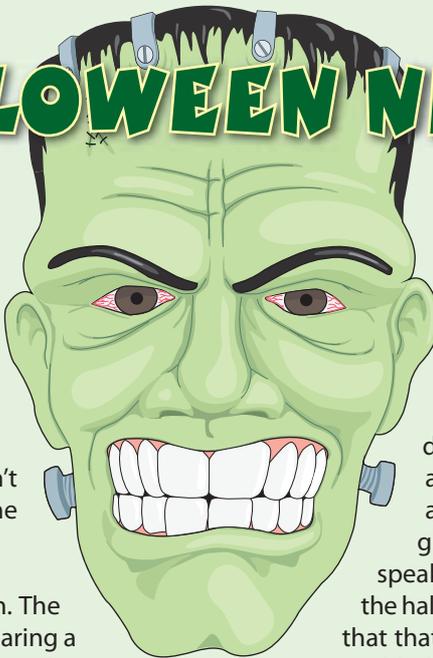
I screamed, I gasped. My mouth hung open. The man at the door was 7 FEET TALL! He was wearing a buttoned up long, black coat and his shoes must have been at least a size 20. They were huge! But the most terrible thing of all was that I recognised his face. It was a face I could never forget. His face had appeared in many horror books that I had read whilst lying in bed on some cold, wintry nights. It was a face that I had also seen in several horror movies back when I was about 9 years of age.

"Frankenstein's Monster", I screamed!

I dashed down the hallway. I swung around my bedroom doorframe like I was a brand new door with heaps of lubricant smothered over it! Then I slammed my door shut like greased lighting!! I crouched down low breathing as quietly as I could. Thump, thump, thump. I could hear Frankenstein thumping down the hallway.

"Hur, hur, hur, I can smell you!" he laughed.

Suddenly he burst the door open but I didn't dare move because I was frozen with terror. He was pulling his head off! I looked on in disgust as his brains fell out but they didn't look like brains. I looked closer. CANDY! Candy was falling out of his head.



"I guess you forgot it was Halloween", he laughed.

"Dad", I cried.

I ran over to him and hugged him so tightly and then we both burst out laughing. Suddenly there was a loud knock on the front door... 'Who could that be?' I thought. My Dad and I both rushed back down the hallway and we opened the front door. "Hello..." the guy at the door didn't get a chance to finish speaking. We both screamed and dashed back up the hallway as soon as we saw his face. "Don't tell me that that's the real Frankenstein", I whispered, as we scrambled underneath the kitchen table to a secluded spot. Thump, thump, thump! I could hear him coming up the hallway. I could feel my heart beating faster than a cheetah being chased by a Formula One turbo charged racing car. From my secluded spot underneath the table I saw him enter the kitchen. "Move", I hushed to my Dad.

We backed into the bathroom and after what seemed like an hour of hiding, he finally left.

"Oh Dad", I laughed.

"Do you want to know something funny? Today is Halloween."

Then suddenly there was a loud knock on the door. Dad and I looked at each other.

"Uh, oh", Dad said... "Not another Frankenstein Monster?". We both groaned.

*By Matthew Harper-Gomm
Grade 5, Brentwood Park Primary School
BERWICK – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Shanitha Maharaj*

She is the Sea
Her surface is idyllic
But underneath chaos reigns
Treasures are washed up in her wake
But things a thousand times more precious may be lost

Her temper is fierce
Her sorrow inescapable
But her moods give her life
And like the Sea
She would be nothing if she were calm

*By Maxwell Cooper
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann*

Lucy

Ambassadors



☉ **Krista Bell** is an award-winning author of twenty-one books for young readers. Krista has been professionally involved in children's literature for over thirty years, as well as being the mother of three sons, all of whom are good readers and writers! Krista's middle son, Damien, is the illustrator of her junior novels. Having grown up in Sydney, Krista had her own bookshop, was a publicist for a publishing company, then a book reviewer on ABC Radio for fifteen years, and during that time moved to Melbourne with her family.

It was in Melbourne that her first book, *JEZZA*, a picture book illustrated by Kym Lardner, was published in 1991. Krista calls the way she writes FIBTION, because she takes real life experiences, embroiders them with fibs and turns them into stories.

Krista lives with her sons and transport planner husband next to a railway line so she can quickly catch a train to the MCG to watch a football match, or go to the theatre, a concert or the National Gallery in town, or visit South Bank or Federation Square where she can be a professional "stickybeak", collecting story ideas. Visit www.kristabell.com.

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. ➔



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.annaciddor.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

Operation S.O.T.C.

Operation in Search of Tom Cruise

Chapter One: In Search Of Tom Cruise

Hi, my name is Gumball. Well it's not actually Gumball, it's really Charlie. Everybody calls me Gumball though because my face is just as round as one.

I'm trying to find out a way to meet Tom Cruise. Why? Because a few weeks ago when I was bored I started reading Mum's magazines such as "Who", "OK" and other boring celebrity magazines that are NOT for nine year old kids (why else would they be hidden in the broom cupboard?).

I was fascinated by the magazines; after reading them under the bed by torchlight for two weeks I was hooked! When I was reading about short men in Hollywood I found a celebrity called Tom Cruise. Being a short guy myself, this article was riveting! When I looked at the photo of Tom, his nose and his tall, gorgeous wife Katie signing autographs, I realised that I didn't have any signatures from any famous people.

I lay under my bed looking at this photo until my torch batteries died. In the dark and dust, with only a cheesy unwashed sports sock and a musty one-eyed bear for company, I had a brainwave. Tom Cruise was proof that guys like me don't have to be losers. Look at Tom! He's got the fame, the money and the girl!

It was on that day, under my bed, in the dark, that I decided that being a short, round-faced guy called Gumball would be a lot easier to cope with if I had a signature collection from famous short movie stars to give me hope for the future.

But there was one thing between me and those signatures: I live a long, long way from America where all the short celebrities are. And I figured Mum wasn't about to let me fly to the U.S.A. on my own.

So, to get my signature collection started, I had to convince Mum to buy me some stamps so I could write to the Hollywood celebrities asking for their autographs.

Or maybe I could even try to get to America myself!



Oz Kids in Print

Chapter Two. Plan A.

"Mum" I said shyly.

"Yes."

"Well, can I ask you something?"

"Yes" Mum said again.

"You see, I really want to go to America" I said.

"Why in the world would you want to go to America?" asked Mum.

"Ummm... err becau...'" I couldn't say the reason because Mum would find out that I know about Tom Cruise and then she would find out that I had been reading her magazines and you don't even want to know what THAT would lead to. "Um... no reason" I said.

"Well, then, no." There was absolutely no doubt she was going to say that. And she refused to buy me any stamps. So then I moved on to plan B: try and find out a way to get to America on my own.

Chapter Three. Plan B.

First thing I had to do was ring up my friend Rufus. He was a pretty dorky friend but he was my best friend. I heard his phone pick up but all I could hear was heavy breathing.

"Hello" I said.

"Yes, this is Master 831787" was the reply from someone with an old, creaky voice.

"What the hell is that?" I asked.

"Oh, sorry Gumball, it's just my *World of Warcraft* name" said Rufus using his normal voice.

"Right" I say very awkwardly. "So, Rufus, are you busy?"

"Um... er no."

"Can I come over then?"

A short time later I arrived at Rufus's house. He was still wearing his Dragon Master outfit made out of an old towel for a cape and his helmet was a colander from the kitchen cupboard. Usually when I visit Rufus we play video games for about five hours. But this time I had something even BETTER up my sleeve.

Operation S.O.T.C. Operation in Search of Tom Cruise (Cont'd.)

Chapter Four. The Idea.

"Rufus, you look cool!" I said, hoping my compliment would put him in the mood to buy my idea. "Hey, I was thinking that we could build a super-galactic ultra super-duper extra, extra, extra strong super giant slingshot!"

"Well, firstly, that sounds awesome! But secondly, can you please tell me why you want to build it?"

I didn't know what to say because Rufus is a big dibber-dobber when you tell him the slightest secret. As we walked to his Dad's garage I thought of something. 'Ummm... homework'.

"Sure" said Rufus and he opened the garage door.

Rufus has a huge garage, and when I say huge I mean HUGE. His Dad has every building tool imaginable. Rufus is banned from going in there.

We got straight to work. First we made a four metre long rubber band out of two hundred stretched bits of bubble-gum glued together. It smelled great - blueberry cheesecake! Then we got out the power drill and several long pieces of wood, a saw and some super, extra, ultimate really strong glue, *the best glue in the world* (it actually was the best glue in the world; I told you his dad has the best stuff).

We worked for hours. "How's that slingshot going?" I asked Rufus, lifting my head up from the *MAD* magazine I'd found on the workbench. It was getting late and I was thinking about my warm beanbag and the X-box remote.

"Great" Rufus mumbled through a mouthful of nails "I just need to... OOOOOOWWWWWWWCCCCCHHHH!!!!!!!!!" That was the loudest yelp I had EVER heard from Rufus. In fact it was so loud that it hurt my eardrums! Then I remembered Rufus has a serious wood allergy and he had just got a massive splinter in his thumb! He was sweating and shaking and was as pale as a ghost. I tried to help him but it was no good. As his breathing got wheezy I backed out of the garage and ran off, hoping his Dad would hear the screams and come to investigate. So much for Plan B.

Chapter Five. America Here I Come!

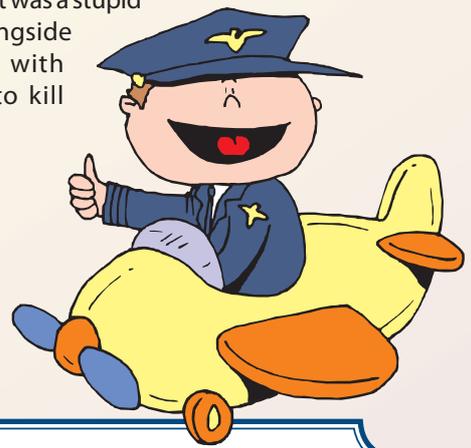
There was nothing else to do. I threw myself into my beanbag and kicked the X-Box remote under the TV. There was no way I was going to get to America. Mum wouldn't buy me a ticket and my human slingshot idea had failed. I was going to be nerdy old Gumball, the short loser with the round head, forever.

Then I heard Mum call out from the kitchen. "Hey, Gumball, I had a good think about that America thing and I got a ticket for you! But you'd better pack your bags; the flight is leaving in a couple of hours."

"Thanks soooo much!!!" Mum was great; I didn't know what else to say so I gave her a huge hug. I threw a few things in my backpack, got the ticket and was ready to go. Mum and I hopped in the car and drove to the airport. Or so I thought. We really only drove around the block and home again.

"What's going on?" I asked Mum. Mum shoved the plane ticket under my nose. I looked at it and realized it was a fake. MUM HAD DRAWN THE TICKET WITH CRAYON!!! I was really gutted. In fact I was so gutted my face turned purple with rage. "Here's your plane" said Mum. She pointed to the garage; the automatic door opened and behind it was a stupid blow-up aeroplane. Alongside me was Mum cackling with laughter. I was going to kill her!

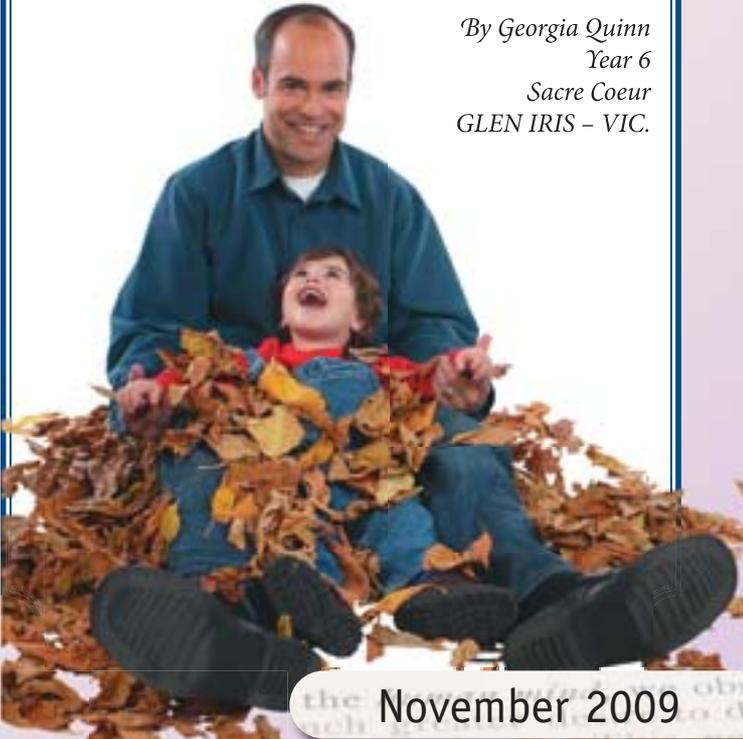
*By James Waters
Year 4
Caulfield Grammar School
- Malvern Campus
GLEN IRIS - VIC.*



DAD

Dad is the rock in the house and is as solid as ice.
Dad is a brawny gladiator in an old Roman colosseum.
Dad is a ray of sunshine in the early, summer morning.
Dad is a walking encyclopaedia,
Dad is a librarian that knows every book on the shelf.
Dad is a mega box of chocolate Tim Tams.
Dad is a loving teddy bear that
puts a smile on my face every time I see him.

*By Georgia Quinn
Year 6
Sacre Coeur
GLEN IRIS - VIC.*



Writing short stories is NOT easy!

By author and illustrator Anna Ciddor

Once upon a time there lived a little girl called Dina. She was four years old. She lived in a house with her mother and father. She had three toys: a teddy, a golliwog and a doll. She loved them all. She always went to bed early and her dolls could play.

One night she couldn't sleep. She heard a noise. She wondered what it was. She went to see. It was her dolls. The dolls let her play with them. When the morning came she still played with them so she had new friends.

The end.

The author aged 4 with her teddy and doll

THIS is my first short story, written at the age of seven (I have corrected the spelling and punctuation so that it makes sense).

I was very proud of this story when I wrote it, and it is only now, many years later, and working as a professional writer, that I can see its faults!

A few months ago I was asked to contribute a short story for an anthology. Nowadays, I normally write novels rather than short stories, but I thought, 'Why not? I used to write short stories all the time when I was little. Short stories are easy. This won't take long.'

Well, how wrong I was! I quickly discovered that writing a good short story is not easy at all. Now that I'm a professional writer, I know that it is not enough to just tell the basic storyline the way I did when I was seven years old. I have learnt to paint word pictures so the reader can see the characters and the scene. Now I know I need to create suspense, and drama, and emotion... and so many other things. But when I tried to write a short story, I found myself struggling to include all of this within the limited word length. With a novel, I am accustomed to having the luxury of using as many words as I like, but I couldn't do this with a short story.

Eventually, I worked out a few tools to help me manage the short story, and I thought you might find these useful.

Here they are:

Take out unnecessary information

In my short story above, the reader doesn't need to know Dina lives in a house with her mother and father, or that she goes to bed early. The story could plunge right in to describing Dina in bed, hearing a strange noise.

Put in words to describe the scene and the mood

We have no idea what Dina, her toys, or her room look like. We don't know what kind of noise she hears. We don't know what games they play together. All this information needs to be put in so the reader can imagine the scene.

However, be miserly and careful with the words you put in

To build a picture of Teddy for a novel I might use a passage like this:

Teddy was so old he was almost bald. He had big brown stitches across his tummy where Mummy had cut him open to put in fresh stuffing, and somewhere over the years, he had lost an arm. But Dina still loved him.

This is interesting, however it uses 42 words, tells us history we don't need to know, and doesn't contribute to the main plot. So, for a short story, I would probably use a passage like this:

Writing short stories is NOT easy! *By Anna Ciddor*

Dina heard a clattering noise. She opened one eye, and nearly cried out in astonishment. Her funny old teddy was trying to stack up the blocks, using his one arm.

These 30 carefully chosen words reveal the type of noise Dina hears, and something about the plot, as well as something about Teddy.

Use a Thesaurus

This will help you find the best possible words that will work hard to contribute something to your story.

Keep the plot simple

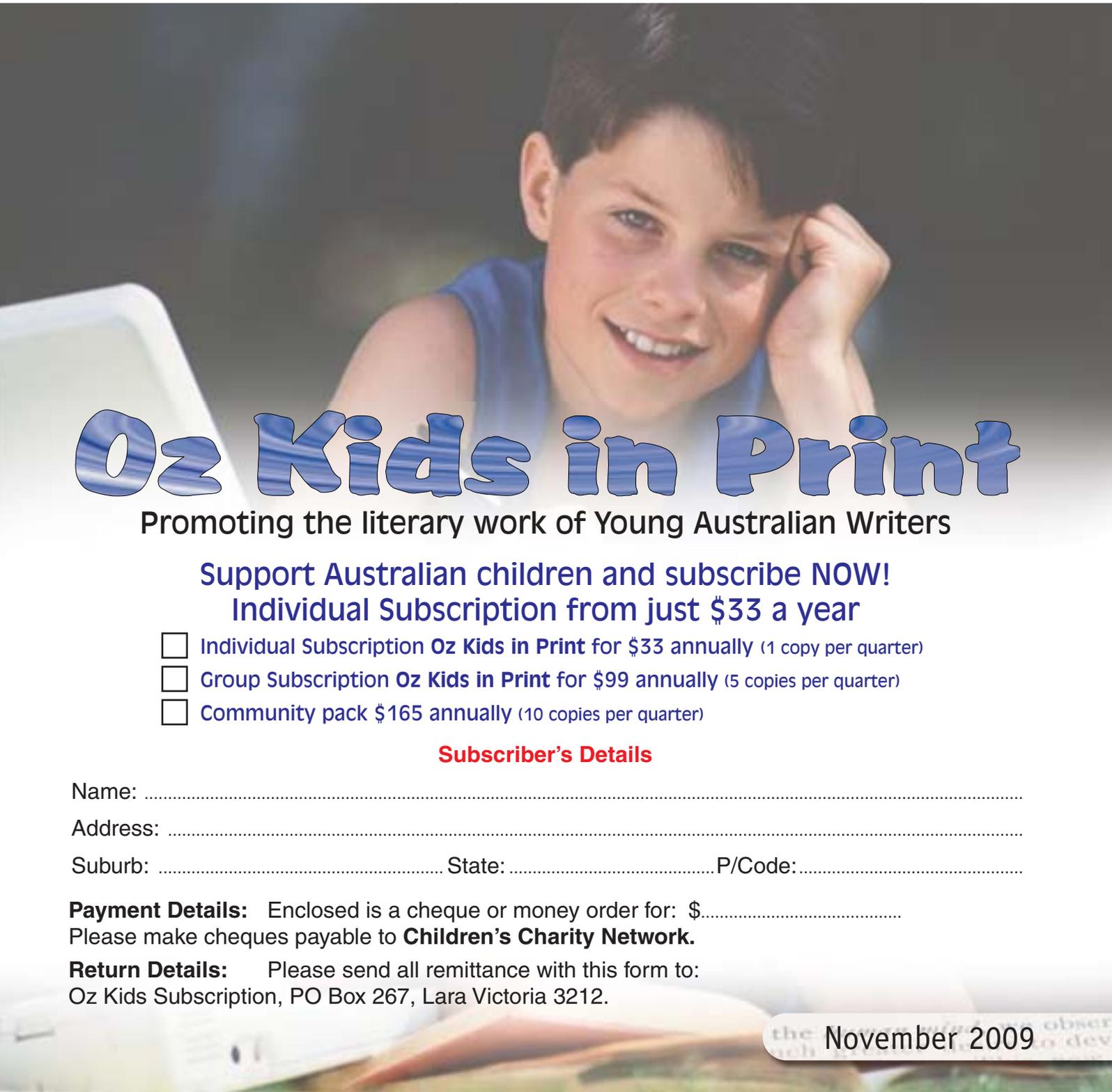
At least I did that right when I was seven!

One of the questions students often ask me when I visit schools is 'How do you think of enough words to fill a whole long novel?' Well, as you can see, writing a novel can almost be easier than writing a short story. I hope these tricks I've learnt for short-story writing will come in handy for you too.

★ ★ ★

Anna Ciddor's short story, 'Kidnapped', will appear in *Picture This!* Volume 1, published by Pearson Education in November.

To find out more about Anna Ciddor's books, you can visit www.annaciddor.com.



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In the Woods

THE UGLY black creature swung, its muscular arm missing by centimetres as the boy ducked under what would have been a devastating blow. He darted to the side, as the creature swung again, slicing a tree neatly in two. That was his chance. The boy made a break for it, darting through the trees and keeping to the shadows so the creature wouldn't see him. And then he tripped. He got up, as the creature crept even closer. He backed away, only to feel something firm behind his back. He turned around to see the base of a huge mountain rising in front of him. As he turned back, a bone-crushing punch connected with his face. And then everything went black.

The boy awoke, sitting in front of a fire, to see two kids. One was a boy, and one was a girl. The girl was tending to the fire, and the boy was sitting on a log. "Look who's awake!" shouted the boy.

"Finally", said the girl, with a sigh of relief. "Do you remember who you are?" she added.

"I know that my name is Nick, I'm ten years old and you are Jason and Julie, my best friends. But how did we get here?"

Jason was the first to answer "Well, what happened was that you came to my house, Julie came over, we went for a bike ride and found a cave in the woods. We went in, and found this place. Then we met Kanook, and that black thing showed up. We managed to get rid of it, but you were knocked out".

"Who's Kanook?" asked Nick, with a puzzled look on his face.

"That's me!" shouted a small, murky green creature, entering the clearing.

"What are you?" asked Nick.

"I'm a goblin", answered Kanook.

"Kanook, what was that thing?" queried Jason.

"They are Glithia's... minions. She uses them to find treasure and magical objects. We were attacked because of this." he opened his hands, showing a grey stone. It had a small marking in the middle, which was two interlocked circles with a line down the middle. It was glowing a faint blue. The sun was beginning to set. "I think we must rest", said Kanook. They lay down by a tree bearing strange looking fruit, and almost immediately fell sleep.

Nick awoke to hear Kanook screaming, only to see him being carried off by two of Glithia's minions. He woke Jason and Julie, and they chased after them. Creatures that they didn't know the names of called out, but they didn't stop. Glithia's minions moved extremely fast for their build, for they had big, bulging bellies.

"What's Glithia?" asked Nick.

"She's an evil dragon. Kanook filled us in while you were out cold", said Julie. They came to an abrupt stop. A gigantic cave was in front of them.

"I think we should go in", said Nick.

The cave was dark, and smelled of mould. Eventually, they lost sight of Glithia's minions. Suddenly, there was a prick of light at the end of the tunnel. And then they saw it. The tunnel opened into a vast cavern that was filled with treasure. In the middle of it was Glithia. Her whole body was completely black, including her horns. Then Nick spied Kanook. He was in a cage being carried by two of Glithia's minions. They were taking him to her. One was holding the stone. Its glow was extremely strong. Suddenly, the walls shook vigorously. The wall opposite them collapsed. And emerging from the rubble, was a golden dragon.

Glithia spoke, "Ah, my brother Galdian. What a pleasant surprise!"

"I have not come to chat. I am here to rid this land of you", shouted Galdian.

"Have it your way. Attack!" she boomed. Her creatures charged at Galdian. Kanook's cage dropped to the ground, shattering to pieces. He quickly got to his feet and ran off.

Glithia and Galdian launched themselves upward, engaging in midair combat. Nick, Jason and Julie chased after Kanook, each grabbing a sword from the treasure hoard. They reached Kanook, and hid behind a small mound of treasure. Glithia lunged at Galdian, and he flew to the side, tearing a chunk out of her wing. She charged again, sinking her claws into his neck as he clawed at her stomach, doing a great deal of damage. Now they were in freefall. Glithia hit the ground with a humongous thud, squashing her minions as she went down. The force of the impact drove Galdian's claws further into her stomach. Galdian stood up and let out a jet of fire. The hilt of a sword was protruding from Glithia's skull. Julie, Jason and Kanook rushed over to Galdian, while Nick walked over to Glithia. Without warning, Glithia jumped into the air. Not knowing what he was doing, Nick grabbed for her spine and climbed up to her head. He grabbed the hilt, and pushed. As Glithia hit the ground, the cave started to collapse. Galdian motioned for them to climb onto his back, and they did just that. They flew through the exit that he had recently created, just in time to see the cave collapse behind them.

Galdian set them down on safe ground, and flew off knowing that his land was safe. The three friends looked at Kanook, knowing they would have to say goodbye. With that, they ventured off for home, tired and exhausted.



*By Kobie Taylor, Age 10,
Newborough East Primary School
NEWBOROUGH - VIC.*

Frei the Siberian Wolf



SILENCE fills the room as I sit, hands clenched into fists, on my bed, my younger cousin, Jevva, frozen beside me. Both our eyes are fixed on a big, blue box on the opposite side of the room, almost completely submerged in a mess of dirty clothes and toys.

The lid of the box is slightly open to reveal two silver eyes narrowed in my direction. Every now and then, the box will shudder slightly, making me jump in fright and my heartbeat like the wings of a bird in flight. If I move a muscle, a faint growl will come from the box.

"Vlad, what exactly are we going to do with a wild baby wolf in St. Petersburg?! If it gets loose, your mother will kill you!" Jevva exclaims, her voice shaking.

My eyes do not move from the box when I reply. "I already told you! We wait until my mother goes to sleep, we ride our bikes up to the forest, leave the wolf there and then... well, it's not my problem!" I explain.

"Vlad, even when we do leave it in the forest, if it gets loose in the city or is hurt or killed, it's still your fault! You should have just left it in Siberia! None of this would have happened!" She complains, a tear rolling down her cheek. I glare at the box, my emerald green eyes unblinking, as my mind wanders back to the first time I saw the wolf.

I was standing in the middle of Siberia, the freezing wind sending a shiver down my spine. I was surrounded by snow, like a white blanket stretching as far as the eye could see. Because my mother had wandered off, in search of artifacts and strange rocks, I was completely alone, with a blue cardboard box folded up in my hands.

To some people, being in a strange, ghostlike land might seem scary. But this is my other home, away from St. Petersburg. Where there are no problems, no mean people, no parents, no rules. White snowflakes drifting down from the pale sky, melting in my tangled hair and on my frozen tongue.

I was strolling through the snow, my chunky, old hiking boots leaving marks on the ground, when suddenly I heard a soft whimper from behind me. My head whipped around to meet eyes with a small, baby wolf.

Its fur was shiny and grey, the colour of metal but the texture of a baby duck's feathers. Its eyes were like the shiny, silver jewellery I had seen in shop windows. I was enchanted. So then I found myself hopping onto the plane we had rented for the trip, with the baby wolf sleeping inside the box.

I rise from my position on the bed, slowly and cautiously. The box shuddered slightly and the wolf's eyes narrowed even further, but there was no growl. I crouch on the ground and crawl towards the box. I stub my toe on a loose nail in the floorboards, but I don't dare scream. I just let out a small yelp of pain and let saltwater tears run down my face and onto the ground, escaping through cracks in the floor.

I hold out a hand and motion for the wolf to come forward. I can imagine the look on Jevva's face right now, but I don't turn around. Suddenly the box tips over and the wolf emerges from inside. It slowly makes its way towards me. Five seconds later, it sits on the ground, barely an inch away from me.

My hand is shaking, but I reach out to let it sniff my hand anyway. When it finishes doing so, it starts licking my hand. I pat it, relieved that it didn't hurt me. "We should name it!" Jevva blurts out. I turn around to see her walking towards me.

"How about Frei?" I suggest.

"Perfect!" she beams. I decide that I can just take Frei back on our next trip to Siberia in two days. I sure I can take care of it until then! Well, I hope so...

Two long days later, I and Jevva, who requested to come along, are standing in the snow with Frei inside the box. I place the box on the ground delicately, as if it would shatter if not handled properly, and let Frei out. He looks around briefly before running away from us, obviously thrilled to be free. A few seconds later, he turns around and looks us straight in the eye. Then suddenly disappears into the mist, never to be seen again.

*By Isobel Benn Vertigan
Year 7, Springwood High School
FAULCONBRIDGE - NSW*

Basketball Feeling

THE ATMOSPHERE on a basketball court is like no other. Unless you have experienced it, there is no way you could describe it for what it truly is.

The feeling of enthusiasm that you feel when you warm up is overwhelming. Everyone on the team is there. They all have the same nervous, excited expression on their face that you would only be able to notice if you were one of them. "Let's go girls, skits up!" the captain screams. "Encourage, we gotta support!"

The balls hammer against the newly polished floorboards and you can feel the intensity rise. The balls are beginning to be passed faster, harder as they fly through the air skipping from player to player. The crowd starts to settle and you know it's almost time.

"Let's go!" yells the coach from the bench with his clipboard firmly supported in his hands, full of unique plays that he can't wait to throw at us. As the starting five take the court you feel your stomach rise in your body. Your legs and arms start to tighten and your head becomes clear. You feel a sense of excitement growing in you, as you look your opponent up and down. They stand in front of you, death staring you. Trying to psych you out. But it won't work, because you have your team.

As everyone starts to take their positions you feel a sense of pride. Your eyes skip across your team. Everyone each wears the same uniform, smiling and encouraging each other. Genuine teammates. Win together, lose together, teammates. You know that whatever happens in the game, you will always be a team.

"All right girls, we want a nice clean game", the referee announces. But by the looks on some of those girls' faces, that will be unlikely. The centres take their stance in the middle of the circle, ready to jump for the first break. "BANG!" and the game is off.

The crowd starts going ballistic with cheer, taunting and screams. The ball moves quickly down the court with minimal passing, making it hard to intercept. But you don't give up, you keep going. The first basket is shot by the opponent, but the next is ours.

We glide down the court, full strength. We start to set up one of our plays that we were instructed to do a few minutes ago. It's all us now. Bounce pass, screen, power lay-up and it's in! Now let's hope it works that well for the rest of the game.

The minutes go by so quickly, but every bit as hard and tiring as the other. Your legs start to burn as your calves feel like they are going to explode in your legs. The muscles in your arms start to grow weak and it feels like they can barely move. But you don't stop; you keep on going until you can't bear it any longer. You never back down, you never give up.

The final seconds start to go by and the pressure is on. The score is 72-71, only one more basket and the game is ours. The

crowd is growing restless as they scream for the team's success. 20, 19, 18, 17, 16 seconds to go to wrap this up. We only need one more basket. Can we do it?

"Yeah here!" scream the girls. 9, 8, 7. No one is open! I'm standing at the top of the 3 point line, should I take the shot myself? This was the shot that would determine the game.

A sense of fear runs up my spine, it feels like the whole place has gone silent. I fake shot, step around my player and jump as high as I can. The ball rolls out of my fingers and the shot is up. I know I'm not imagining it this time; the place really has gone silent. The buzzer sounds while the ball is mid-air. I can feel the adrenalin pumping through my veins. The ball soars through the air, it feels like minutes rather than seconds.

Nothing can explain how you feel when you win a game. It's like you can do no wrong. But the feelings don't hit you straight away. It feels as if the joy rises in your body, until it explodes into a skit of jumping, cheering and laughing. The crowd is going nuts and you can hear nothing but clapping and cheering.

As you look around for your team it is easy to spot them. For they are the ones with the exact same look on their face as you. A look of pride and joy. They are your team.

Win together, lose together teammates.



*By Kirsty Hartin
Year 10
Quirindi High School
QUIRINDI - NSW
Teacher: Anne Scott*



Journey of Life

Drowning in the sea of sorrows
No way to survive
Trying to live for tomorrow
Am I really alive?

Suffering in the darkness
Light is no where to be seen
I have become so careless
When did people become so mean?

I'm on the road of life
Suffering in darkness and sorrow
The light comes in like a knife
Do I lead or do I follow?

All that I can see is Gray
In the middle of the journey
I am on the way
Can I see the reality?

Now that I am here
I have reached the end
Sorrow and darkness are always near
I am around the bend

The darkness and sorrow I can see no more
As I travel on
I have opened the door
And this is a new song.

*By Felicity Pidgeon
Year 12
Cabra Dominican College
CUMBERLAND PARK - SA*

Our Special Grandma

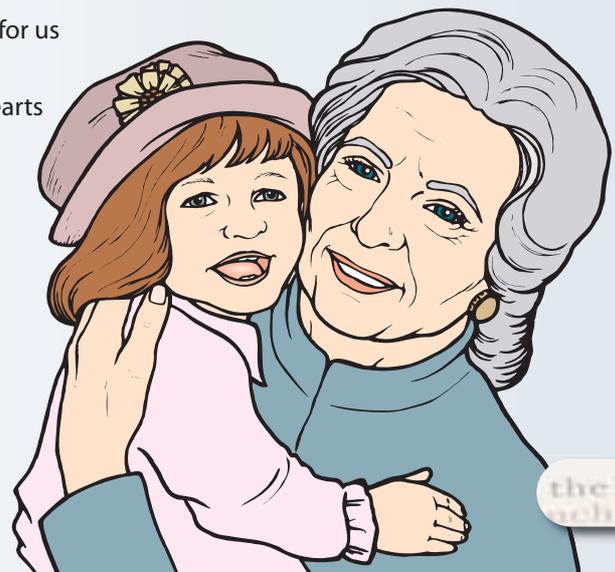
In loving memory of my Knitting Grandma Eve...

- G** is for **Great** Grandma to us all
- R** is for **Reading** us lots of books
- A** is for **Answering** all our questions
- N** is for **Nurturing** and caring for us
- D** is for **Definitely** in all our hearts
- M** is for **My** Special Grandma
- A** is for **Always** praying for us

All Our Love To
Our Special Grandma

Dear God

Thank you for Grandmas
That love and care
Each special day
We share with her
Is to cherish
For ever
Amen



*By Mikaela Willans
Age 10
Jubilee Christian College -
Grange Unit Distance Ed.
ATHERTON - QLD.*

‘Inspire Me’

CAD ran home through the back streets near his house, slipping and skidding around corners and weaving in and out of dumpsters. Although it wasn't the nicest of places, Cad found the area familiar and on his way home from school, he would often stop somewhere along the way to think. Not tonight though as he had to get home before his Aunt arrived. He wanted to practise his newly composed tune before his Aunt heard him playing it on the piano. It could be unpleasant if she happen to hear him because Cad's Aunt hated music. She didn't like Cad either because he considered himself a 'budding young pianist.'

Cad broke out of the back streets into a well-presented lane with expensive buildings. Cad's home was rendered white and it stood out considerably against the other red brick buildings in the lane. It was probably the noisiest house in the street as well. There would always be arguments and Cad remembered the one that had dramatically changed his life. He had a talent for piano playing ever since he could remember getting his hands on one. He could compose beautiful tunes, which were hard to distinguish from those of a professional pianist. One day Cad's Aunt decided she had had enough. During one of the usual arguments that night, his Aunt lost control and struck him a damaging blow to the neck. As a result she damaged his vocal cords. Since that time Cad hadn't spoken a word and he expressed his thoughts through music played on his piano.

An elderly, apparently homeless man spent a lot of time on the street near Cad's home. Cad didn't see him as a homeless man though, but as a respectable, caring person. Cad was always trying to think of ways to help him but his loathsome aunt would often stop his efforts. She didn't like the man either. One day as Cad walked past him he greeted the man with a simple wave and was about to head inside when the man spoke. "I've heard you playing the piano many times", he said, "Could you play a tune for me? I'd be very grateful if you did".

Cad was overwhelmed. He felt his heart thudding against his chest and a smile etched on his face. Finally, here was a way he could help this homeless, elderly man. Cad nodded and the man smiled back. It was a smile filled with warmth and joy and it gave Cad encouragement. He burst through the door and took to the stairs two at a time. He raced into his bedroom and placed himself at his upright piano. He was thankful that his Aunt hadn't taken it away from him although she used the excuse as a threat, which Cad found 'empty'. Then he began to play a newly composed tune. The notes came naturally to him and he was delighted with the result. The music wafted through his window on the second floor and floated down to where the elderly man was standing. Cad looked out at him and saw the happiest sight he had ever seen. The man was swaying back and forth, eyes closed and deep in thought. Cad looked back and closed his own eyes and let his heart and fingers do the work. As the sun set he felt so relaxed at a time such as this, with music drifting in the air and a cool breeze wafting through his window.

Suddenly, there was a thumping noise that shattered through the music and Cad's eyes shot wide open. Before he knew it,

he was back in his bedroom and had come back to his senses. "Cad!" said a voice. The voice sounded angry and upset, but Cad wasn't worried. He kept playing his music. He didn't care what happened to him as right now he just wanted everything in the world to make that elderly man happy. As Cad played on, his Aunt burst into the room, her face red with rage and madness. She picked up Cad by his collar and the music was abruptly cut off. As the last note hung in the air Cad knew that this was not going to be a normal argument.

"I'm sending you far away", she blurted as froth flicked from her mouth. She dragged him down the stairs. Cad felt numb and his mind became a blank as his Aunt continued on across the front yard. Cad remained motionless until he saw the homeless, elderly man. Hatred of his Aunt and the pain she was causing came back to him and he began to thrash about wildly but his Aunt's grip was too strong. He was shoved into her car and the door slammed and locked behind him. He banged on the door with his fists but it was of no use. His Aunt started the car and quickly drove away. Cad looked out the back window and caught a last glimpse of the elderly man, standing in the street with his arms thrust out towards the car.

Sometime later, a rocking motion woke Cad and he soon came to his senses. He found himself in the back of a truck along with what seemed like dozens of other children of all ages and backgrounds. Cad was thirteen years old, but there were many children who were much younger than him. He must have fallen asleep in the car and in the meantime was transferred to this truck. The truck stopped without warning and everyone lurched forward. The doors were thrown open and everyone was ushered out. Cad heard screams and shouts whilst vague images flashed before his eyes. Children were being escorted into a large building. Then he heard a voice that rose above the others, "Excuse me, but where are we?" asked a boy with red, teary eyes and hair strewn across his forehead like most of the others. "The 'good for nothing home', that's where you are", replied the woman who had been asked. Cad should have been surprised by this reply but he wasn't. He remembered his aunt's words, "I'm sending you far away..." and he knew he wouldn't be returning to his home any time soon.

The inside of the large building into which they had been taken was unwelcoming and vast. The floor was laid with marble and at the other end of the room from where Cad was standing; there was an enormous blackened fireplace. But the room certainly wasn't a homely one. Cad had to get used to the hard work to which he was put and the punishments that he received when he was unable to keep up. His minders had to get used to him not being able to speak. He absent-mindedly became a 'good for nothing' person. He lived like this for months until one night when he became more than a 'good for nothing' person.

Cad was woken by a raging storm. It was good timing because he had plans. Lately there had been a rumour going around that the Manager of that dreadful place loved the piano. It was probably a useless rumour but Cad listened with all his heart. He figured the Manager must have had a piano and it was going to

'Inspire Me'

be risky to get to it because Cad knew from past experience just how nasty the Manager could be. Not to him though, because he was always well behaved and the Manager acknowledged that. Yet sneaking into his room late at night was another thing. Cad slowly opened the door and it creaked loudly. Cad froze and listened intently for any sound of stirring but heard nothing. He continued into the room and closed the door behind him. He was in luck. There was a grand piano 'waiting eagerly to be played' in the far corner of the room. At the other end was a door which Cad assumed led to the Manager's bedroom. He placed himself at the piano and stared at it for a moment. An image of a homeless, elderly man with outstretched arms seeped into his mind. Then it was gone. Cad felt a presence behind him and slowly turned around. There stood the Manager in the middle of the doorway staring at Cad with a blank face, although a warm, crooked smile soon became visible. "Go on, inspire me", he said simply. Cad turned his back to conceal a smile. This was his opportunity and he was going to give it the best shot he could. He began to compose a tune with the notes flowing freely to their ears. It was beautiful. It was breathtaking. It filled the Manager with exhilaration and he was completely amazed. "You shouldn't have been sent here", he whispered when Cad finished playing, "but I know what to do with you!" He sent him to piano auditions and the teachers were thoroughly impressed. In a few weeks Cad had practised a little more with his composing and became extra confident.

Cad became famous after that. His talent was being recognised worldwide. He played in concerts all around the world in front of an ever-increasing throng of fans. He also made a lot of money but that didn't fill his heart with joy. What did though was the thrill of being on stage and taking in a deep breath of excitement and nervousness that lingered in the air every time he performed at a concert. Some years later, his fortunes enabled him to buy an expensive house, which he knew he didn't really need but enjoyed anyway. He could look over his impressive and formal garden while composing tunes on his brand new grand piano. Cad was grateful for all this but still something was missing. It was something that his heart was trying to tell him. He began to play a soft tune. Maybe it

would help him to think of it. His fingers motored away and he closed his eyes and concentrated. Somehow this act seemed familiar to him but he couldn't remember where it was from. It had been awhile since he had become famous but he tried to see beyond that and back to his previous life before. He saw his Aunt and instantly thought it couldn't be anything to do with her. He stopped playing and looked out the window once again. This act also seemed familiar to him and then he saw a man just outside the window. This image remained in his mind and he knew instantly who it was. He summoned his Carer who looked after him seeing as there was no one else who could. Cad didn't want to go back to his dreadful Aunt a second time. The Carer didn't have a family of her own and Cad could tell that at times she was uncertain of what to do. Cad didn't really have a family either and in that way they were alike. He hadn't known his parents because while Cad was still young, his parents had been struck down by a car, while crossing the road. Finally, Cad asked the Carer to take him to the single lane he once called home.

The car stopped at the corner of the lane and Cad jumped out and told the Carer to wait. He walked slowly around the corner, stared down the lane and within moments, memories of his former life came flooding back to him. He also saw the elderly homeless man outside the front of a gleaming, white house. He had almost expected the man to be gone. Cad started running towards him and threw a great, big hug at the elderly man. The man was taken by surprise and chuckled when he realised who it was. "I knew you'd come back" he said with a deep voice, "I knew you'd come back". It seemed that the man was just as cheerful as ever and especially delighted to see Cad. Together, they walked slowly back to the car, where Cad caught a glimpse of a woman staring out from a window on the second floor. Her face was red with rage and madness. But he took no notice and continued on. He had done what he had come to do and that was all that mattered. He was taking in the elderly homeless man and giving him a place to live where he could feel safe and comfortable. Cad knew from that very moment that he had truly helped the man and inspired many more!

*By Adrian Harper-Gomm
Kambrya College, BERWICK - VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Odile Oliver*



Lost Treasure

'Torch?'

'Check.'

'Rope?' Rachel read off the list, scribbling a check mark beside 'torch'.

She and her younger brother Ziggy were in his room, organising their supplies for an expedition to the beach.

The children's mission: to find the lost treasure!

Ziggy and Rachel had first heard about the treasure from Old Pete. He was an aged fisherman, with windblown grey hair and a leathery, wrinkled face. Sometimes the kids were able to catch Pete before he went out to sea in the early morning. If he were in a good mood, he would tell them a story while he set up for the day.

Last week Pete had told them about the lost treasure.

'Once there was a pirate called Jemowyn Badslash,' Pete had begun in his rough, gravelly voice.

'He was young and daring. Jemowyn raided all the finest ships, stealing money and precious ornaments. He stowed his treasures away in a large cave beneath the rocky platform on this very beach.

'But Jemowyn was also very foolish. One day he decided to sail to one of the coastal islands and invade its small village. A couple of hours before he and his crew were to leave, they noticed a storm cloud advancing toward them. Jemowyn didn't cancel the trip.

'Only two crew members agreed to accompany him on those conditions. That night, Jemowyn, his remaining crew and their ship, the Wave Slicer set sail. The waves were tall and powerful, battering the ship with high ferocity. Suddenly, an enormous wave hit them. It flipped the Wave Slicer right over! Jemowyn and one of his crew were trapped beneath the ship, and drowned.

'The third pirate grabbed a piece of debris and held on for dear life until the storm was over. Luckily for him, he drifted back to shore. He was the only one to survive to tell the tale.

'The treasure has never been found. Some say the ghost of Jemowyn Badslash guards his treasure.'

Ziggy and Rachel had picked this sunny Saturday morning for their quest. They weren't worried about Jemowyn; he was just a myth.

Rachel checked the supplies list. The torch, matches (in case the torch's batteries went flat), rope, a bottle of water and a roll of bandage.

All of the stuff was spread out on Ziggy's bed, so the children put it into a backpack, once Rachel had said they were ready.

The two exited Ziggy's room and left the house.

Because their house was close by, it was a short walk to the beach. They stepped onto the soft sand in minutes.

Ziggy and Rachel walked across the beach to the rocky platform. It was the polar opposite to the sand, hard, rough and dark, while the sand was silky, smooth and bleached white by the sun.

The kids climbed onto the platform.

'Ziggy, be careful. You might fa—'

'Woah!' Ziggy's foot slipped on the rock, and he made a rapid descent to the ground.

Strangely, there was no sound of his landing...

Rachel looked down where his body should have been. It wasn't there! Instead there was a Ziggy sized hole, leading into darkness.

'Ziggy, are you down there? Are you okay?' Rachel called out.

'Yeah! Come down, you got to see this!' A voice exclaimed.

Rachel squeezed through the opening, feet first, unlike her brother. She dropped about a metre and landed with a muffled thud.

The first things she noticed were the musty smell and the sound of dripping water.

When Rachel's eyes adjusted to the dimness, she gasped.

The cave was filled with treasure!

There were mountains of gold coins almost reaching to the ceiling! Glittering jewellery sparkled with precious stones and ivory handled cutlasses were strewn across the floor! Statues made of solid gold and silver, with priceless china cups and plates!

They had found the lost treasure!



By
Madeleine Massy-Westropp
 Grade 6, Loreto College
 MARRYATVILLE - SA
 Teacher: Mrs. Anderson

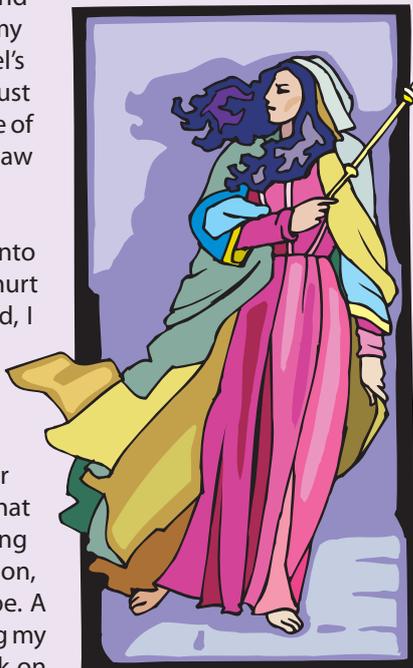
Lands Afar

THE WORLD dropped out from under me. A tingling sensation flowed through my arms and I saw an outline of a door of light, shimmering and beckoning me as if it had been there the whole time, just waiting for me to find it. In the incandescent light of the door, my hand seemed like someone else's – an angel's limb exposed for one glorious moment, just then, something bubbled up on the surface of the door. The outline grew stronger and I saw markings of the Goddess Diana.

The door opened and I stepped through into a world drenched in such vivid colours, it hurt my eyes just to look at it. When I adjusted, I drank up the scenery. There were trees dripping leaves of green-gold and red-orange, the sky was a purplish blue on top of a horizon bathed in an orange glow, like a sunset that never fades. Tiny lavender blossoms floated by on a warm breeze that smelled faintly of roses and lilac. A spring was nestled to the east of the current position, where water cascaded down a slight slope. A thick ribbon of river sliced through, dividing my patch of dew-drenched grass from a bank on the other side. I spotted a leaf and bent down to touch it. It curled in on itself, melted and re-formed as a butterfly, drifting heavenward.

I heard a chorus of music and was led to a group of Goddesses. "We have been waiting for you", one said.

I was led into a grotto, past a circle of tall crystals, as delicate as glass as she explained how the magic worked and how the crystals controlled it.



We crossed a ravine and walked over a bridge where the trees opened up, revealing a circular clearing. There were caves before us, tucked beneath a ledge overgrown with vines. The caves lit up as soon as we entered, walls dancing in the sudden brightness. Generations of rain had smoothed the stone to such a high sheen in some places that I caught glimpses of myself in its surface – an eye, a mouth, a composite of ill-fitting pieces.

Pictographs of ancient goddesses were carved into the walls from various materials. I was admiring a pictograph when a sharp pain caught my attention, "You mortals, so easy to fool..." cackled the Goddess.

The once exotic sky turned a dark and soulless black, clouds moved in, thunder roared and the nature died. I tried to escape, but it was too late.

She expanded into a ghastly, churning wall that reached the sky. In that moment, I could only feel a fear so real that I was frozen on the spot. Those skeletal hands gripped tightly around my neck. I fought back, and hit its leg. I ran to the ornate crystal that was told to control this once magical land. If my plan worked, and I destroyed it, I would destroy the land forever and hopefully be transported back home... hopefully.

*By Georgia Christianos
Year 3, Reddam House
WOOLLAHRA – NSW
Teacher: Mrs Shapiro*

The Freezing Cold of Where I Lay

I trotted through the snow by night,
The horse whinnied, the bit was too tight.
On my horse I sat without glee,
This was no time for "Yip Yipee".

The surrounding darkness covered my face,
Snow dripped from my rusting mace,
In these times, these dark, rough times,
The only bright colours were those of the limes.

I froze under my winter coat,
The mountain goats began to gloat,
Horse trotted on with me on his back,
I was securing the heavy sack.

His knees buckled as I fell down,
In the distance I saw my town,
I can't go back I told myself,
The king will kill me, he told me himself.

I can't move on with only me,
My horse, he is the only key,
To unlock the door of my salvation,
Warmth would be a great sensation.

That sensation, of course, I did not reach,
Life was sucked out of me, like a leech,
As I rose to the heavens above,
I saw a sign, a bright white dove.

All I know now is that the King,
Has since left his castle ring,
To the mountains he ran in hate,
And ended up with the same fate.

*By Rachel Trim, Year 5
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
MONA VALE – NSW
Teacher: Miss Gibson*

Tash Gemma and Their Dilemma

Chapter One

'Today,' explained Tash, 'is the day you will win the award... and Johnny will win it too!'

Gemma smirked at her sister. 'It might be you this time Tashi, but if it is I'll never speak to you again!' Jokingly, Gemma poked out her tongue.

Gemma and Tash were NOT identical twins. Each had blonde hair, but Tash's eyes were blue and Gemma's were brown. Gemma liked being 10 minutes older.

And until this morning, everything had been going well for the popular twins. They decided to be 'fashionably late' and walk to school on this special Awards Day.

Each secretly hoped to win, but both thought Gemma was the likely winner.

But, Tash walked straight into the window and the sound of her forehead hitting the strong, stained glass window was loud enough for the school down the road, Solomen Heights, to hear. Mistakenly Gemma thought her sister was making the noise on purpose.

Then, the girls bumped in to the school Principal, Mrs Shoreman.

'Hi girls. Now, what have I done to deserve such children, or let's say...' Mrs Shoreman looked around to find the next word as the girls stood directly in front of her tapping their feet in a position to almost say, "I'm BORED!". She continued, 'MONSTER-like... girls... running around the halls during the near-end of homeroom?'

'Nothing. Nothing, Mrs Shoreman. It's not Tash's fault though. The thing is...' Gemma was staring at her sister. She knew she was being a nice sister. It was not like Mrs Shoreman could do much to her anyway... 'I left my pillow on her bed and Tash has very knotty hair... so she uses a silk pillow but when she woke up her hair was one big knot! So I went down to the store and bought some products for her and we simply discovered we were late... as Tash ran in to the, uh, very... well like... hard doors.' The girls giggled but attempted to not look in to each other's eyes. 'So, like... anyways... it's all my stupid pillow's fault.'

Mrs Shoreman could tell this was a ridiculous reason yet she had no choice but to say, 'Well then Gemma, next time, please move your pillow. Oh and...' Pausing again, 'uh, sadly...' Mrs Shoreman added

in a mumble, 'Or gladly...' 'You must forfeit for disobeying the rules and indicating you have no respect for punctuality.' Mrs Shoreman walked off in a huff, mumbling words to herself.

Tash mouthed 'Thank You' to Gemma, yet Gemma's moment, the moment everyone knew she was going to win had just been handed to Tash. Gemma felt dumb. It was as much Tash's fault about that morning as Gemma's, but Tash had been so selfish she went on with the lie. Mrs Shoreman had walked off and Tash was jumping, whereas poor Gemma was standing there, slouching – next to her more popular sister. Tash pushed Gemma to the side and told her she was 'The Best'. Gemma didn't feel the best though and she ran out of her school, King's College, and unbelievably cried – in the teachers' car park. Tear after tear, Gemma remembered many of her friends saying,

'Gem, I am voting for you. You're like so gonna win!'

The whole scene with Mrs Shoreman and Tash made Gemma feel like she had let them down.

'Gemmmmmmma!' Tash screamed, 'You just walked out! Be happy for me!' Tash whispered, 'Please.'

Tash had no idea of how Gemma felt. She thought Gemma was being selfish but it was Tash herself being selfish in reality. Gemma knew she couldn't stay mad at her sister. She was so proud she was popular and she didn't want Tash to follow her for the rest of their lives. Gemma nodded. 'I am. Sorry. Congrats Tashi.'

Tash sat on Mrs. Wilk (Gemma's Science teacher)'s car and smiled. 'Gem, thank you, you're a great sister... but I have a question.' Gemma giggled, she felt as if she 'totally' knew what she wanted.

"Sure Tash!" Gemma tied Tash's knotted ribbon.

Whilst Gemma was tying the ribbon Tash wriggled, 'What if Johnny wins?'. Tash tried to hold down an upset face but she surrendered and smirked a little. Gemma could tell she had a crush on him. 'You like him, Tashi!' Gemma pinched her.

They both burst out laughing.

Chapter Two

When the time arrived, Tash had distributed a pink scrap piece of paper, reading: 'Tash Sam, that's who I am!'

Gemma heard Lisa, Penny and Chloe whispering.

'You know Tash is cool, guys but like... that 'motto' was kiiiindaaaa cheesy', Penny said, showing her awkward feeling of hurting Tash behind her back.

Chloe and Lisa both nodded to show their agreement.

Deep down, Gemma agreed too, but she couldn't admit this feeling to her sister.

Tash Gemma and Their Dilemma (Cont'd.)

'Shh! Everyone, quiet!' Mrs Shoreman demanded. 'Chloe Smith. Terra O'Donnel. Jonathan McKenzie. Natasha Sam. Adam Spitalni and Kerry Chestnut... You are nominated for this award – Please stand on the green line.'

Lisa and Penny looked at Gemma but her reaction was unexpected, Gemma was clapping and whistling.

Tash coughed, as if she were asking for the attention of the school, 'Hi everyone. Today I arrived at school late because my sister found a knot in her hair, I went down the street at 8:24am to get her some products for fixing it. This ended with me arriving late to this, may I add, Beautiful School! But... as long as my sister was happy, I didn't mind.'

'As you can, umm, clearly...' Tash held on to her words, aiming for a (what she called smart) word, much like the Henrietta style, 'RECOGNISE!'. She stopped, realised she became slightly carried away, took one big breath and continued, 'I am thoughtful and helpful and nice, and if you vote for me, you will notice how some girls can be popular exactly like me!'. She giggled, 'And... oops, forgot to add. There'll be free Prada Soaps in the girls' change rooms'. Tash showed off her fake, cheesy smile and sat down on the chair next to Johnny.

That story was a lie. She was thoughtful and helpful and kind, but that story was not true and Gemma thought she should have been less 'In Your Face'.

Gemma realised there would be four more years until the next award would be given and that, in four years, she would have graduated. She remembered that she lost a big opportunity (a mention of the award would be on her résumé when she was going for her internship at Vogue). Gemma started regretting the story she told Mrs Shoreman. She sighed, 'Oh... shivers!!!'. Her thoughts were loud enough for the entire school to hear. Penny checked, 'This whole thing is a joke and Tash's speech is a lie? Uh Gem, that's harsh babe.'

Gemma glared at Penny, and headed for the door. Mrs Shoreman told Mrs. Wilk, the art teacher, to block the door from Gemma.

'Oh no! What have I done?' Gemma knew she was in strife with the Principal.

'Gemma, where do you think you're going?', Mrs Shoreman asked in her softest voice.

Gemma faked a bad stomach, 'Oh, to the bathroom. I don't feel well!'

Mrs Shoreman was not one to believe the Sam sisters. 'Is that so? Because I believe you just said your sister's speech was a joke. Are you jealous? Gemma Sam, jealousy is an ugly...' Pausing, 'Ugly! ...Thing.' Mrs Shoreman clearly enjoyed using her quotes.

Chapter Three

'Dad, I want to eat this in my room if that's OK.' Gemma pointed at her goopy Carbonara. Mr. Sam looked at his two teenage daughters who were exchanging looks. He knew something was up, but simply frowned and replied, 'Okay. Do what you like, I guess?'

Mr Sam could not understand the teenage ways.

Gemma stormed off to her room and slammed the door. Tash rolled her eyes at her father, 'Drama Queen'.

Mr. Sam frowned at the rude behaviour he was witnessing. 'Tashi, dear, tell me what happened at school today?'

Tash replied, 'Oh, it is just something between Gemma and I'.

A plate crash usually indicates an event or a game at a fair where you earn points. Yet, plate throwing at home is trouble. There are not many smiles, in fact, none.

Mr and Mrs Sam rushed to Tash's room. 'Tash! What happ...' The couple stopped as they heard Gemma crying. They stepped three metres to the side into Gemma's room. Their daughter was lying in major pain... with some pink glass stuck in her arm. Mrs Sam fainted and Mr Sam rang the nearby ambulance.

They met up with the doctor in emergency. His name was Dr. Bell and he had known the Sam family for years, in fact he was like a second Mr Sam. He approached Gemma and rubbed some cream on her arm. 'It's called Embla cream, Gem. It won't hurt, it makes your arm feel numb and will take the pain away.'

Gemma nodded, and felt Dr. Bell understood her. 'I didn't mean to...'

The family looked at her as if she was speaking another language.

'Throw the plate, y'know', she finished.

Dr Bell realised what she was talking about, 'We know Gem, and we'll work it out.'

While Gemma fell asleep Tash had been taken in for questioning. Dr. Bell brought in a psychiatrist later to question Gemma.

'Gem, I believe you are suffering from anger management disorder. A lady called Ebony owns an institute called "Anger Solutions". She is a psychiatrist and will be observing and looking after you.'

Gemma was very surprised.



By Brittany Marlow
Year 7, The King David School
ARMADALE - VIC.

The Adventures of Snowy & Ted: *Snowy Finds Ted*



SNOWY was a very unhappy bear. She lived with her foster parents, very very mean foster parents. Every day she would go out and do twenty miserable chores, but there was one chore that overcame Snowy with dread. It was having to clean the outside toilet. Snowy was only five years old so having to face spiders, cockroaches, snakes and toads was pretty hard to do at that age. Poor Snowy would go out every day to the loo and clean and clean and scrub and scrub this smelly horrid place.

One day when she was cleaning the toilet, Snowy saw something; it was a black glass eye. Snowy went around to see what it was. Suddenly Snowy felt happy, she had found a teddy bear. The bear was brown with a white patch around his eye. One of his eyes was missing, but Snowy didn't mind. Snowy carefully picked him up and examined the blank spot where the eye should have been. "You poor thing", said Snowy. Snowy suddenly had an idea; she would save up all her pocket money

to buy him an eye-patch. Snowy also decided to call the little teddy Ted. She snuck Ted inside and hid him in her bedroom cupboard so her nasty foster parents wouldn't find him and throw him away, then Snowy went downstairs to dinner. Once again Snowy had to have cold mashed potato and disgusting peas from the night before.

Three days later very early in the morning Snowy snuck off down the street with Ted. It took her what seemed a long time to find the right eye-patch for Ted, she wanted it to be a nice blue one. Snowy decided to give Ted a quick wash at the drycleaners, she thought Ted looked very handsome. Snowy quickly rushed home but when she got there Snowy found a nasty surprise. Her foster parents had found out where she had been and Snowy got a good spank and was sent up to her room. Snowy sat on her bed, crying. Snowy thought about what she should do and then she had another idea, she would gather her two bed sheets and tie them together and climb down from her window. Then she would run to the closest house and tell them about this serious matter. Snowy jumped up and put her plan into action, as soon as her feet touched the ground she ran to the nearest house and knocked loudly on the front door. A kind lady opened the door and Snowy explained what had happened including all the horrible chores. The lady was disgusted with the cruel behaviour of the foster parents and called the police. The foster parents were taken away and put in jail. Snowy had nowhere to go. The kind lady felt sorry for Snowy so she asked her if she would like to come and live with her. Snowy now has a new mum and dad and Snowy is the happiest bear in the whole world and so of course is Ted.

*By Ema Souness
Year 4, Corrigin District High School
CORRIGIN - WA*

WINTER

Drawn in by the deathly whispers
comes she in deepened stir.

Shrill cry of icy bitterness,
naught believes it has occurred.

For yonder times of smile and skin
now buried deep beneath.

The haunting winds flee scurrying creatures
as snow invades the heath.

Tall oaks stripped bare of leaf and twig
though proud, ought not to stand.

Her merciless grip leaves hostile traces,
globe bows down to command.

She swoops and soars, attacks at will,
thunder 'luminates the grey.

She dims the sky with shining wand,
our slumber no delay.

Her wand away and will at hand
she ponders disarray.

Who leaves to let the sun peek out
shall return another day

*By Stephanie Baroudi
Age 14
Korowa Anglican Girls' School
GLEN IRIS - VIC.*

Memories

CRYSTAL River, forever a home.

Rain pelts down on the small tin roof. Sally Jane sits quietly in her wooden rocking chair. It is early in the morning and the first rays of orange and yellow are just beginning to paint themselves in the sky. She listens to the harsh rain outside, letting it make a gentle hum in her head. Her face, wrinkled like a wilted petal, is weakened with tiredness, and as her eyelids drooped, she slipped into a deep sleep...

Suddenly she was in the Crystal River. The gleaming sun was shining down on the bright green trees, which were slowly swaying with the gentle breeze. She watched the peaceful town, and began to walk towards the river. It was as transparent as ever, and the golden rays illuminated the river with light. She looked down, into the cool, clear depths as fish swam past and she could almost feel their carelessness, as she knew that there was nothing to fear in the Crystal River. As the fish swam off she saw her six-year-old face looking back at her. No wrinkles or lines. She began to drift off in thought when all of a sudden the river went dark.

A grey shadow began to smother its way over the town. She looked up and saw that the sky had gone grey and lightning had started booming over the vast landscape. A jolt of fear surged through her body. The happiness and joy that she had been feeling had now evaporated into thin air. She looked behind herself to find that everything had gone. The cemetery had been dug up, leaving torn up, dead grass. The houses, which had once stood so tall, had been bulldozed and moved, leaving bits and pieces of wood and bricks, strewn all over the valley. The trees, which had been home to many of the native animals, had been cut down and demolished.

The colourful valley was now dark and unforgiving. The wind swirled around her in a mocking way.



As if to tell her that she had lost. There always had to be a winner and a loser. Only it was in violent whispers, rushing past her ears. A flash of lightning blinded her for a moment, and when she was able to see again she found herself above the valley. The water was almost overflowing over the top of the valley. She couldn't pull her eyes away from the sight, she was transfixed, her eyes staring, glaring. A damp hand touched her on the back and she managed to pull her eyes away to turn around. Behind her were her parents, looking at her with a hopeless and miserable expression. Then her mother spoke, in a hoarse whisper.

'You have to let go, Sally Jane.'

She desperately tried to reply. She opened her mouth but no sound came out.

Suddenly she was falling, falling into eternal darkness. Her heart was beating out of her chest. It hurt so much, so much...

When she looked down she looked at her hands. They were beginning to wrinkle. The lines becoming more prominent every second, until her eyes drifted open. She released a long and anguished sigh.

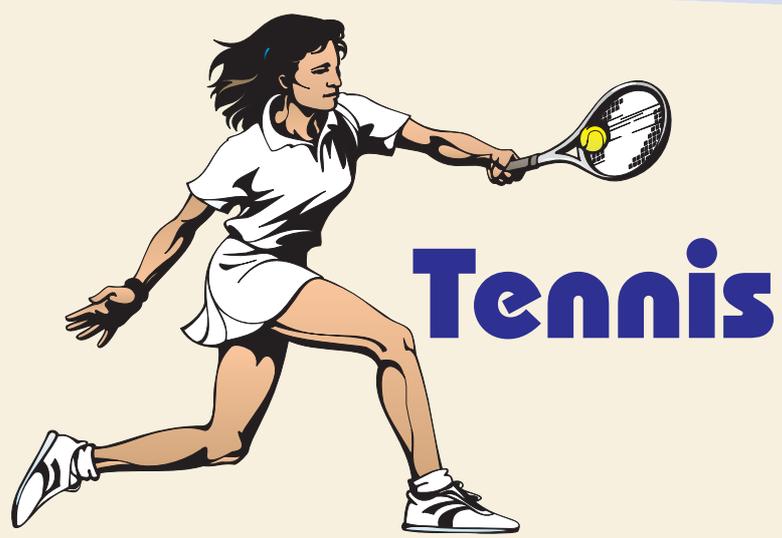
Sally Jane was back in her cottage, ninety-three years old.

She had promised to herself that she wouldn't dream about Crystal River any more. She knew that she couldn't bring back the past. Nor change it. But she couldn't help wishing.

It wasn't the same.

Crystal River, forever a home.

*By Blake Lovely
Year 6, Curl Curl North Public School,
NORTH CURL CURL - NSW*



Tennis
In action
Fingers grip
Running wildly
Racquet flips
Trip over
That's okay
Win the game
Hooray Hooray!

By Susannah Alexander, Age 9, WEST PYMBLE - NSW

Never Perfect

My muscles are coiled as if they are springs,
Tense and powerful they release their raging hold,
And I go flying.

My mind is set
I do what I have to do,
Turn, pike, roll, turn, straighten, stretch hands,
Splash!

That's the problem
"I told you! Flatten your hands!"
My coach is a hawk,
Sees everything, feels everything, knows everything.

They're useless and in the way,
Fingers are too long,
Palms too wide,
Too much splash

I can feel them as well
Always so heavy
Weighing me down just like a thousand kilos.

I have so much to concentrate on,
Toes, legs, stomach, shoulders,
I've got it perfectly,
Just not my hands

I ascend back up, it's natural for me,
Right leg step, slight pressure
Left leg leap, my muscles are coiled,
Legs together, head up, spring
And I go flying.

Turn, pike, roll, turn, straighten,
Stretch hands.
Splash!

*By Gabrielle Coard
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE - SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann*

ARMY SQUAD

NOW it's the future the world has changed a lot. A new war has started. WORLD WAR 3 has come. I'm in the fire squad of the army. I fight with all the fire weapons with the squad beside me. We are getting ready for the war. We all know that some of us won't be coming back. We're ready to go out to war.



As we go on to the boats we think about the other men who died in World War 1 and 2.

I see the shore already; I get my flamethrower ready to shoot. The rest do too.

When I get to land I see all the other squads' men die. I hear the sound of guns shoot.

Men fall to the ground. I jump in an army tank and I shoot. We've won the battle, but we haven't won the war I say. Suddenly I feel a pain in my arm. Blood falls from my arm. I've been shot.

Quickly I run to one of the nurses. She wraps my arm with some bandages. Then I go to fight. I knock out a few men with my gun. More of my men fall. I get my flamethrower out and I shoot fire at the other side. A 26-year-old man called Random says to duck as a missile goes past. But it was too late for him to move. I get in a helicopter to see if I can find any wounded men but there weren't any. Then the chopper gets shot, we start to fall, and we put the parachute on and jump out.

We land safely, but I don't think the chopper did. I take Random to the nurses but it is too late for him to live.

I have to leave him. The war is finished, I think.

As we get back on the boats we are attacked again. The boat is sinking, so we jump overboard. Lucky there was an extra boat. We get on it and escape from them.

When we get back to our land we see some boats and choppers; we realise they have not given up yet. We get ready to attack again; we start shooting missiles. Boats start flying up out of the water and crashing into other boats. Men are coming from the helicopters and start shooting.

With a gun in my hand I put my finger on the trigger and shoot, down goes one man, down goes another then finally they surrender.

*By Kaiden Riddle-Johnston, Age 9,
SILKSTONE - QLD.*



The Story of Tam and The Magic Ghost of Mao Zedong

Chapter 1 – The Life of Tam

ONCE upon a time there lived a handsome, young boy named Tam, a cruel stepfather and a tall, mean and ugly half brother called Jin. They lived in the hot deserts of Mongolia, in the town of Likata (Lick-ate-r). And as most would know, living in the desert, there isn't that much water, so it is very valuable out there; they have the same problem with food.

Every two weeks a train called "Desert Raider" comes along the old, worn out track and drops off the town's food and water. The train driver is an old, wrinkled man called Ryan. Tam is friends with him so he always brings a little extra for Tam, but there's no point because Jin steals Tam's food anyway. Tam would get it back but he's too scared that the stepfather would see them fighting and take even more of Tam's food.

Tam's life is very boring, he doesn't have much excitement at all, except when the stepfather believes him and Jin gets in trouble, but that hardly ever happens. But one day, something very unfamiliar happened and changed Tam's life forever...

Chapter 2 – Thornberry Creek

It was another boring day for Tam. The Desert Raider had just left, and like usual Jin had stolen his food, but he didn't care, it was going to happen anyway. What Tam was focusing on was the Mao Mana festival, in a couple of days' time people from all over Mongolia would celebrate the birth of Mao Zedong, he was one of the most powerful people in the world! Until he died that is. The festival was happening in the big city of Xinhang – a couple of miles from here.

Tam was thinking about himself not going to the party and being left behind with all the chores, but he was relieved when he heard the stepfather say to Tam and Jin about the person gathers the most Thornberries from Thornberry Creek will get a beautiful new T-shirt and shorts and will be able to go to the Mao Mana Festival on Saturday. Tam shot off to grab a basket while Jin slowly jogged to the creek without a basket. Tam asks Jin why doesn't he have a basket and Jin answers back that he doesn't need one then smirks.

Once they get there, Tam goes straight to work while Jin grabs two Thornberries, gets bored and falls asleep. When Jin wakes up Tam has his basket full of Thornberries and when Tam isn't looking, Jin sneakily grabs the basket full of Thornberries and bolts off. When Tam turns around she sees Jin with Tam's basket in his hands and bursts into tears but then, right in front of her eyes stands the ghost of...

Chapter 3 – The Ghost of Mao Zedong

Mao Zedong!

Tam stands there, stunned. *Is it really him?* Tam thinks. His long black beard, the Chinese-ish look and his long brown robe. *It must be him.* Tam says that he thought that Mr Zedong was dead, Mr Zedong replies that he is but his soul isn't. He then

tells Tam that if he really wants to go to his birthday festival in Xinhang than he must put this magic yabby in the nearest waterhole. He then gives Tam the yabby and then Mr Zedong went on that Tam must feed it every 3 hours with this magic potion. Mr Zedong then gives Tam a special liquid in a weird looking bottle. Tam then goes to look up to Mr Zedong but he has vanished!

Tam dashes off to the waterhole just south of Likata, There's not much water left but it will have to do. He puts the yabby in and gives it a little drink of the magic potion. He did this every 3 hours for the rest of the day.

The next day, the stepfather told Tam to go and look for some more Thornberries. He went off and fed the yabby then went to do his job. While Tam was out, the stepfather went fishing and caught the yabby, which was now very, very fat. They cooked the yabby and had it for tea. When he had just noticed that he had eaten the yabby and was just about to start crying again, Mr Zedong appeared and told Tam to bury the bones under her bed – which was actually logs and sheep wool.

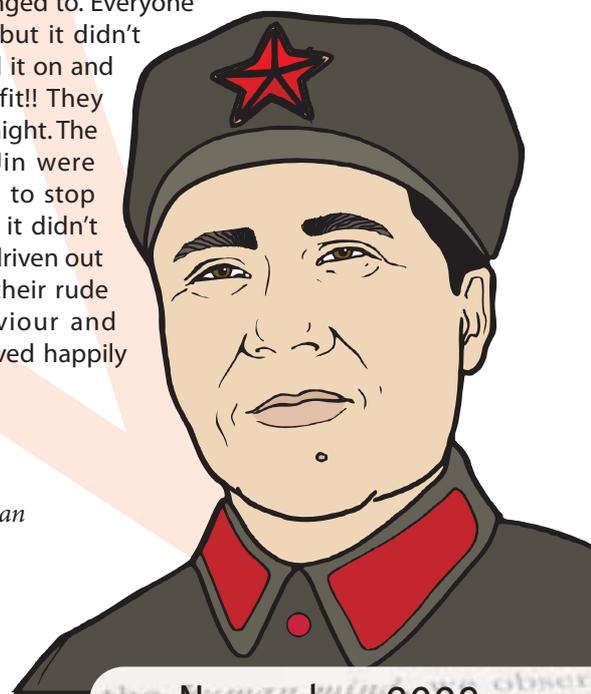
Chapter 4 – The Mao Mana Festival

Today was the day of the Mao Mana Festival, the stepfather and Jin had just left. There was a long list of chores on the table for Tam, he couldn't bear to look at it. There were at least 75 Chores on it! He then remembered the yabby bones and instead of yabby bones he found a cool T-shirt and shorts along with a cap! He put them on and went outside and thought to himself, "How am I going to get there?" Suddenly a white horse came along and stopped in front of Tam. He jumped on and was off to Xinhang! When he got there he met a beautiful young lady called Sarisa. What Tam didn't know was that the person he was dancing with was the emperor's daughter!!

He suddenly saw the stepfather who would be furious if he saw Tam there, so Tam ran off but dropped his hat. Sarisa caught the hat and said that she would marry the person that the hat belonged to. Everyone tried the hat on but it didn't fit, until Tam tried it on and it was a perfect fit!! They got married that night. The stepfather and Jin were jealous and tried to stop the wedding but it didn't work. They were driven out of Mongolia for their rude and cruel behaviour and Tam and Sarisa lived happily ever after!!

The End

By Cameron Morgan
Age 9
TARCOOLA – SA



November 2009

Through the Looking Glass



Like an unnoticed shadow
 She walks the halls
 Completed with silence
 Her presence confusing
 Awfully awkward
 She scans the room
 Like a piercing blade
 Her eyes cut you in half
 Your soul is taken,
 You think.
 Class is over
 A breath of fresh air
 For now.
 You don't know where she is
 Well nobody does, really.
 She tries so hard to not be noticed by you
 Yet she is
 And that you try so hard not to notice her
 You do
 Because reality
 Does not include invisibility
 Or does it?
 You walk to your friends
 Something is breathing down your neck
 You turn around
 But nothing.

You swear she was there,
 They think you are going crazy,
 Your so called friends of course
 You describe the girl with no name to them
 Black hair, pale skin
 Ghost like
 They don't understand,
 They haven't seen her
 She sits right in the corner of the room
 You tell them
 Trying to explain is becoming hard,
 Maybe it's just your imagination
 They try to tell you,
 But you still think otherwise.
 Weeks roll on
 Alone
 And you become defensive,
 Your friends don't think you are crazy any more;
 You are.
 A few weeks was all it took,
 To turn into your illusion
 The one you created
 The one that took your life away
 Caused people to worry
 When all the time
 You were looking
 Simply,
 In the mirror.

*By Emma Sherwood
 Year 9, Quirindi High School
 QUIRINDI - NSW
 Teacher: Anne Scott*

The Hapless Hound *that deserved what it got!*

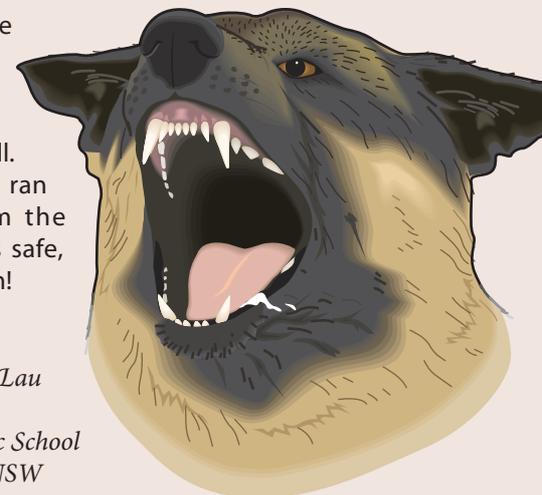
I WAS running for my life as a snarling and growling black shadow lunged towards me from behind. I turned and saw its ferocious jaw with bared red gum and saliva dripping, trying in vain to bite my right leg.

I was so terrified that I wanted to scream for help but I was tongue-tied. I ran down the street holding my breath as I tried to distance myself from the dog but it continued to follow close behind, determined to catch its prey.

Suddenly, I turned and kicked it in the jaw and it hurt my toes. Ouch! I turned around and ran again and I saw a tree ahead of me. I quickly climbed up the tree while the dog lunged at it, trying to reach my legs as I climbed up. I was lucky to just make it! It started to bark while encircling the base of the tree. I panicked and I slipped on the branch and I went crashing down! I could just see the grin on its face! What it didn't realise was

that I came down like a ton of bricks with the tree branch. The branch hit its face directly as I fell. With a whimper, it ran off, shocked from the impact. Alas, I was safe, but with a sore bum!

*By Alison Yien Tee Lau
 Year 6
 James Erskine Public School
 ERSKINE PARK - NSW
 Teacher: Mr Cooke*



My Journey

to nowhere

THE ROAD looks so long, but I can't be far now. For days I have slowly plodded along, alone and afraid. I don't really know where I am going but I will know the right place when I get there.

Layla, my teddy, is slumped pathetically in my hand. She looks like I feel. The sparkle is gone from her eyes now. They never used to be glassy and staring. They used to dance. It feels like long ago that we ran around the field, laughing and singing and dancing. It feels like I've forgotten how to laugh and dance, and if I ever sing again it would only be songs of pain and despair that would escape my lips.

I turned around a corner and looked at the next road I would have to conquer. It was long and winding with scraggly bushes down the sides. Like a snake. One that had been lying there for eternity because it has nothing and is nothing to anyone.

I let my shoulders slump and a single tear slides sorrowfully down my cheek. I have to give up. I've been walking for too long now. I wonder if there really is a happy place at the end of my road, and if there is, is it really worth this?

Agony, hurt, lost, alone and afraid don't begin to describe what I feel. The pain is beyond anything, beyond everything.

I sink slowly to the ground. I wish there was someone here to look after me. To order me to stand up and keep walking. Someone I would have to pull myself together for. But there is no one.

I used to hate rules, people telling me what to do, how to eat, how to act, what to believe. Now I would give anything for it. To know what to do would be comforting. It would be easy, straightforward, no guess work involved. Never having to wonder if death would be coming to meet you at the next bend. Not like now. Now I don't know what I'm doing. I'm just muddling through and hoping for the best.

I ran out of food days ago and only have small amounts of water at a time for fear I would run out of that too. I am hungry and tired and just want to lie down and rest and never get up again.

Maybe, when I get to where I'm going, Mum and Dad will be there. Then they'll pull me into their arms and hold me tight and we'll all run through the fields and the sun will shine, really shine, enough to make the cold ball of fear and worry in my stomach go away. Maybe is enough. Who knows, maybe wherever I'm going is right around the next corner.

So I stand up and bravely place one foot forward and resume my journey. My journey to nowhere.

*By Juanita Marie Quinlan
Age 12*

*Mary McKillop Catholic Primary
HIGHFIELDS - QLD.*

REMEMBERING SUMMER

I smell

death on the wind, choking plumes of purple smoke reminding me of lives lost.
I smell blood, staining walls of white, and black ashes, the colour of mourning.

I see

weeping mothers and lost children, the whole world is weeping today.
I see, a broken and battered landscape, what happened to our peaceful town?

I taste

the dust of what used to be and can never be again.
I taste the tears of a thousand families, who have lost what can't be replaced.

I hear

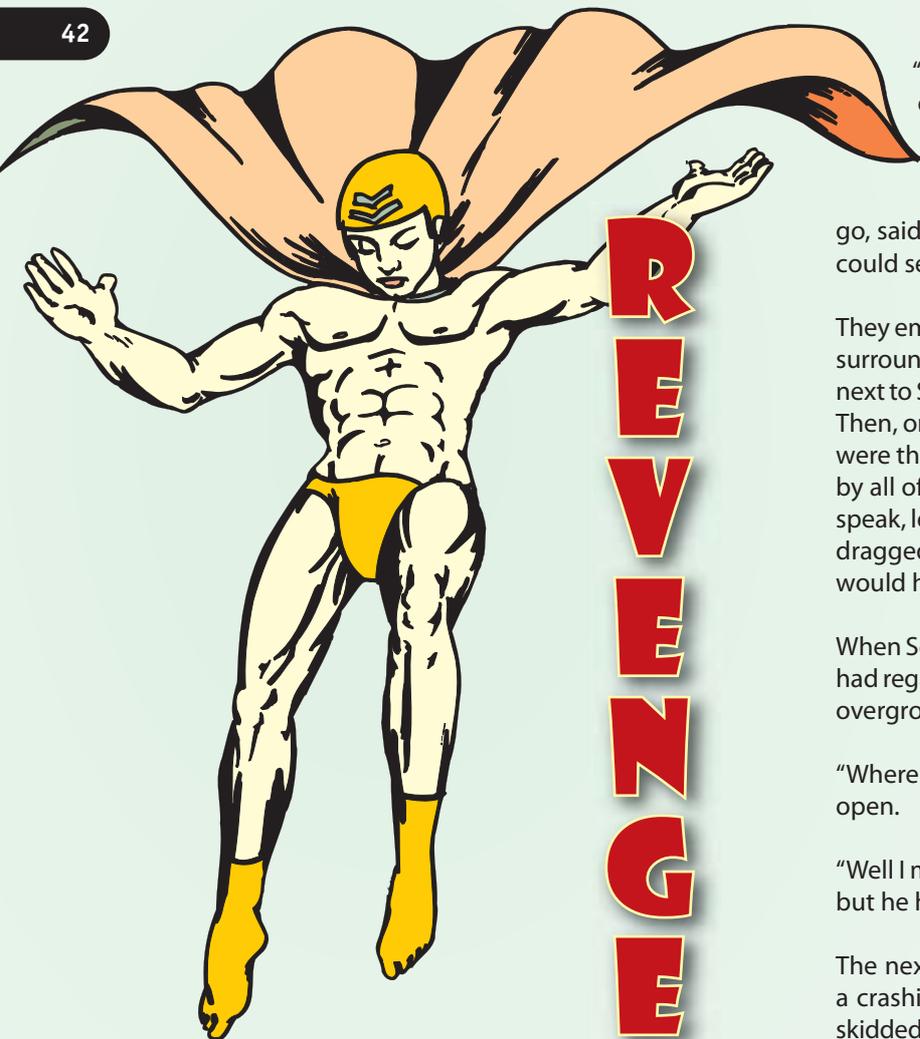
bloodcurdling screams of agony, piercing the black sky.
I hear the indestructible crackle of the fire as it burns up memories of happier days.

I feel

burns that cannot be healed with medicines and only with the passing of time.
I feel the murderous heat of Black Saturday.

*By Jessie Paeglis, Year 5, Methodist Ladies' College, KEW - VIC.
Teacher: Joy Horn*





IT WAS 20 December, 2004 and it was so hot you could cook an egg just by leaving it on a rock. Sean who lived on 52 Almaldo Lane in Perth, was slouched on his sofa watching the news on television. Sean's father had mysteriously gone missing a week ago and the news had made the headlines. His father had black hair and was quite tall just like Sean. Sean would be outside had it not been so hot, instead of watching television, because he never spent much time with his Dad who always had something important to do.

Then, Sean heard a knock on the door, which his mother answered. He heard a deep voice. "Ma'am we were sent to fix a broken air conditioning unit."

"But there's nothing wrong with our air conditioning", she replied. Just then, the air conditioning unit in the lounge room made a high-pitched whining noise and smoke started flowing out like a snake spiralling into the ceiling.

The two men dressed in workman's overalls walked into the lounge room and locked the door. Then, the men suddenly charged at Sean and tried to fit him into a large box they had carried into the room. Sean cried out and wriggled past them and out an open window. The men roared in frustration and came quickly in pursuit.

Sean ran down the lane and along a line of hedges. As he was running past a large rectangular growth of leaves, a hand shot out and dragged him in. Sean was going to shout for help but a hand was placed firmly on his mouth.

"Shh, they'll hear you", said a smooth voice, obviously the one who dragged him into the hedge, which seemed to be hollowed out so there was just a case of leaves, which was impossible. The sound of footsteps became louder and then eventually faded away. "Let's go, said Sean's saviour. Sean looked at the stranger but all he could see was a red t-shirt and ripped denim jeans.

They emerged from their leafy disguise and were immediately surrounded by several men in black business suits. The stranger next to Sean said nothing and just looked calmly in front of him. Then, one by one, all of the men were lifted up into the air and were thrown down by an invisible force. Sean was so shocked by all of the events that had just happened that he could not speak, let alone move. So that was how he ended up being half dragged, half carried home by a middle-aged stranger. How would he explain this to his Mum?

When Sean and the stranger finally reached Sean's house, Sean had regained mobility and was walking. He walked through his overgrown porch and knocked on the door.

"Where have you been?" shouted Mum as she flung the door open.

"Well I met this stranger..." he turned to gesture to the stranger but he had mysteriously disappeared.

The next day, when Sean was walking to school, Sean heard a crashing noise and so he ran to investigate. But, just as he skidded round a corner he stopped in his tracks like an emu with a paper bag over its head, as a car smashed to block the alley he was about to run up. Then, he heard a roaring behind him and shakily turned towards the noise. There was a disfigured lion crossed with a gorilla charging towards him. He vaulted over the car and ran to the safety of a house. He looked around and saw he was in a cul-de-sac and in the middle of it was the man with the red t-shirt and jeans, holding his palms towards the smashed car. Sean ran over to him and looked up at his face. It was perfectly shaped and he had bright green eyes. That was all he had time to look at before the man put his hand on Sean's shoulder, and they teleported.

Sean woke up on a clean bed in a shining white room. The only furniture was a bed and there was a large door in front of Sean. After a while, the door opened and a short man in a lab coat came in.

"Master Kethan wants to see you, follow me", the short man said. Sean rose from the bed, white robes fluttering around him like white birds. He walked through an endless corridor and finally emerged into a large room with a line of bookcases and a huge fireplace. The so-called 'Kethan' was reading a book on a plush red sofa. He was wearing a scarlet dressing gown that flopped over his feet like dangling dog ears. Kethan looked up and stared at Sean with green eyes and slowly said one word "Magic".

Sean's eyes quickly darted away and snapped. "No, it can't be true. Magic isn't real!"

"Then how do you explain everything you saw?"

REVENGE

(Cont'd.)

Sean sighed and slowly droned, "Why do you want me?"

"You have a gift", Kethan replied, "a very rare gift".

Sean slowly figured it out. "So I'm magic?"

"If you have the right training."

"And I'm guessing you're going to train me?"

"Yes."

Sean was with Kethan in his basement, trying to move pebbles with his mind. "You shouldn't concentrate on the pebble, but what's between you and the pebble", Kethan said encouragingly.

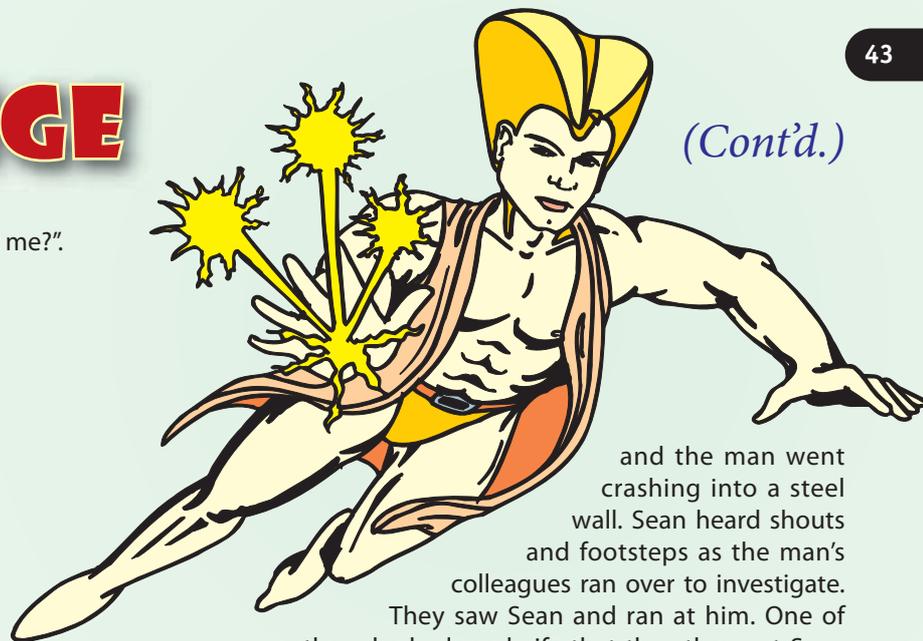
They worked for hours and hours until eventually Sean could lift up Kethan himself.

"Now, you must save your father from the evil men that have captured him", Kethan announced informatively.

"You mean my dad's not dead, he's just captured?" Sean said grimly.

Sean was in a black leather jacket and dark green camouflage pants. He slowly crept up to the abandoned warehouse where his dad was held captive. He put his palm to the back door of the warehouse and it slowly fell to the floor. The men guarding the inside of the door were surprised as their two heads were slammed together violently. Sean walked inside and through another doorway where a huge man approached him.

"Hey kid, you're not meant to be here", the man said in a gruff voice. Sean didn't say anything but just punched at the air



and the man went crashing into a steel wall. Sean heard shouts and footsteps as the man's colleagues ran over to investigate.

They saw Sean and ran at him. One of them had a long knife that they threw at Sean but it was deflected by a movement of Sean's hand so it only skinned Sean's hand. All of them jumped on him and Sean was overwhelmed and couldn't move. Sean tensed up and used the last resort move Kethan had taught him. Fire ripped through the men, flames licking at their burning coats. Sean finally stopped, fell to his knees and collapsed.

Sean woke up panting.

"So it was all a dream", Sean muttered to himself. Sean heard his mother calling for him to wake up and be ready for school so he started putting on his uniform. After he was dressed he looked at the mirror and froze as he saw his reflection. His hand had a scab from where the knife had hit him.

By Liam Maher

Grade 6

Reddam House

WOOLLAHRA - NSW

Teacher: Mrs Sharon Shapiro

I Like the Smell



I like the night time winter's smell
When I can hear a special bell
It makes me feel all cosy
And makes my cheeks turn rosy
I snuggle up nice and warm
As the snow falls down with flakes
The flakes sometimes fall
With a kind winter's call
That flutters back then
And reminds me of all

By Laura Dooley

Year 5, St. Cecilia's

GLEN IRIS - VIC.

Teacher: Mrs Corffe



The Mist

THEY lunged for him, froth erupting from their ferocious mouths, with blood-shot eyes locked on to him, their prey. Their teeth about to sink into his leg, and then...

Simon Page woke, drenched in sweat; he trudged out of his bed, remembering his nightmare as he walked. Little did he know that time was running out, and he would have to fight for his survival.

The sun began to rise, spreading light upon the world once again. Simon wandered down the street, heading towards the Newsagent, and instantly sensed something in the air, whether it was fear, hope or irony, he didn't know, but he did know that the fear, The Mist was soon to spread, and he couldn't waste any time.

Once he reached the Newsagent he noticed many people outside, quite a difference from the usually deserted outside of the shops. The first were two men, chanting. 'Are you prepared for the fast coming Mist? If not—'

He didn't get to hear the rest of the sentence as he entered the Newsagent. He immediately caught sight of the front pages on many local newspapers. Bold headlines, were standing out. 'Preparation for The Mist is essential' and 'The Mist is coming.'

As Simon looked around he released a deep sigh, as he remembered his family's immense lack of money.

Simon's family was extremely poor, therefore unable to afford the proper precautions for the upcoming Mist. Throughout the last two years Simon's family have avoided being engulfed by The Mist with mere luck, however the annual mist is reported as 'The Worst of All Time' and it's going to take a lot more than luck to escape it this year.

Simon was the youngest child of the family. He lived with his widowed mother, and brother. Simon had short, brown hair, and deep blue eyes, like the pummelling seas. He was a short, skinny boy, hardly noticed by anyone due to his size. Simon lived in 13 Maple Street, Abbasid, Los Angeles.

He knew what The Mist could do, and had never underestimated it.

Simon once knew a boy, his age, he lived next-door to Simon, and they had formed a great friendship between one another. However, the boy doubted The Mist's power.

The Mist came, and he never saw that boy again. The Mist had killed the boy.

The Mist was to arrive in a few days' time and house after house, neighbourhood after neighbourhood had started preparing for the seemingly eternal darkness, The Mist.

Simon looked around the shop, with a sense of hopelessness and longing. He then grabbed a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk, his family's daily rations, that were just enough to keep them alive.

Once he had left the shop, he passed by the men again and headed for his home.

Simon entered his house, his mother sat crouched up against a small radio that she found in the bin a few months ago. She was obviously listening to the latest news about The Mist.

'Hi Honey.'

'Hey Mum.'

She looked at him with a tired smile, and stood up. Simon noticed the large bags underneath her eyes. A wave of anger surged through Simon and he began to protest against her late hour shifts.

'Look, Mum, I know that you're trying really hard to earn money for us. But don't you think you're working just a little bit, too hard?'

'Oh Simon, that's very sweet of you, but you know how I feel about working, when The Mist is so close upon arrival. And

I don't want anything to happen to you, or the rest of the family.'

Simon released a long and doubtful sigh.

'Mum, I love you, but spending money on precautions for the mist is very expensive. And it's just, too much for us to afford.'

Simon's mother let out an anguished moan of defeat. She stared out the window, to the small trees she had planted many months ago. She knew that they would never get the chance to grow, nor to have a life. As she left the room, Simon could see in her eyes that she was crying inside.

★ ★ ★

Agitated thoughts danced in Simon's head, painting pictures of innocent people, being taken by The Mist, as they went. And as the moon shone on his face, embracing his emotions, he slipped out of consciousness.

★ ★ ★

Days passed and the forever looming Mist came closer and closer. By the day before the Mist was warned to hit Abbasid, Simon's brother had caught a major virus spreading throughout the area. It was extremely contagious and people with the virus were to be quarantined to another location.

As Simon walked across to give his brother his lunch, a loud knock at the door rushed into his ears. His mother walked to the door and slowly opened it. Three large men stood at the door, dressed in black suits and were wearing large black sunglasses, hiding their eyes. They looked at Simon's mother for a small amount of time and then spoke.

'Are you the mother of Brent Page?'

'Y-yes, why?'

'We are the QA. Quarantine Agency. And have come to realise that your son, Brent Page, has an extremely contagious virus that has been known to be deadly. By order of the Government we have been ordered to Quarantine all people with the virus to another location, until they are fit and healthy to return back to their home.'

Her eyes began to fill with tears.

'No! You can't!'

'I am very sorry ma'am but we are on a very tight schedule and will need to take your child in about half an hour.'

She couldn't believe what she was hearing. She tried to connect her head to her mouth. To talk. To make a sound. But she couldn't, so the men talked again.

'We will be back here at precisely one o'clock, please have him ready. Thank you.'

They shut the door and began to walk to their car. She couldn't move, her body was completely stiff. She stood there, until finally, she came to her senses and walked to where Brent was lying.

She walked past Simon and signalled for him to wait in the other room. She sat on Brent's bed and began to talk.

'How are you feeling, Brent?' Brent let out a loud cough and answered hoarsely.

'Not too good.'

'Look, I can't tell you this any other way. A few people have come and they want to take you somewhere. A place where you can get better, and then you can come straight back home. Always remember us, no matter what, and we'll miss you for every second of the day until you come back to us. Do not worry about us. We will do our best to escape The Mist. Now we need to pack.'

Brent's eyes widened, but then he understood. He coughed harshly, and tried to sit up. But he was just too weak. All he could do was sit and watch his mother rushing around his room.

And as Brent watched his Mum helping him, he knew that he would have one thing that would help him get through this virus. The love and hope of his family.

★ ★ ★

Simon stood still on the road, watching the van. Brent sat pressing his face against the back window. Tears streaming down his face until he faded out with the car as it travelled further and further.

Life without Brent was hard but as the hours passed, and Simon and his mother grieved, The Mist came closer and they soon gave up. As they all knew that time was of the essence.

While his mother was closing all the windows and locking the doors, Simon turned to a window. A ghastly sight caught his eye. He could hear, in the faded darkness, quiet whispers. And although they were coming from the horizon, it was almost like he could feel them breathing down his neck. He shivered. And as he did, his heart almost instantly stopped. He couldn't stop staring out the window. Staring, at The Mist.

He shut the window and took one last glimpse at The Mist, and the seemingly isolated houses for as far as the eye could see.

All of the curtains were shut in the house and all of the lights switched off. His mother ran to his room and shut the door. Simon could see, even in the darkness, the paleness in her face. She spoke, in a hoarse whisper.

'Simon, The Mist is upon us. Now we are going to hide underneath the bed, and I want you to do nothing no matter what happens. If The Mist takes me, do not show yourself, and do not try to save me, or they will take you as well.'

Cont'd...

The Mist (Cont'd.)

The thought of my mother being taken was horrifying, but I obeyed.

'Yes Mum.'

As his mum began to crawl underneath the bed, he could tell that by now The Mist would have started to engulf the house in its thick, white blanket. And he could hear the whispers, which were trying to force themselves through the cracks in the windows.

He lunged underneath the bed with his mother, and held onto her with as much strength as he could. Although it hurt his hands, he didn't feel it, as the fear of The Mist had overtaken all feeling in his body.

When The Mist was in your presence, it seemed to suck all of the happiness, hope and joy in your life. And use it as power against you. It seemed to force all of the bad thoughts, the fear and the problems in your life, into your mind. That was how Simon was feeling now.

All that he could hear now was the harsh breathing of his mum on the back of his head. Time seemed to slow down, making every noise as loud as a bullet from a gun.

And as he heard the door of his brother's room creak open, and the faint whispers suddenly loud and clear, he knew that The Mist had entered the house.

He stared at the closed door of his room, and knew that it was all over as The Mist crept underneath his door. The whispers echoed in his head and tears began to fall down his face. He could tell that his mother was paralysed with fright as well.

His life flashed before his eyes as he watched it come closer and closer. And by the time he fainted The Mist was upon him.

★ ★ ★

His eyes flickered open. He felt completely disorientated and perplexed. The sky was blue, with white clouds. The birds were twittering and the sun shone on his face. All of a sudden he became completely unsure and overwhelmed over whether or not last night was a dream. And although he wished so dearly that it would be, it soon became clear.

'Hello? Is anybody home!?' The silence that followed was almost unbearable and as he found more and more rooms empty, the last flicker of hope in his heart seemed to dim, until as he found himself back in his room, it was completely put out.

The thought that he had been trying to put out of his mind, the one that he never wanted to turn to, he finally had to accept. His mother, his life source, his love, had gone. Forever.

He never went to the Police to tell them of his mother's death. And he never again felt that warmth of having someone he loved by his side.

Every night, when he was in his bed, he would stare up to the ceiling, asking himself questions that he knew would always be left, unanswered. Why her? Why did it have to be my mother? Will I be able to cope being alone?

Simon's heart was torn. And he knew that sooner or later someone would find out about him. Find out that he was now an orphan. But he just couldn't be taken to an orphanage. Not to be sent off to live with another family. He just couldn't.

It had only been a few days since his mother had been taken. And living by himself had become harder and harder.

One day, as Simon was upstairs, staring at a picture of his mum and himself, the phone ringing broke the silence.

He picked up the phone and let a faint, 'hello' escape his lips. Then a man with a deep voice replied.

'Hello. Is your mother there?'

'Um, no, no she's just, um, shopping', he replied hesitantly.

'Well give her this message. Brent's virus has become worse. He is almost unable to move. The doctors say there is not much chance that he is going to make it. But we are told that you are able to visit him. Please write down this address—'

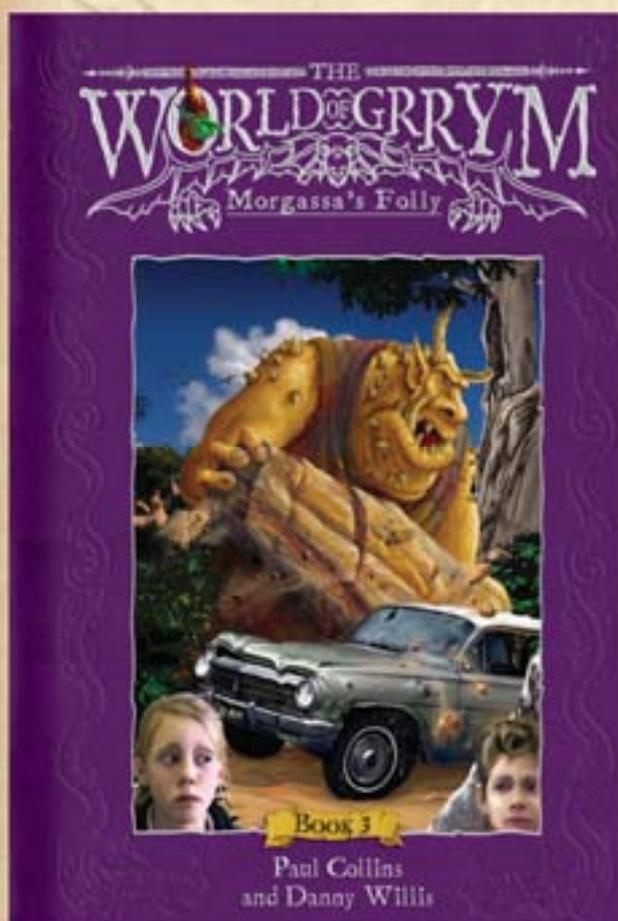
His voice seemed to fade in Simon's head; he couldn't believe what he was hearing. First his mother, and now his brother fighting for his life.

He wished he could just close his eyes and then wake up, just to find out that it was only a dream.

*By Blake Lovely
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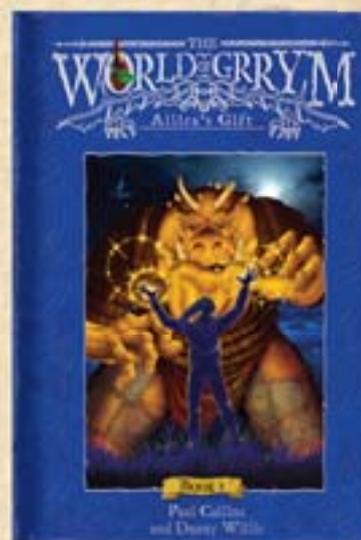
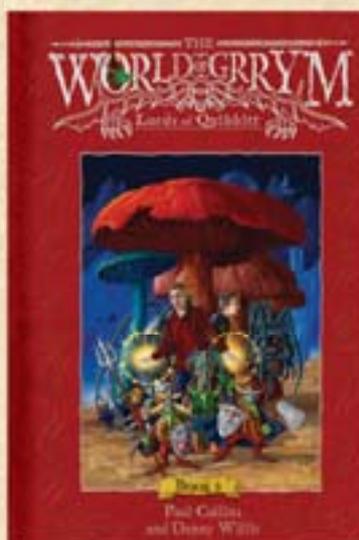
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