

# OZ KIDS IN PRINT

**Issue 2, 2020**

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*Cover design by  
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(2019 Commonwealth Bank Art Award)*

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## Contents

From the Editor's Desk.....	4
2020 Young Australian Art Awards .....	9
Book Reviews.....	12
What I have learned about the publishing industry through interning .....	17
Lockdown Activities.....	24
Creative Net .....	30
Ambassadors .....	35
Our Authors & Illustrators .....	41
Book Review – The Big Hit.....	43

### AWARDS FOR POETRY

<b>The Vagabond and His Guitar</b> .....	7
<i>Vivian Nguyen, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>The Power of Words</b> .....	10
<i>Vanessa Phung, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>A Show of Stars</b> .....	10
<i>Ayo Adejoro, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>Encrypt</b> .....	14
<i>Matthew Hughes, De La Salle College, Malvern, Vic.</i>	
<b>Mourning His Muse</b> .....	18
<i>Lauren O'Callaghan, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>Her Beauty</b> .....	20
<i>Vanessa Phung, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>Wooden Prison</b> .....	23
<i>Angelina Hemsworth, Loreto College, Coorparoo, Qld.</i>	
<b>Dusk</b> .....	29
<i>Isabella Bauer, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>The Realm of Youth</b> .....	34
<i>Molly Waters, Queensland Academies   Creative Industries, Holland Park West, Qld.</i>	
<b>Reflection</b> .....	37
<i>Monica Nguyen, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	

### AWARDS FOR SHORT STORIES

<b>I've Been Hurt Worse</b> .....	4
<i>Sheridan Newby, Mansfield State High School, Mansfield, Qld.</i>	
<b>Firefighters</b> .....	5
<i>Deeksha Dudeja, Mansfield State High School, Mansfield, Qld.</i>	
<b>Where's the Cereal, Mum?</b> .....	6
<i>Ben Springhall, Kingaroy State High School, Kingaroy, Qld.</i>	
<b>The Highest Point</b> .....	8
<i>Will Hoffman, Newington College, Redfern, NSW</i>	
<b>Sakura no Hana (Cherry Blossom)</b> .....	11
<i>Anna Nguon, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>The Mountain Escape</b> .....	14
<i>Gufuran Hugaz, Greenslopes State School, Greenslopes, Qld.</i>	
<b>Numb</b> .....	15
<i>Molly Waters, Queensland Academies   Creative Industries, Holland Park West, Qld.</i>	
<b>Our Little Town Boolundi</b> .....	16
<i>Briar Steinhardt, St. John's Lutheran School, Kingaroy, Qld.</i>	
<b>Acrostic Poem – “Coronavirus”</b> .....	17
<i>Keyaan Nasim, Westall Primary School, Clayton South, Vic.</i>	
<b>Secret Friends</b> .....	18
<i>Emma Yang, Beaumont Road Public School, Killara, NSW</i>	
<b>Anello Opale (Opal Ring)</b> .....	19
<i>Bianca Tonin-Petryszak, St. Dominic's Priory College, N. Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>Diving Deep Down</b> .....	20
<i>Emma Bao, Abbotsleigh School, Wahroonga, NSW</i>	
<b>Murky Green</b> .....	21
<i>Kayley Renouf-Dowdle, St. John's Lutheran School, Kingaroy, Qld.</i>	
<b>The Search</b> .....	22
<i>Chloe Flintoff, Mansfield State High School, Mansfield, Qld.</i>	
<b>Creepy Pasta</b> .....	23
<i>Dylan Galgano, St. Luke's Primary School, Loral, Vic.</i>	
<b>Circus</b> .....	28
<i>Annabella Luu, Sefton High School, Sefton, NSW</i>	
<b>Caring</b> .....	29
<i>Aresca Macwan, Gilson College, Mernda, Vic</i>	

<b>The Scar</b> .....	31
<i>Elizabeth Graham-Higgs, Lindfield Learning Village, South Turramurra, NSW</i>	
<b>Waiting On Life</b> .....	32
<i>Hailey Harris, St. Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide, SA</i>	
<b>Just Like Any Boy and His Dog</b> .....	33
<i>Elijah Rantala, Mansfield State High School, Mansfield, Qld.</i>	
<b>Moment in Time</b> .....	34
<i>Janna Safa, Aitken Creek Primary School, Craigieburn, Vic.</i>	
<b>Thunderbolt Girl</b> .....	36
<i>Maisie Fullerton, Our Lady's College Annerley, Annerley, Qld.</i>	
<b>Thornwood Mansion</b> .....	38
<i>Elizabeth Graham-Higgs, Lindfield Learning Village, South Turramurra, NSW</i>	
<b>Café Melbona</b> .....	40
<i>Zac Kurzbok, Clifton Hill Primary School, Clifton Hill, Vic.</i>	
<b>Echidna's Easter Egg Hunt</b> .....	42
<i>Alice Bergman, Fahan School, Lower Sandy Bay, Tas.</i>	
<b>War is an Inkblot</b> .....	44
<i>Charlotte Landherr, St. John's Lutheran School, Kingaroy, Qld.</i>	
<b>Lost</b> .....	45
<i>Akon Baak, Vale Park Primary School, Vale Park, SA</i>	

### 'Possession'

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**Suhani Panchal**

2019 Commonwealth Bank Art Award

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Our lives changed a few months ago. Staying home was the new norm. While I was able to get a lot more done without sports and Mum's taxi, Australia's students were busy changing to home schooling via video links, phone calls and emails. So entries had initially been slow coming. Art entries continued as students were able to spend time being creative with paints and pencils. Some parents worked from home, while some found themselves out of work.

Now is a good time to write about your experience and emotions, how you dealt with the change to home schooling and what you achieved while home. Even if you don't send it in to us, it is good to keep and read later, as part of your history.

Just like the story *Café Melbona*, written by Zac Kurzbock in this edition.

Look after one another as you return to school and to those who will be returning to work.

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**KEEP ON WRITING (TYPING)!**

*Carol Dick*  
Managing Editor

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# I've Been Hurt Worse

**I**RACE to my room with only one thought in my mind, I sped past my mum who looked like she was reading a book on the torn up lounge that's rather short when resting on the broken floor boards.

I slam open my door as I grab the darkest shade of foundation powder I could find, I cake it onto my face to cover every bruise and scratch on my face. I place every brush and container down exactly where it was.

I hear my mum run to my door as she stops herself on the door frame. With a slight stutter of hesitation in her voice she asks how my time at my dad's was. I said in the most persuasive voice I could put on, as I replied with the same answer almost every Sunday afternoon, "It was okay".

Mum would always look the same when I saw her after being with my dad, she would have an overly put on smile with her eyes as red as blood almost as if she had been crying for hours.

The weeks passed faster than they had ever had before, but sadly every week was the same: go to school and be greeted by a few bunches in the arm, come home to an empty house. Once I fall asleep every night I hear my mum walk into my room after coming back from the hospital at 12 every night just to see my sleeping face.

Every second weekend I would go to my Dad's house with my step mum, every

time I would do something only slightly wrong, the both of them would load their hands up with rings and decide to do what they would call 'persuasive' punishments. However they would continually tell me that I would never learn, therefore they would be forced to punish me further.

One afternoon everything changed. I opened the door after a 30 minute walk home only to find that my mum was there, with tears trickling down her face and scratches covering her face.

I sat down next to her, without hesitation she hopped up and threw a small bag of chocolates with a small Christmas letter on it. I opened it up only to find the few words 'Good Valentine's Day, thanks for the loan'. I looked to the other side of the card to see a picture of my dad and his new wife in front of a Tesla and a large mansion overlooking Hollywood.

I looked back up only to see that Mum was gone and tears had formed behind my eyes knowing that my Dad had hurt my Mum, of what I hoped would be the last time. My hands shook, never had I been so certain yet nerves for the consequences in my life.

Today is the one year anniversary of my Dad and Stepmum's jail sentence. One year down, 14 left.

**By Sheridan Newby**  
Year 8, Mansfield State High School  
MANSFIELD – QLD.  
Teacher: Mrs Bladin

# Firefighters

**A**S I walked into the fire-station, it had been a long time. I felt a wave of emotions crashing with each other inside me. I grabbed my pendant fastened around my neck that had my daughter's face on it for courage, and surely enough, it worked. My boss spotted me and ran over and gave me a handshake and my colleagues hugged me.

"Good to have you back Dawson", they all said to me.

It was good to be back, I'll admit, but it didn't take the pain away. I had instant flashbacks; I remembered walking my daughter in and everyone treating her in the same manner as they just treated me, and her walking up that podium and receiving her badge. The first time she drove a fire truck, there were just so many! Suddenly our walkie talkies started producing static and we all heard the same thing:

"Emergency bushfires near the Portland Bridge."

We jumped straight into action, I was scared out of my wits as I thought about what lay ahead of us. My colleagues called me and I jumped into the fire truck as we rode off. It was the fire season so the dryness and humidity must have started the fire. I spotted the smoke and grabbed my walkie talkie.

"Smoke spotted ahead", I warned everyone.

We all got ready to fight off the fire but as we neared the sight, the truck suddenly stopped. We all wondered what on Earth could have happened. The driver jumped down and saw the flat tyre. I felt my heart beat getting faster as I looked across and saw the flames becoming bigger and bigger as every second passed. The crows above the fire were circling around and you could even hear the panic in them as they cawed loudly.

Because of the flat tyre, we couldn't keep going and the other fire trucks didn't have the same equipment as us, so they wouldn't be fully equipped to stop the fires! I stopped for a second as everything turned dizzy and I saw the world spinning around me. I sat down and landed with a thud and my colleague rushed to me.

"Dawson, is everything OK?" she asked.

"I'm fine", I replied. But in the back of my mind, I wondered, is this what happened to my daughter before they took her away from me? And will the same thing happen to me?

The flashbacks and questions haunted me and wouldn't go away as I tried to take my mind off them and focus on my job. At this point you could smell the smokiness of the fire and it was crucial that we put

them out before they spread even further. So, we called for backup. And within minutes a new team arrived to assist and another truck towed us to the fire site and we all grabbed our hoses and pointed them straight at the fire. The helicopter above kept coming and going with large amount of water to pour on from above as well. It wasn't easy, everything kept becoming blurry, and it was as hot as a boiling teapot. I clutched onto my pendant as it kept giving me the strength to fight the monster fire.

My heart-rate quickened every second, but the pendant was like a magical pendant that was speaking to me and giving me strength. With one last bucket of water emptied by the helicopter, they were out. The heat disappeared and we watched the once green and lush trees and bushes falling down, and becoming ashes before our eyes. I clutched onto my pendant, feeling tears form into my eyes... I did it. I fought the fires. I felt my heart beat pacing down and happiness in every bone in my body. I'm going to remember this day forever, I thought, it isn't gonna leave me that easily.

By **Deeksha Dudeja**

Year 8, Mansfield State High School

MANSFIELD – QLD.

Teacher: Mrs Picton





# Where's the Cereal, Mum?

**T**HE SUNLIGHT sparks through the curtains and wakes me up with its warm embrace. I wake up, get out of bed and walk to the kitchen. I do my usual thing and open the cupboard doors. There is no cereal nor is there any bread for toast.

“Where’s the cereal Mum?” I shout out down the hall.

“I’m sorry son, we just... we just can’t afford it”, says Mum with sorrow, “The grain and wheat prices have all gone up, I guess we’re to blame”.

You see, my Mum and Dad are farmers, wheat farmers. This drought has done quite a beating to our crops and in turn the wheat and grain prices have shot through the roof.

“Here darling, I have some baked beans here, you could have this”, said my Mum as she mustered up a quick cheap breakfast.

“All right thanks Mum”, I shouted from the dining room to the kitchen, “Now, I have got to get to school, I might miss the bus”.

“Sweetie, listen could you please stay home today and help your Dad and I clearing the dead crops”, said Mum with her head down looking glum.

“That bad?” I asked with dread.

“Yeah, we would really appreciate the help”, Mum says with hope.

“All right”, I said with gloom as I remembered today was the day of the big test and I would be behind next week in all my schoolwork. I get the sinking feeling again. The nervousness and anxiety encompasses me whenever something bad happens on the farm. I read that anxiety is risen in farmers’ children due to this stupid drought. I can certainly back that fact. I feel the anxiety rising in me.

Dinner that night was silent. Moving those dead crops with Dad today felt like moving the dead bodies of children Dad cared for. He put a lot of hard work into those crops and now that we have nothing to sell, money is scarce. We have nothing. Dad didn’t say anything all day. He was extra silent. A silence that encompassed him wherever he went. This silence was darkness. The silence was suffocating. Mum and my sisters eat silently too. All of us, in silence, eating the only thing we could afford, baked beans. I look over to the TV which is on channel seven. Seven Local News is starting, maybe there will be news about the drought.

“Breaking news. Cereal, wheat, corn and other grain prices are expected to skyrocket due to the drought affecting many farmers across Australia, mainly in Queensland and New South Wales. This price drop is a sign of the struggling farmers out there. This level of food shortages is what started the Syrian conflict in 2011 and the drought in East Africa in 2011 that caused 10,000 deaths throughout the drought. It is hoped that Australia does not fall to that situation—” the news ended as Dad turned the TV off, he then walked down the hall to his room.

“I think we all need an early night too, children. Lucy, Nora, off to bed. You too William”, Mum ordered politely.

I go to my room and as soon as my head hits the pillow, I’m gone. Gunshots, so many gunshots. I sit up to see I am in one of my family’s paddocks. Gunshots, so many gunshots. People are running at me with guns strapped to them. I stand up and they start shooting. I feel my body being torn to pieces. Ripped apart with machine gun fire. I fall to the ground and in a pool of blood, I start to rise. Like a spirit ascending. I see my rag doll of a body on the ground as I keep rising. I look down to see the men raiding our house. I see my Mum shot and my sisters are taken. This is like the Syrian crisis. Famine turned to war. This is the

worst case scenario. They break the glass on the windows and crystals of glass are scattered across the sky. Like stars spinning in motion. I see my Dad. He stands there and BOOM!

I awake to a loud sound. I get up. Get out of bed and walk to the kitchen. I see my Mother on the ground crying as she holds the body of my father. He shot himself. It was too much. A pool of blood encompasses him like the dark silence that consumed him before. The silence killed him. I can't feel anything. He is gone. The anxiety feeling is back. It suffocates me like the silence suffocated Dad.

“The drought affects a lot of farmers in terrible ways. Suicide rates are the highest they have ever been in Australia due to the drought and this is not a good situation we need to be in. The less farmers we have, the less food. Export value has dipped 12% due to this drought and the economy will be hit hard this coming year. The less exports the less money coming back into Australia's economy. This is not just a national crisis, if we don't export our grains, cattle and other products then this is now a global crisis. We need to band together to save these farmers. This is a global crisis. If you need help or are struggling, contact Beyond

Blue today. Thank you for watching Seven News, goodnight Australia.” I turn the TV off and look around our small, cramped apartment rental. We had to leave the farm. Mum isn't taking it well. She isn't her best. I look after my sisters most days because she can't. Mentally she is silent. Mentally she cannot care for us. I get up and go to the window. I look out across the city. I look to the sky.

“I love you Dad, always.”

By **Ben Springhall**

Year 10, Kingaroy State High School  
KINGAROY – QLD.

## The Vagabond and His Guitar

There, at the damp corner of the city,  
the thin, skeleton-like figure  
holds his old guitar close to him.  
The haggard man weakly hunched,  
the gentle strumming begins.

The night is a special kind of blackness,  
cold blue embraces him,  
and within its safety,  
I can feel my own soul more clearly,  
that innocent inborn spark.  
“Mmmhmmm, mmmhmmm”,  
quietly humming along  
“Mmmhmmm, mmmhmmm”,  
with thoughts dragging into song.

His soul drops freely into the sweet melody,  
thoughts floating,  
swirling along the chorus,  
fill up the chilly blue night.

The notes dance and play, like the sun  
wading through the misty sky  
till all too soon, the notes begin to fade,  
slowing, this sweet melody ending,  
closing dim, lonely eyes  
wondering where he went wrong.

Asleep in the shining blue moon,  
the cold light, his only comfort  
seeing the man's elongated limbs,  
cramped, angular posture,  
my heart breaks a little more.  
Sometimes eyes need music to see,  
and the darker the night,  
the sweeter the song.

By **Vivian Nguyen**

Year 11, St. Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Ms. Rathmann

# The Highest Point



**A**RISE from a sleep, cold, wet and tired, as expected. It is 6am,  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ . As I rise from my tent and out of my dew-covered sleeping bag, I am faced by a hundred or so other Himalayan adventurers all going through their morning routines. I myself have been on the trail for nine days and feeling the symptoms now, I couldn't imagine what these other trekkers are going through. The thought of their pain won't leave my head, I have so many questions about this.

Today should be my final day, well so I hope. I walk up to one of the fellow trekkers and start some small talk, along the lines of the weather and how he has progressed. His name was Michael, and he told me he has enjoyed this voyage up Mount Everest and is confident he will get across the line today on what should be the last day for all of us here at this camp. Prior to coming to Nepal, I did some research on the experiences of past climbers, a common note between all these writing pieces were how they said the afternoon on their final day was the most life changing experience of their life. So here I am, eager to finish one of the hardest climbs of my life. Michael and I continue chatting while we have our powdered oats and honey ration pack. We have discussed how excited we are about reaching the summit this afternoon and we decide we want to be the first of the people here at the camp to reach the top. We head off on our way, the other trekkers' faces have a weird shocked and confused look on their faces.

After a bitter hour of trekking in the coldest and harshest climate I have ever been in, we imagine we have at least a 45-minute lead over the next trekker. We are really starting to feel it now, with at least 5 more hours of trekking and almost a kilometre more to climb vertically. Michael wants to rest, we have a break and hydrate for about 2 minutes or so, it's hard to keep track of time under immense pressure at such a high altitude. Another hour passes and many rest breaks to go with it, I feel for Michael and console him through this as he is immensely feeling the pressure under the altitude. We continue this pattern, but we are still confident we have a lead over everyone else as although we are having many breaks, we are motivating each other to pick up the pace towards the summit because we know the reward will be worth it. Another 2 hours passed and we have an estimated arrival time to the summit in approximately 45 minutes.

Michael is gone, not literally but physically and mentally. He keeps saying "this is it", I keep pushing him, I know if I leave him behind, he won't finish this. We arrive at a rest stop off the edge of a cliff, I tell him to sit and rest while admiring the view while I went to the portable toilets. I don't normally assume the worst but this time I am, leaving Michael on the edge of a cliff unwatched in this circumstance is never what I should do, we are all thinking the same thing and the same worst possible outcome, suicide.

Just as I am about to walk out of the toilet, I hear a bang on the door, and I open up the door and see another distressed hiker who must've caught up to us. He has a massive look of fear and shock on his face and I instantly assume this is because of the cold. I greet him and the first thing he says in a stuttered voice is, "I... I... I just saw it happen just then, who is he?". I am confused and ask what he means, he says "Y... Y... Your friend, over there, he just jumped".

I drop everything and run back, screaming and assuming the worst. I get to the edge of the cliff and see his trekking pack standing up alone looking over the snowy Himalayan region. I don't know how to feel, I look over the edge and just see a cloud of white shiny snow. I look around for help, nobody in sight. I lost the other trekker who pulled me out of the toilet but most importantly I've lost Michael, for good.

I assume I am the only one around. With no other point of contact I must turn around and head all the way back to alert someone. But no, I can't do that, after all of this I know exactly what Michael wants and exactly what I want, that is to finish. I continue on by myself, without Michael. With an estimated half hour left in my journey I have enough self-belief in myself to finish this off. I'm pushing through it despite the voices and the movie playing in my mind of Michael. I am traumatised once I finish this. Something is going to have to be done surrounding my mental state.

Lost in my thoughts I suddenly find myself on the final stretch, one hundred metres to go, steep uphill.

Here I am... this is all I have ever wanted, to reach the summit of Everest, this is what Michael would've wanted. I push myself up the final rock and bring myself onto my feet, standing tall, on top of the world, at the highest point on the globe.

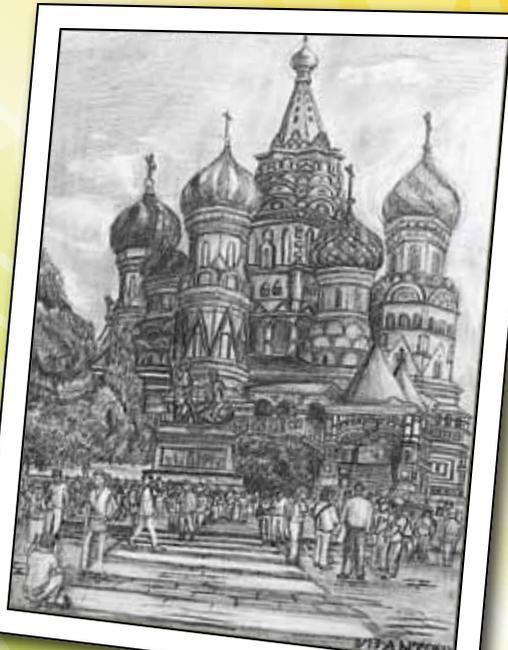
I look over the edge and into the bleached white terrain and scream out "I did it... I did it". All of a sudden I hear a whistle behind me and a familiar voice saying, "Hey, sorry for running ahead mate, just wanted to finish first".

By **Will Hoffman**  
Year 11, Newington College  
REDFERN - NSW

# 2020

# YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS

By Anthony Qin

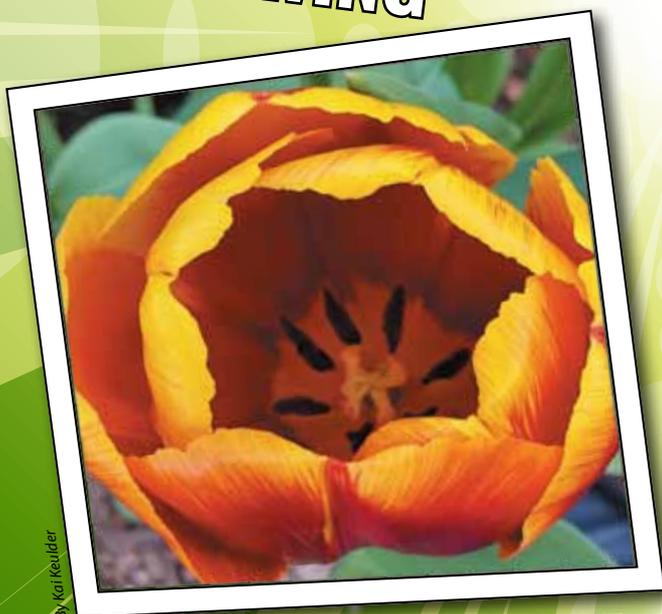


## DRAWING



By Manna Tsuchiya

## COMPUTER ART



By Kai Keulder

## PHOTOGRAPHY



By Matthew Ropesam

## PAINTING

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The YoungAtArt website and the Young Australian Art Awards are an initiative of the Children's Charity Network. All entrants must be no older than 18 years of age or attending either a primary or secondary college. There are 4 categories: Painting, Drawing, Photography, Computer Art. There are three age groups: Junior (Prep to Grade 4), Middle (Grade 5 to Year 8), Senior (Year 9 to Year 12).

To enter your Artwork you will need to obtain a digital image of your piece of work and submit this image on-line through our website at [www.ozkids.com.au](http://www.ozkids.com.au).

To do this you will be required to sign up in order for you to have the access to submit artwork. If you or your school do not have access to digital imaging, you may send a copy of your artwork to Young at Art, PO Box 267, Lara, Victoria 3212. Further information is available online.

# The Power of Words

We've got a problem with communication  
and it's becoming quite a concern,  
we flip ourselves over frustrations,  
yes, I'm losing faith in words.

Burn away towers of communication,  
throw them away, cast them aside,  
shed these weapons of separation,  
these cutting words must be denied.

Words without warmth take away my soul,  
they slip vaguely beyond my control,  
stopping me from passing though the midnight toll,  
stopping me from passing to my supreme goal.

Why must I live up to expectations  
and suffer from standards of society?  
Why must I be a comparison and wreck myself with anxiety?

You bully those who aren't true  
to your idea of perfection,  
an idea that's a mirror image of you  
you're not fond of introspection.

To cross this river of loneliness  
we need the key to future happiness,  
we learn to fight against bitterness and hatred,  
now ask yourself, why were you created?

With no war and no brutality,  
if we love each other we'll find victory,  
but in this harsh reality  
we need faith in the goodness of humanity.

Tears of reality,  
sighs of morality  
drowning in this dreadful sea,  
can it be... ME?

By **Vanessa Phung**  
Year 8, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Ms Rathmann

# A Show of Stars

Stars dance across the night sky,  
luminous diamonds  
bedazzled on a sea of midnight blue  
to impress the moon.

One by one  
they begin to shine  
like dazzling lights  
lustrous and bright.

Their glow is warming  
like our elders  
watching over us  
as our lives move on.

Scattered through the sky,  
they form shapes and pictures  
like ancient maps  
charting our journeys.

New stars appear  
like fairy dust,  
new-born wishes  
waiting to come true.

By **Ayo Adejoro**  
Year 8, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Ms Shelda Rathmann

# Sakura no Hana (Cherry Blossom)

**C**HERRY blossoms dance gaily in the breeze, a myriad of pastel colours reflecting the fleeting beauty of life and death through their natural cycle. Each blossom opens as if it were a book, a book more sculpted than written, the ink infused into the petals to give them their soft glow. It is a tale of the loving care of the soil, the rain and the sun, a story of the insect and the soil bacteria. Yet despite all of that love and care, the ephemeral existence of the trees vanishes from the world, journeying to its afterlife. A grand poem of the living world, the cherry blossom tree lifts its branches to the sky as if its very presence is enough to hold back the darkness and command the sunlight.

★ ★ ★

Today will be the day Sakamoto Tanaka leaves home. He will leave a place that has been his childhood cocoon and travel a journey which is fraught with danger and uncertainty. Nevertheless, he enjoys the thrill of tackling the ferocious waves. He paddles through the Urui River with his fellow fishermen. His boat falls under a rhythmic pattern as he paddles forward only to be pushed backwards by the persistent waves. He sits in silence, listening to the world around him: the whistling air, rustling leaves and flowing water, giving him the calmness needed for the challenge ahead. He looks down at his aching hands. Calluses, cuts and bruises mar his skin, representing his many arduous yet euphoric journeys. A long array of wilting cherry blossom trees line the river's edge, releasing an exuding, soft, rose-like scent. Sakamoto's eyes follow a blossom which falls from a tree, gracefully dropping into the river, which is then forcefully pushed down stream.

Past the trees and against the pale white skies, Mt Fuji stands in the background, overlooking the inevitable outcome. Its rugged terrain reveals raw physical strength alongside vitality and spirituality. The peak of the mountain divides the heavens and the earth, a stairway to the

skies. Its peak is dressed in white winter snow which frowns upon the loss of lives. Deep lines stretch across its face, bearing downwards, overlooking those predestined to die, and waiting for them to ascend its trials and pathways to the afterlife. Sakamoto stares at Mount Fuji in awe, as its rugged lines and snow peak are symbols of immense power. The power he aspires to achieve.

Suddenly, the ocean awakens and stirs. Sakamoto's heartbeat quickens, falling in time with the rumbling of the river. Adrenaline courses through his body as he prepares for battle. Thundering water and rolling waves bear downwards onto sleek wooden boats, forcing some of the fishermen out of the safety of their craft and into the river's domain. Their despairing cries fall on deaf ears of the sea gods. Sakamoto desperately directs his boat back towards the shore, but his efforts are to no avail. The strength of the water traps the fishermen as if they have become the fish which the river is trying to catch. The roar of cascading water surrounds them. He has never fought such a powerful typhoon. Panic begins to creep its way into his body. He looks toward Mount Fuji and it stares solemnly back. Its position is one of safety, and at that moment he envies it. White sea foam teases the doomed ones, offering the oarsmen moments of safety. The foam forms a shroud behind them which belies their ill intent. Cruel waves continue to crash relentlessly against the tiny boats. Curves of water form claws to seize control of the souls cowering amongst the feeble wood, tossing them like toys.

The forces of nature collide with the weakness of humankind. A surge of fear runs down Sakamoto's spine as he bows low, dodging the splash of the waves whilst praying to the sea gods for deliverance. The first giant wave materialises. Its sheer magnitude deepens the terror within each crew member. Through their chests, their hearts pump and beat like they're trying to escape. Clutching his oar, Sakamoto

urgently paddles away from the danger zone. The first of the five boats fall prey to the angry ocean. The wave contracts around it, assaulting it in a frenzied rush. The others turn their heads away as sounds of splintering wood are heard. Paddle faster! Sakamoto grits his teeth, unwilling to accept defeat. The deafening cries of his crewmates are finally drowned out by the violence of the crashing waves. No matter how fast they paddle, the river is an unyielding predator. It is invincible. He feels the presence of the enraged water behind him, knowing that the battle will only last a little longer. The elaborate thread of fate wraps itself around him. A shadow is cast over Sakamoto as he crouches in anticipation, awaiting his demise. Droplets of water fall onto him and he smells the final whiff of his favourite tree, the cherry blossom.

The swaying old trees along the edge of the river wave goodbye, bowing before Mount Fuji and praying for the provision of safe passage for the blossoms on their journey. The haunting spirits fill with pride and sadness as they watch the blossoms drift away. Witnessing the symbolic action from a distance, honey bees lift their wings to the sky as a sign of gratitude for the pollen that the cherry petals have provided. Slowly, each blossom flows along the river of time, following its destiny. Today will be the day they leave home. They will experience a unique journey, encountering brutal trials as they pass from this world. The petals join with their fellow sisters and brothers, forming an aromatic floral carpet that drifts towards the sky. Their fragrance is not pungent and penetrating like other flowers, instead, it's faint and unobtrusive.

Like the moving hand of a clock they mark time in their chaotic way; pink petals, red stamens, blue skies. The sweetest seduction. Memento Mori.

*By Anna Nguon*

*Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Ms Rathmann*

# BOOK REVIEWS

*These were done by students while schools were still closed.*

## **The War That Saved My Life**

by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley (Text Publishing)

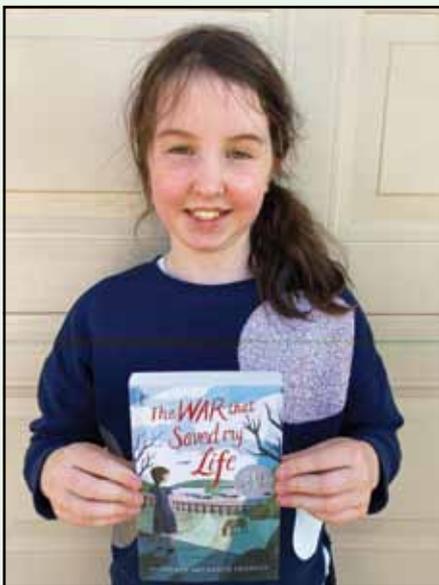
In the book *The War That Saved My Life*, a 9-year-old girl with a club foot is taken from her home in London when the war starts as an evacuee. She ends up in a country town, where she experiences love and joy for the first time.

In the country town she is taken to a nice, big home compared to her small, dark, damp, miniscule flat in London. Her father sadly died when her brother was born, when she was four. Her mother never wanted children so she was treated like a cripple, because of her club foot.

I would recommend this book for readers aged 12–14, and anyone who is eager to learn about the war without feeling all sad and gloomy afterwards.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Isobel Heer, Year 4, Geelong Lutheran College, Vic.



## **Toffle Towers**

by Tim Harris, illustrated by James Foley (Puffin Books)

I liked this book because some of the characters are funny, and some are mean and selfish and I liked that because all the different personalities made it interesting. It's about a hotel that has many different, amazing rooms and a 10-year-old boy called Chegwin runs it.



There's also a flying shuttle bus which is on the cover. There are great illustrations in it too. I can't wait to read the second book that is out now.

For readers 7 and up.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [9/10]

— Elodie McInerney, age 9, Blue Mountains, NSW

## **The Book of Chance**

by Sue Whiting (Walker Books)

Twelve-year-old Chance Callahan begins to grow suspicious when she finds some strange photos and books at her house, making her wonder if she is adopted. This sad and mysterious book made my heart lift. I couldn't help agreeing with Chance when she talks about social media, and her reactions seemed to be sent through the book and into me as I shared her shock, sadness, and urge to know more.

Chance lives in Wollongong, NSW, and her friends are the only people she can trust. She feels lost, afraid, lonely. Fatherless, and now... perhaps motherless.



I recommend this book for readers aged 12+.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [9/10]

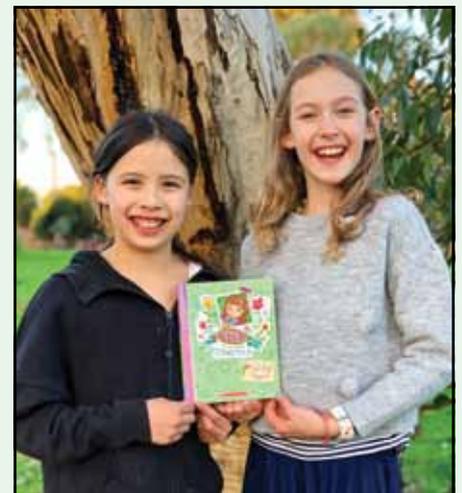
— Chelsea, age 11, Blue Mountains, NSW

## **Ella Diaries: Wildlife Rescue**

by Meredith Costain, illustrated by Danielle McDonald (Scholastic Australia)

We could not believe that the next book in the *Ella Diaries* series was about animals! We think that animals are so cute and so does the main character, Ella. She LOVES animals so much she could not stop talking about them in the book.

*Wildlife Rescue* is a lovely fiction book. It is about a baby ringtail possum that fell out of a tree and Ella and her friends save its life. Along the way, she makes a new



friend called Harper and starts helping out at the local Wildlife Rescue Centre. We really enjoyed the story because Ella cared about the animals so much and inspired us to make animals a part of our own lives.

This book would be suitable for animal lovers aged 7 to 12. We loved it so much that we could not put it down!

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Tia Dong and Inez Johnson, Year 4, Fairfield Primary School, Vic.

## **Stella the Unstoppable and the School Camp Kerfuffle**

by Richard Newsome, illustrated by Alice McKinley (Affirm Press Kids)

Stella is very excited about school camp, especially because she hears there is going to be a pizza party and a trophy for the team who gets the most points on the activities. But when she hears about ‘Spud Riley’, she worries that camp might have a few more surprises (not good ones) than she expected.



This book is VERY funny and I liked it because it had a problem and I really wanted to figure out how it was going to be solved.

I would recommend this book for kids aged 8+.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [8/10]

— Grace, Year 3, Vic.

## **Ella At Eden: The Secret Journal**

by Laura Sieveking (Scholastic Australia)

*Ella at Eden: The Secret Journal* is a great book! I love it so much because it builds on from *Ella Diaries*. This is a new series about Ella’s adventures at her new boarding school, Eden. The thing I love most about this book are the cliffhangers. I never wanted to put the book down because every chapter ending was intriguing.



This book is great for kids aged 10–12 because the language is a bit more advanced than *Ella Diaries* now that Ella is in year 7. I definitely recommend this book to people who like mysteries.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [9½/10]

— Annabelle Wiltshire, age 10, Bentleigh East, Vic

## **The Glimme**

by Emily Rodda, illustrated by Marc McBride (Omnibus Books)

I loved *The Glimme*, because it had quite a mysterious catch to it. It also had very cool creatures, and lots of action (especially when the fire beast was attacking the giants and Finn).



The story made me feel curious, especially when Finn looked into the paintings and wondered: ‘What does “The artist’s secret is the key, to doors no eyes but mine can see”, mean?’. I was really intrigued. Finn is my favourite character, because he is the most daring, funniest, most curious and also the coolest character in the book.

The drawings help you understand what’s happening more clearly. Marc McBride and Emily Rodda are a great team.

Suitable for readers 10+.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Jean-Louis van der Merwe, Year 4, Eltham North PS, Vic.

## **Tilda Teaches Cartwheels**

by Amy Adeney, illustrated by Katie Alexander (Five Mile Press)

Tilda, Binky (Bianca) and Harry are on their way to their first swimming lesson. Tilda thinks she is a superstar swimmer but she soon realises that Binky is better than her. So because she isn’t very good at swimming, she thinks of something she is good at – cartwheels! But does it go well?

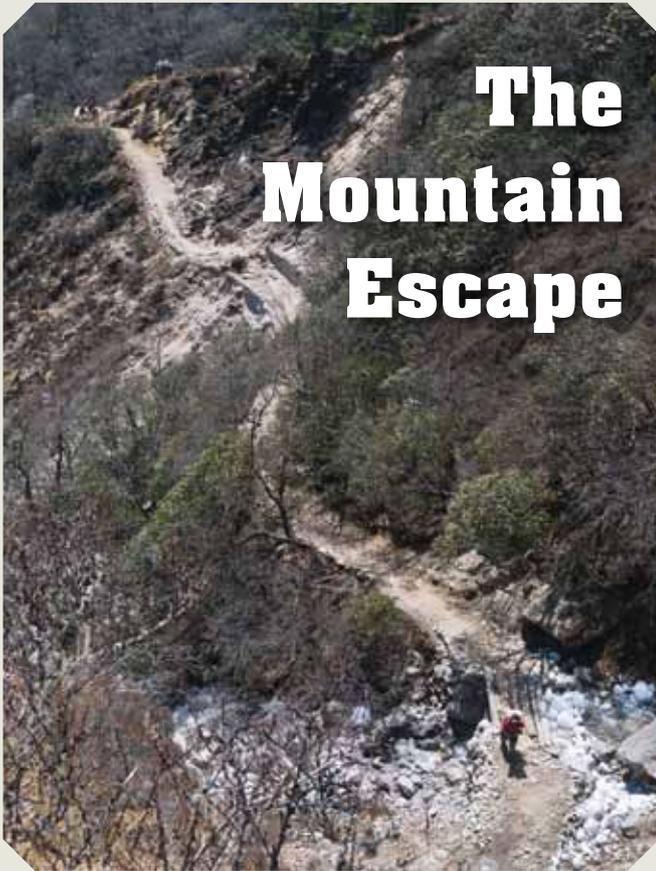
This is kind of like a ‘what are you going to do next?’ type of book.

I would recommend this book to kids aged 5–8.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Charlotte, Year 1, Vic.





# The Mountain Escape

**V**ICTORIA was sprinting down the mountain side careful not to fall of the edge as she returned from her once-in-a-lifetime quest vacation. She was tip-toeing along the rocky, creaky mountain track. She was holding her bow and arrow as she walked as stealthily as a ninja. Her sensitive listening was careful for even the smallest sounds.

It was forbidden to be out after 1pm. That was one of the Earth King's strictest rules for over 1000 years and the penalty was execution.

Victoria slid into a hot, misty cave that blended into the rocky part of the

were cracking jokes at each other and stopped halfway through suspiciously. They had not yet found her, captured her and murdered her, but if they did...

She caught her breath, anxiously glancing in all directions, searching a way for freedom. Rocky covers grew on both sides of the cave, slippery with disgusting water and dusty with dried sand. She could never wall jump with the conditions of the cave and her boots. She couldn't turn back and jump off the mountain either.

To do so would be absolutely bonkers and she would fall to her death. But if she sat there sulking, the Warriors would

mountain. It smelt like water and rotten eggs. The rocks under her shoes were sharp and painful to her bare feet.

She had survived being out after 1pm before, but never for so many hours and so high up the mountain. She wished with so much love that she was back at the palace with her two best friends. Her stomach ached as it ran through her mind that she might only be living for a few more minutes even though the Earth King was her eldest brother.

Victoria leapt to a pause as she heard three Earth Warriors talking behind her, stomping in her direction. They

find her and she would die in seconds. By arrow or by sword, she would die. Victoria straightened herself against the cave wall, quiet as an ant, forcing herself not to sneeze. The Warriors became clearer. Louder, louder...

She leapt out into the empty pathway and looked behind where she could see the Earth King's palace in view, annoyed with hatred. For five years the palace had been the lair of the Earth King. Her friends told her that before he was crowned, the palace was where the former Earth King had lived, having served whatever he wanted, and the palace could be seen clearly. After the new Earth King's coronation, the palace was completely covered from an earth wall.

So it was with relief that she stopped in front of a hole. The Earth Warriors were close and this was her only chance of escape. So with one deep breath Victoria jumped down the hole and slid all the way down. She came to a stop at an earthy platform and took one look around before she realised that she was at the bottom of the mountain and in front her was her long, black skateboard with a white skull. With one gigantic leap, Victoria got onto her skateboard and rolled all the way to her parents' house, dodged the mango tree which was swishing around and bashed the door open, her head filled with happiness.

Little did she know that in a few seconds her eyes were going to see things that they never saw before. Little did she know that she was going to see something out of her mind.

By **Gufan Hugaz**  
Year 6, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.  
Teacher: Mr Castle



# ENCRYPT

Encrypt is a sly in the shadows kind of hacker.  
Black hooded and long white pants to slip into the night.  
Shallow brown eyes with a hint of green and deep odourless breath.  
Swiftly, silently and calmly with no hesitation moves.

Rough dry skin to the touch.  
A laptop and USB he will always carry.  
Deep and controlling voice that says,  
'Don't look for mercy you will not find it!'

By **Matthew Hughes**  
Year 7, De La Salle College  
MALVERN – VIC.  
Teacher: Anette Phillips

# Numb

**I**T WAS cold. That's what she recalled from that day. The ice glazed streets diced her town into neat, uneven sections, the red noses and misty breaths. That was the last thing she felt before it happened. Perched timidly in Dr. Porter's office, she recalled her day as she had rehearsed time and time again, all the reiteration seemed routine at this point; 'recall, discuss feelings'. Yet any time the latter arrived, she had nothing left to express. All she summoned was the chill of the winter breeze seeping into her skin, mellow and dull, painless yet agonisingly numbing. It seemed reasonable to her to take solace in the meaningless objectivity. After all, what could she say? What did she feel?

"So, Eleanor", Dr. Porter stated sincerely, "How do you plan on spending your holidays?". It was slightly jarring; she had subjected herself to therapy for the past year and she had heard hardly any small talk leave the doctor's lips. "Uh, I guess I'll be staying with my sister and her family again", she answered tentatively, stirring in her chair. It was difficult to discuss the holidays after what happened, after the imprint it left on her. Right on cue, Porter clicked his pen and asked her to recount the incident and how it made her feel. She began as she always did, by explaining the way she felt about him, the way she would run her fingers through his hair and gaze as he melted at her touch. The way he would look at her, as if she were the sole person

he could ever truly adore. The absolute passion that overwhelmed her when he held her in his arms. She lost herself in the recollection, like a pair of permanent rose-coloured goggles, driving her to grip tightly upon the special moments she found. She reminisced over the way his voice flowed like waterfalls of golden honey when he uttered her name. Her knees weakened even when illustrating the memories, of him.

It was long ago, yet she rehearsed the moment so frequently in her subconscious that the events of the night remained etched in her mind, branded into her emotions, suffocating her thoughts. Then, that night, fracturing her life into shards of self-loathing and pity, a barrage of sorrow and loss.

Hands intertwined, they trudged along the sidewalk, arms swaying as they hummed different Christmas tunes, entranced by the fluttering snowflakes planting themselves on their heads. She shivered, her numb fingers stuffed into the pockets of her jeans, desperately attempting to warm herself. He noticed her efforts and daintily placed his coat on her shoulders, he flashed an affectionate grin at her and chuckled. She smirked playfully and bent down, collecting a handful of snow. With

a light-hearted giggle, she hurled the snowball at him, striking him directly in the chest. Unknowingly, he trod upon a fragment of ice-coated concrete.

She could never erase the sound of his head hitting the pavement, nor the sight of his unresponsive body sprawled, unmoving, upon the bitter tarmac. It haunted her memories, captivating her every thought. At first, she didn't trust it was real, she must have stared disbelievingly at him for a full minute before she truly acknowledged the situation. Her whole being was in shock. She collapsed and let out a wail, shuddering and weeping. Someone nearby rushed towards them and phoned the paramedics. Tears streamed from her eyes and streaked down her face, her body heaving with distress. She caught a slight glimpse of his body, lifted upon a stretcher and hooked to different machines, soon locked within a truck, speeding away without any notice or farewell to the moments they had shared.

It was all too fast. The ambulance, then the hospital, then the funeral. Life seemed to progress by her while she was unable to move, stuck within that moment, forced to relive the tragic sorrow she had undergone. Frozen within her own feelings and their supposed meanings. In that moment, emotion overcame her, however, in this one, she didn't sense anything, she couldn't, all she felt was a vast expanse of nothingness, a numbing that crept up her spine, spreading through her body like a virus. As she concluded her recollection, she pondered one notion; she couldn't blame herself for being numb, after all, it was cold.

By **Molly Waters**

Year 11,

Qld. Academies | Creative Industries

HOLLAND PARK WEST – QLD.

Teacher: Ms. Gleeson



# Our Little Town Boolundi

In the dry times,  
My mate and I make rhymes,  
There's no rain in the clear hot summer skies,  
Trucks come here and by,  
Through our little dry town Boolundi,

We weep more than drink,  
One blink we have water next to nothing,  
Life is hard in our little town Boolundi,  
Losing more people day to day,  
All moving to the cities,

Lines run through our little town Boolundi,  
Stores running out of water litres daily,  
Cracks run through our roads,  
My mates mournfully moved from Boolundi,

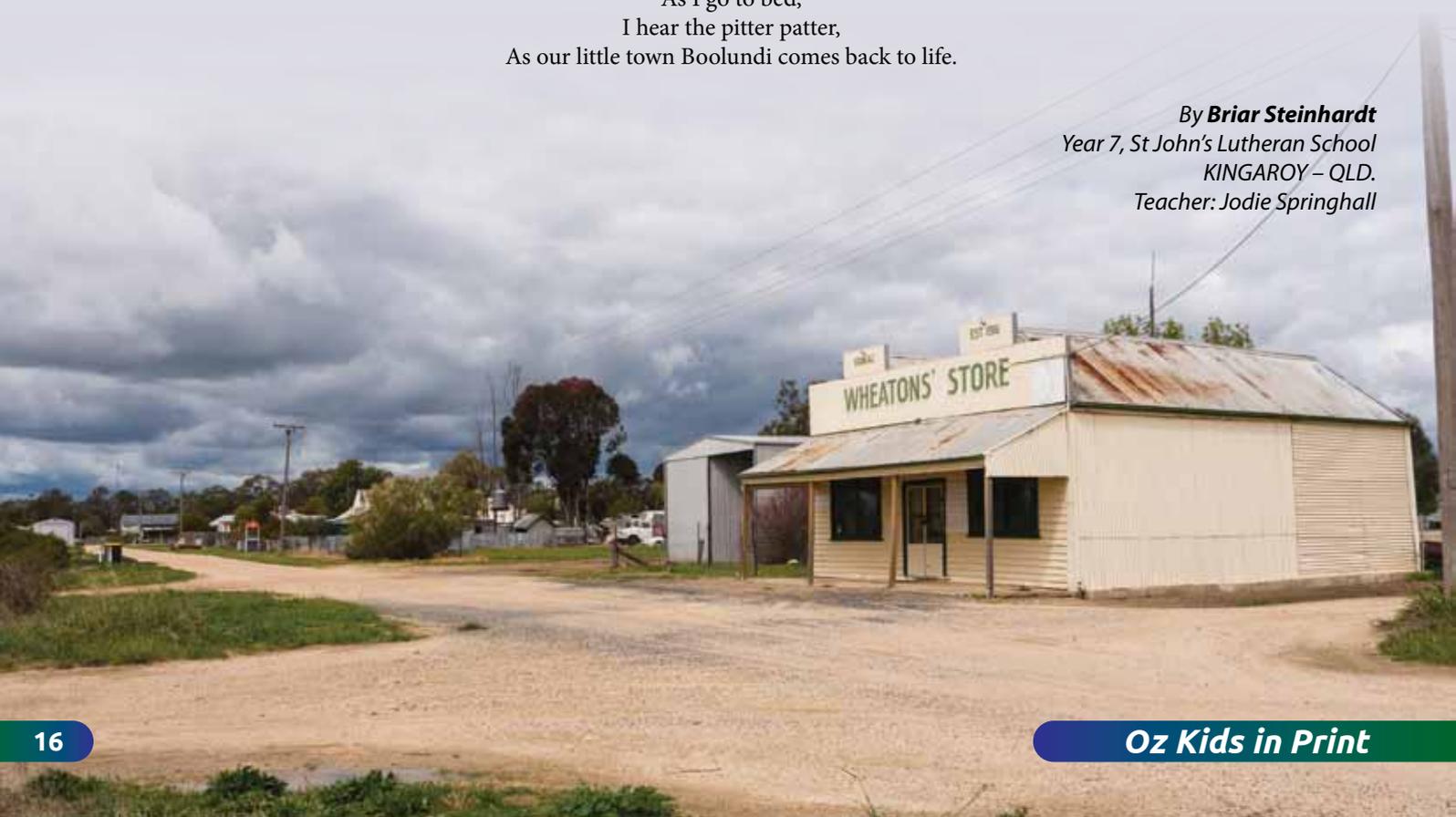
Our lives have been like a rollercoaster,  
The wind blows steaming air through me,  
As our little town Boolundi slowly died,  
The buzz of flies fills my eardrums,

Our water is nearly at Day Zero,  
Day Zero, one week away,  
Last water truck rolls down the ghostly road,  
It's nearly Day Zero,

A single toilet flush costs nine litres,  
Fifty litres is all we get a day,  
No rain has fallen on the land for ages,  
As I run out of pages,

A single drop lands on my head,  
It rains, it rains, I tell you,  
As I go to bed,  
I hear the pitter patter,  
As our little town Boolundi comes back to life.

*By Briar Steinhardt  
Year 7, St John's Lutheran School  
KINGAROY - QLD.  
Teacher: Jodie Springhall*



# What I have learned about the publishing industry through interning

By Stella Black

## ★ Reading works in progress helps me as a student

*(And hopefully improves my marks, too.)*

Interning at Ford Street Publishing has helped me strengthen the skills and techniques that I am currently learning at university. A large part of my course interrogates narrative structure and analyses scenes and characters in a critical manner. I've found that it's one thing to be able to do this with a piece that's already been published, edited, and is in its final form; it's a completely different experience to apply these skills to an incomplete piece in its drafting process. They're still in the works and have the ability to change and be moulded in a way that accentuates their meaning. These manuscripts are full of raw writing, which is wonderful to read and to be able to offer suggestions in order for the writing to reach its full potential.

## ★ Manuscript assessments are more involved than just checking typos

*(We don't actually edit any of the typos when reading the manuscript. That happens when the editor comes in.)*

Reading manuscripts has exposed me to writing styles that I generally don't turn to in my personal reading choices or through my required course readings. Analysing picture books and middle-grade novels is new to me, but it's refreshing to work with more light-hearted content in comparison to what I normally read or write – a lot less pessimism.

However, I have had to learn how to adapt to different writing styles and to be objective when reading drafts. I have to understand each writer's voice and try to give advice that will make their voice sing in their writing. I can't just become entranced by the story like I do when I'm reading books at home. I have to think of the story as a set of events and characters that make a strong, supported thematic statement. Does the tone stay consistent throughout the piece and, if it changes, is this intended in order to cause a reaction from readers? How will the characters be interpreted? Are these events appropriate for the intended audience? Does the intended audience need to change? Are there any plot holes that I am questioning as a reader?

## ★ How to separate myself as an assessor, reader, and writer

*(And learning to not intrude on authors' pieces.)*

When you are reading a manuscript for assessment, it doesn't matter if you feel more like reading a middle-grade fantasy today and have picked up a contemporary young adult piece. Each story should be assessed objectively and with the same amount of investment in the piece. Each story needs to be appreciated for what it is. What I have found really difficult isn't reading genres I wouldn't normally read or enjoying the manuscripts – it's been great to broaden my reading – but instead, reminding myself that I'm assessing, not writing. It's hard when you think of a really

good metaphor, or piece of dialogue, or even an event that fits in with the story perfectly. It's not a collaboration, and no matter how much I like the story, I need to adapt to separating my writing from the assessment process.

## ★ Publishing is much more involved than you think

*(It's not just the writer and the editor. Someone has to make the books.)*

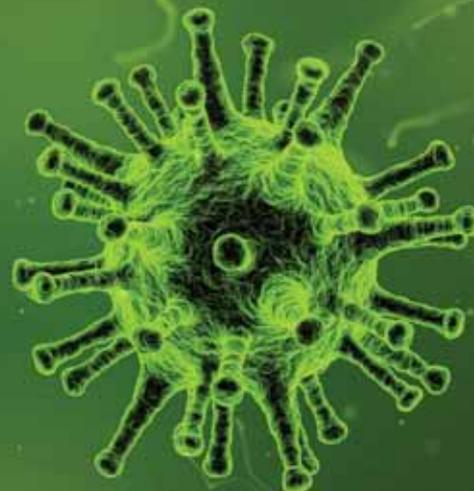
My perception of the publishing industry has changed exponentially. We live in an age where it's so simple to self-publish your own work, and theoretically, anyone can have anything published by themselves if they want. You can even send a manuscript to Amazon and they'll publish it for you. Publishing a book traditionally, though, involves many more people than just yourself and a website. There are manuscript assessors, editors, and then there's the amount of time in between all of the drafts being completed and re-edited and finally finished. Even after that, there are the printers of the books, and the timeline set on the book's release, which corresponds with other releases of the year. When the book is finally released, there are booksellers, schools, friends, families and readers. The actual process of publishing a book is so much more than just submitting a draft to be printed and bound, but it's worth it!

**FORD ST Publishing**

162 Hoddle St, Abbotsford, Vic 3067, Australia  
T +61 3 9416 4062 F 61 3 9481 1123

## Acrostic Poem – "Coronavirus"

Covid-19  
Outbreak has made us  
Rethink every idea in  
Our mind has  
No restriction or fence  
Appreciate this moment with  
Vigorous euphoria  
Imagine a land of fantasy  
Ruled by you with  
Unbelievable freedom  
So unleash your mind but not yourself.



By Keyaan Nasim  
Year 2,  
Westall Primary School  
CLAYTON SOUTH – VIC.  
Teacher: Mrs. Emma Katz

# Secret Friends



**T**UCKED up in her grandmother's attic, Emma stared intently at the cover of the book she just found. It was old, dusty and torn. Mysteriously, the book was titled "Find Your Hidden Friends".

Emma Yang was nine years old and loved to read books. She spent much of her free time digging into the pages of her books like a rabbit burrowing holes. All her friends would tease her and call her a bookworm, but she didn't care.

Emma's hand trembled as she flipped open the book. Suddenly, beams of light radiated towards her as she began to rise from the ground.

"What's happening?" Emma whispered to herself. Then everything went black...

"Oomph!" Emma landed with a thud. She could smell the rotten leaves and the sight of humongous trees waving like flags about in the wind. Suddenly, a curious squirrel hopped up to her. It twitched its adorable button nose and shook its fluffy tail.

Then, the most peculiar thing happened. The squirrel started to talk!

"Would you help me? I'm lost and I need to find where my friend's birthday party is," the squirrel explained worriedly. Usually Emma didn't like to help anybody, but with that desperate expression on the squirrel's face, she just couldn't say no.

"Let's try going that way," Emma suggested as they ambled along the crooked path together. Before long, Emma found herself

laughing and joking with the squirrel. Soon, they were deep into the ominous shadows as Emma began thinking that they'd never find the birthday party they were looking for. Miraculously, she suddenly spotted two gnarled trees holding up a sign reading, "Happy Birthday Twitchy!"

Coyly, Emma asked the little squirrel if his friend's name was Twitchy and the squirrel squeaked, "Yes!"

Excitedly, she pointed to the gnarled trees and announced into the squirrel's ear, "I think you'll find your happiness there!". Squealing with joy, the squirrel ran towards the long tables, wrapped in scrumptious party food.

Grinning, Emma followed her new friend when she began to think of her grandmother. Immediately, the squirrel noticed the blanket of sadness cover Emma's face and handed her a book titled "Love, Your Secret Friends!"

Emma carefully flipped open the book and sure enough, light streamed out of its pages. Soon, Emma found herself sitting on her grandmother's attic again. What an adventure! Emma thought.

**By Emma Yang**

*Year 4, Beaumont Road Public School  
KILLARA – NSW  
Teacher: Lei Pei*

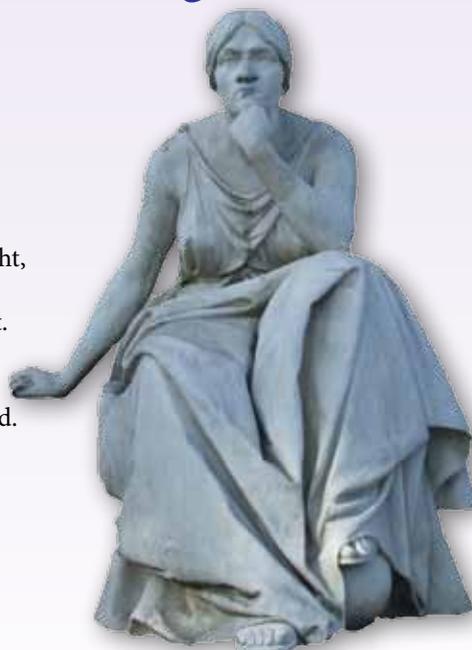
## Mourning His Muse

She; a slow burning serenade,  
Was renaissance to shallow art,  
By sculptor new to passion's blade,  
And all such matters of the heart.

With stone he'd imitate in vain –  
Her eyes; pearl stars which guided night,  
Her smile; sweetest summer rain,  
Her laugh; soft song of birds in flight.

Love a rosy lens unto life,  
Heard art in both the loud and hushed.  
Love was warmth in coldest strife,  
Yellow and pink like heaven's blush.

Such tender hues, dusk held high,  
'Till death did break the fervent sky.



His love for art fell through the cracks  
As life stopped with her final breath.  
Now two shadows rehearse their acts,  
Hers of living and his of death.

She wears naught but eternal youth,  
And he; the constant lash of age.  
In thought, he sits, worn and aloof,  
Awaiting his life's final page.

He knows now what he sees in art,  
Living, dying, not far apart.

**By Lauren O'Callaghan**

*Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Ms Rathmann*

# Anello Opale (*Opal Ring*)

**S**TREAMS of pure scattered rays of light poured through the cracks in my blinds awakening me. Shades of pinks, blues and deep greens were reflected on the bedside table beside me like a disco ball, reminding me of our happiest memories. Each shade caused me to ruminate on the times when sunlight beamed through our curtains. The distinctive aroma of the cologne we bought in Venezia took power over any smell in the room. All I could hear were his gentle breaths, and feel the warm, soft, air make its way down my neck. He held me. It seemed like he'd never let me go, but he did.

\*\*\*

The house was a painting, cold in its rendered realism. Here I was, lost and confused. My heart sank as I realised the day had come. 10th January 2008, another day circled dreadfully in thick red marker. My body started to feel pain deep within my bones, a kind of pain that seemed to travel through to my chest eating me alive. I knew there was no other way. I disturbed the radiant colours and clasped the Anello Opale in the palm of my trembling wrinkled hand. I slid it down my finger, the band slowly clutching it tighter as it reached my knuckle. With a bit of pressure, it forcefully grabbed hold of the base of my finger, refusing to let go. It didn't fit the way it used to.

The rain was unrelenting, exhibiting no signs of ceasing. I sat in the car, switched on the ignition and slowly reversed out the driveway. Thick droplets splashed onto the car and accumulated on the windscreen, blurring my already fizzy vision. As I got closer, the roads seemed longer, almost endless and the lights of oncoming cars multiplied. Reality hit me. I switched the radio off and hesitantly stepped out of the car. I would usually be on my way to the farm with him but instead I was here. Alone.

I went inside and noticed the atmosphere was different to before and the slate grey floor complemented the dark, monotonous walls that

enclosed me. Above every door there was a blue plastic sign with simple letters, no fancy fonts, just bold white. My footsteps echoed as I made my way to the end of the hallway, "What room is Clemente in?". I was taken to his room. As I entered a flood of emotions hit me like a tidal wave. I felt anxious, scared and yet supported. They were all perched around his bed, comforting him. The sight reminded me of the times when everything was tolerable. When everyone was happily helping themselves to the antipasto platter in the middle of the table. Here I was, surrounded by family, my three sons hand in hand, deep in prayer beside their Padre. They didn't let go of the tears that filled their eyes but I could see they were trying to act strong, in the hopes that it would ease my pain. I took a seat beside him on the hard, plastic chair, and in an instant everyone in the room made their way out the door.

His dinner lay in front of him. Untouched. The plate was decorated with sloppily cut up carrots and a slab of chicken that appeared to be slightly undercooked. I chuckled and shook my head in disapproval, knowing that he could produce a far

more appetising meal with his eyes closed. Hopefully he would be back in the kitchen soon, but for now it was my duty to feed him. I reached for the shiny silver fork and carefully dropped small pieces of food through the opening of his mouth. I witnessed the sight reddening his pale cheeks as ounces of life returned to him with each bite. His hands met mine. The Anello Opale reflected its bright colours as he gently stroked the smooth surface of the perfectly rounded gemstone. His soft lips stretched into a tender grin that didn't quite reach his tired hazel eyes. The contrast between his sorrowful eyes and forced smile would have been comical if it were not for the way it made my heart sink to the bottom of my ribcage.

For a few moments I stared at him whilst stroking his bald head to make sure he remained awake. I wished I could yank out all the tubes strapped to his frail body and draw him into a tight, rejuvenating hug. The chemo was not working, but perhaps I could heal him, maybe I could give him some of my strength. I was not ready for him to leave me. The steady heart rhythm suddenly became more rapid. In an instant, an ear splitting noise began emanating from the monitor. Beep. Beep. Beep. I saw a red line flash before my eyes. It flatlined.

My mind went completely silent. Thick air invaded my body, causing my lungs to tighten. My vision blurred, everything was in slow motion. Family and doctors came in and surrounded me, offering hugs that I could not feel. I sat there, frozen. Unresponsive. I took off the Anello Opale and held it tightly. It was all that I had left of him. I glared at all the vibrant colours as if they were the remnants of his soul. The blue speckles represented his calm demeanour, and the gold his priceless laughter. I stroked the well-crafted ring with my thumb, and it was as smooth as the fingers he intertwined with mine. In a way, he was still with me.



By **Bianca Tonin-Petryszak**  
Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

# Diving Deep Down

**S**ITTING on a gnarled tree, Serena gazed down at the world below. Before long, her mother appeared holding an ancient bronze book.

“I found this in the attic”, Serena’s mother reported as she ambled her way to her curious daughter.

“Thanks mother!” exclaimed Serena bubbling with excitement. Like an Autumn leaf, she sprang down the tree branch and grabbed the book from her mother’s arms.

Hastily, Serena began to wonder what stories the book held inside, so she carefully peeled open the cover. Suddenly, beams of light radiated from the book, before Serena began floating weightlessly up into the air like a feather up into the sky...

“Where am I?” Serena asked as the smell of salty air embraced her. The only thing she could see were striped green, blue and pink fish swimming around. That’s when she spotted a lion fish swimming furiously towards her towards her. Although she tried to run away, she soon realised that instead of feet, she had a tail like a fish! Desperately, Serena wriggled like a worm in the soil, but she couldn’t move anywhere. Suddenly, the lion fish began to talk.

“Hi can you help me find my way back home?” it asked helplessly. Although Serena didn’t really make friends or like to help anyone but this time, she decided to help the lion fish, it looked it looked so despondent.

“Sure!” Serena replied while navigating her way through the coral like a bird learning to fly. Finally, they came to a stop where there was a cave.

“Let’s go inside!” the fish exclaimed swimming in, where she was greeted by another lion fish.

“Grandma!” the lion fish cried, swimming towards outstretched arms.

“Come on in and have some food!” the grandma cried in delight. After finishing off a delectable feast, the lion fish noticed the blanket of sadness shrouding Serena’s face. Sighing, the lion fish pulled out the same book from the attic.

“Come and visit us soon!” the fish sobbed, waving its fins.

“Bye!” Serena agreed. When she returned home, she hugged her mother as tightly as vines on a tree.

Moral: Always have a friend no matter or at least a few friends.



By **Emma Bao**

Year 4, Abbotsleigh School

WAHROONGA – NSW

Teacher: Mr Keating



## Her Beauty

Oh how the green tree’s branches,  
cast their loving shadows over her.  
Through the long hours of summer,  
she bathes in the dimmed sunbeams.

She follows the darkening night  
and sleeps under the dryness of winter,  
but through it, her fragrance remains  
as she wakes from her quiet snow grave.

At morning, she greets the arching rays,  
in the mesmerising breeze, she dances.  
Not caring for the earth’s sorrows or joy,  
her smile, so radiant and free.

How the pristine rose shines,  
lightens the smile of an innocent girl.  
In the rose’s presence, she would make  
all my worries and despairs fly away.

By **Vanessa Phung**

Year 8, St Dominic’s Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

# Murky Green

**T**HE BEATING sun shone down on the murky green water. The water looked like an oil spill minus the reds and yellows.

“Why is it green?” I asked.

“Just algae?” My sister Phoebe guessed. I bounded onto the dried mud where water should have been and stepped into the still water making it ripple like miniature waves. I dove into the green water, with Phoebe following. We splashed around in the water for what seemed like an hour until we were worn out and swam back to the bank, we were about to leave when I saw a white sign reading HARMFUL ALGAE MAY BE PRESENT IN THIS WATER CONTACT MAY CAUSE SERIOUS HARM TO HUMANS AND ANIMALS. I showed Phoebe the sign. She shrugged and started walking back to where we were camping. It was only a short walk back but as I walked into the clearing where our tent was set, I started feeling dizzy. I went and sat on the dead grass. I didn't notice I had slept, but now the sky was turning pale pink but the heat was still lingering around. I looked inside to find Phoebe clutching her stomach. She immediately ran outside and threw up beside me. I realised I wasn't feeling the best either and my throat felt like it had been scratched a million times. I flopped onto my bed inside and slept. I woke up to my head throbbing and itching rashes scattered on my arms and legs. I couldn't sleep so I made my way to sit against a tall tree outside. The moon was just a small white scratch in

the sparkling sky. The gentle breeze was finally cold, maybe the weather was finally cooling down. I spent the rest of the night sleeping and waking up next to the tree. I stood up from where I slept, inside Phoebe was scratching at her arms. My head was still aching. Then I thought, the algae did this to us. We walked back to the Murray River, once the sickness had finally worn off, wait. There was silver floating among the green. Fish, dead fish! I wonder what is going through their minds?

I darted through the water, it was so hard to breath! Grit is scraping my gills, fish are meant to dominate water not perish. The green water was slowly suffocating us. Fish all around me from bony bream, golden and silver perch and Murray cod like myself were fleeing from the evil algae that was happily killing us. Finally, as we swum the water cleared into a murky brown colour, I was still barely breathing when I crashed into the river bank. Ow! I didn't think the river bent here. I swam along it and almost crashed face first into another bank. I swam the other way and unsurprisingly the other bank was there. There were fish all around me seeming just as confused as I was. The water must have lowered in this scorching weather. I must take the risk and jump. I swam back a distance, taking a last breath and shot past the water's skin into the suffocating air. I landed on the cracked, air-less brown river bed. I squirmed and flopped around until I finally splashed into a refreshing puddle. It wasn't green, nor was it the other side of the river. Uh, I still need to get to the other

side. I leapt out of the water, not nearly as graceful as a dolphin. I just caught a glimpse of green before crashing into the water with a soft 'plop'. I frantically swam, until plummeting into a fish. It didn't move as I backed away. They were dead! I kept swimming, as I noticed dead fish all around me. I finally couldn't breathe anymore. I swam back past the dead fish and threw myself out of the water, just missing the puddle. As I flopped into the puddle, the water rippled. I stuck my head out of the water and saw rain start to form more puddles around the bare river bed.

After days of drenching rain, the green had started fading away. There was silver floating among the mottled green and brown water. There was fish, dead fish! There were at least a thousand fish scattered along the bank and resting in the water. Was it the algae? What had caused this mass fish kill?

The algae was finally gone. After a few days of rain it disappeared. The river flooded causing me to stray out of the river into another stream. The dying algae has reduced the oxygen levels, making it hard to breathe. I don't think I'll make it. There are fish with me who have started dying off. I took a last half-filled breath and it all went black.

*By Kayley Renouf-Dowdle  
Year 7, St John's Lutheran School  
KINGAROY – QLD.  
Teacher: Jodie Springhall*

# The Search

## SQUAWK!

A beat of the wings and another squawk of the beak caught the attention of my close friends.

“This way!” I called, the sound echoing above the tall trees, catching the wind to spread far across the sky. A flurry of wings beat like a synchronised dance with the steady pace of my flapping keeping time. The day was done, we had been flying around, observing what some ugly, large creatures were doing to our habitat, and now it was time to go home. These weird creatures were called different things; one said “Building and Construction: Sam”, one said “Building and Construction: Doug”, and there was even a “Building and Construction: Hamish”! Why do all of these things have the same first name? It’s not even that appealing... This thought was just drifting through my head when Joey called out behind me, “Jessa, where next?”

“To the left!” I responded, turning to the left and picking up speed, everyone trailing behind me.

“V formation!” I called and we all formed a large V to save us energy. We were getting close; the massive Sitka Spruce should be nearing here, right about... now. Where is it? Where did it go? Wait, why are our families out in the middle of the town? Where are the houses? Who did this? Why is everything gone? My crew dived to see their families, and I swooped down to my husband and little girl.

“Mum! Mum!” She said, “Mum, I have all of your stuff, dad and I packed up while we were trying to get out of the way!”

“What do you mean, Azura darling?” I responded, glancing over at Jayvee, (my husband) who just looked down at his feathers.

“The creatures came with big yellow things and completely demolished everyone’s homes”, she replied.

“OK”, I said, and beat my wings firmly, flying upwards in front of everyone. “We’ve got this.”

“Listen up everyone!” I yelled, so those at the back could hear me, “Because this is the only time I’m saying it! Our homes have, yes, been destroyed, but we will not get anywhere by just sitting around doing nothing! I know you are upset, as am I! My family does not have a place to stay, just like all of you! So from now on, we will search for a home in another habitat. Understood?” I decisively announced.

“Understood!” they chorused.

“Good. Tough times don’t last but tough people do”, I added quietly. I didn’t know how to react to this disaster. I tried looking firm, but inside I had crumpled like paper under pure pressure.

Chatter spread out among the crowd as we all hoisted our bags and children onto our backs to set out on a wild adventure. The search of a new home.

We spread out everywhere through the forest areas, splitting up to cover more land, searching for shelter, food and water. Nothing, nothing, – and you guessed it! – Nothing. No place was ever as good as our previous village, no; don’t say that, no comparing.

Five days passed and we had no luck. I started to worry. What would

happen now? Do we keep searching or do we rest? Where would we rest? What about the young kids and the seniors? They must be exhausted! We need to find somewhere, and fast!

The next day I called a meeting.

“We need a break”, I started, and smiled as the kids cheered, “So our next task is to find a temporary home. It doesn’t have to be perfect, it just has to work”.

Only a few days later, we had found shelter and everyone was relaxing. It was time to rest; tomorrow we would go to search for a home.

A day passed and we had nothing. I began to panic; the following generations will be living on the ground! The Blue Jay bird would not know how to fly or be extinct! No, that is not possible, calm down Jessa! But my wings didn’t stop increasing speed and my heart rate was almost matching its rhythm. Then I heard it, the sound of a fellow Blue Jay finding success. We did it! We had found shelter, and gathered water and food. With persistence we had reached our goal. Yet, if those ‘Building and Construction’ creatures hadn’t destroyed our home, we wouldn’t have needed this goal in the first place.

Those who take things from others when they know the consequences, or even when they don’t know the consequences won’t have to pay, because it’s not them who will get in trouble, it’s the victims. Our planet is too weak for us to leave it to die. The only things that can reverse the effects is the one that caused them. The creatures. All of them.

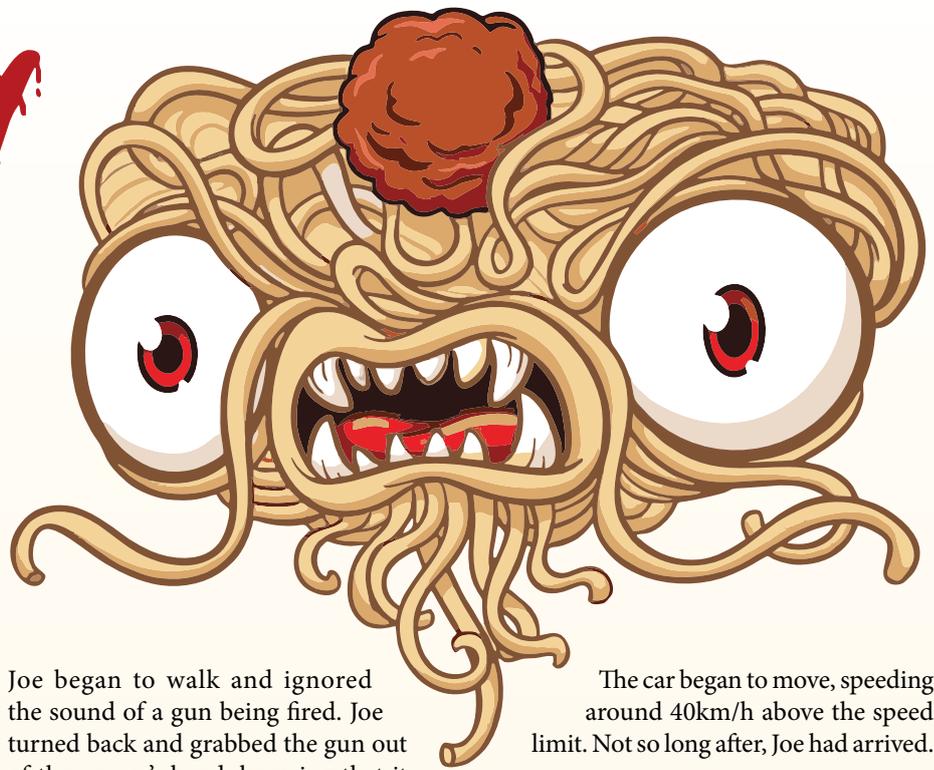
By **Chloe Flintoff**

Year 8, Mansfield State High School  
MANSFIELD – QLD.

Teacher: Miss Kirsty Watson



# CREEPY PASTA



**T**HE NIGHT was cold as Joe stared up at the sky wishing for stars to shine once again. He looked down quickly, focusing on the cracks of pavement filled with minuscule specks of moss. Without a thought, Joe crossed the road. A speeding Mitsubishi unexpectedly came to a stop and honked its horn loudly.

“Get off the road!” She cursed something in Italian. The sound startled Joe, who still had his head down but he kept walking shadily.

As Joe reached the path he stopped on a small weed underneath a large ball-shaped tree. The scent of pasta travelled softly through Joe’s nose. At that moment Joe realised that he hadn’t eaten for almost a week. He’d just been so caught up in the divorce.

He followed the scent, hypnotised, his only thought was food. He wandered deeper into a dark alleyway. Approaching a shady figure, Joe stopped dead in his tracks... The man was trembling, he had a gun in his hand and tears down his face.

“Take it!” he shouted, throwing a thermos at Joe. “I can’t do this any more!” Joe picked up the thermos, remembering his mother telling him to never waste pasta. The man shouted again, “Go! Now go!”

Joe began to walk and ignored the sound of a gun being fired. Joe turned back and grabbed the gun out of the corpse’s hand, knowing that it could be useful on his journey home. When he reached the road, he stuffed the gun in his pocket and reached his hand out to the road hoping for a taxi. A silver cab pulled up, Joe walked in the front seat with a sigh.

Joe told the driver his long address and the driver asked for a pay. Joe didn’t realise this and he began to stress. He made his reckless decision and pulled out the gun, pointing it at the driver.

“Take me!” Joe demanded sternly. The driver backed away, almost falling out of the car.

“OK man!”

The car began to move, speeding around 40km/h above the speed limit. Not so long after, Joe had arrived.

“Thanks mate!” said Joe.

“Hope I don’t see you again!” replied the driver.

Joe ran inside the house, placed the thermos on the marble counter and opened the thermos. He remembered that he had been soaked with muddy water from a truck before his taxi trip. He walked up the worn-out stairs of his house, hearing large creaks and cracks.

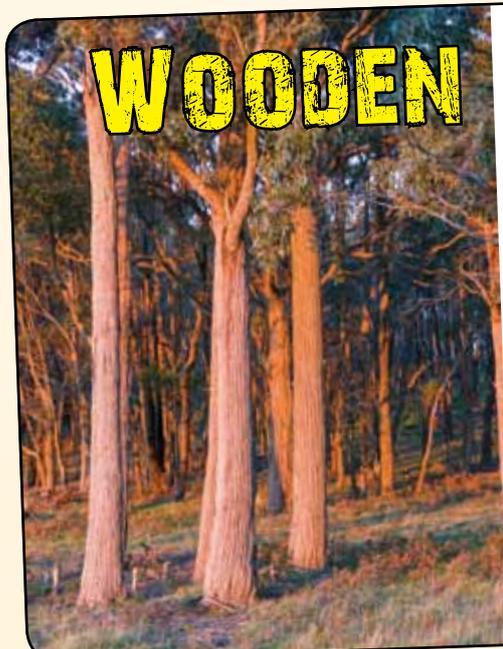
Joe stepped in his bathroom and grabbed a towel from a small cupboard. He dabbed the towel on his forehead. Looking in the mirror he saw a single thread of spaghetti and he turned around. The spaghetti disappeared as he turned so Joe walked out, saw a pile of pasta and screamed.

“What the...” he gave a laugh.

Why’d I get scared, he thought, it’s only pasta.

He walked back to the bathroom and stared, frozen by fear. In the mirror stood a large ball of spaghetti behind him. He screamed as loud as he could until the pasta pounced and Joe was consumed by the saucy goodness of deadly spaghetti.

And Joe Philman was never seen again...



## WOODEN

## PRISON

Years and years,  
Empty tears,  
Follow as I run.  
Trees and trees,  
As I flee,  
Missing all the fun.

Eternal boredom,  
Eternal burden,  
Wooden prison.

By **Angelina Hemsworth**  
Year 7, Loreto College  
COORPAROO – QLD.  
Teacher: Ms Tilly

By **Dylan Galgano**  
Year 6, St Luke’s Primary School  
LALOR – VIC.  
Teacher: Mrs. Curtis

# Lockdown Activities

What do you do when school closes down for weeks on end? Lots, as it turns out!

Here are some activities kids from around Australia have been getting up to.



## Making Snowflakes

I liked making some snowflakes during lockdown. I put them above my bed. You have to make sure you draw a neat square on a piece of paper, then cut it out. Then fold your square into a triangle and cut little shapes around the sides. Finally, you open it up again so you can decorate it.

— Charlotte, Year 1, Vic.

## Painting and Craft

I started watching the Moriah Elizabeth YouTube videos when school closed. I immediately fell in love with her works, and began to repaint my sister's unicorn – inspired by her Squishy Makeovers. Soon I branched out to other YouTube channels, and began watching the WowArt videos, which a lot of the paintings on my wall are copied from.

I made Mum's Mother's Day card with 5 Minute Crafts help, and helped my younger sisters make their cool crafts. I also bought a hot glue gun and some wooden sticks, and began making little houses inspired by the descriptions in books. One of my first was where I pictured what Beth, Tom and Grace's cottage would look like from the Grace books in the *Our Australian Girl* series. I hope to continue my love of art, visual representations and YouTube videos now that school has gone back!

— Chelsea, age 11, Blue Mountains, NSW



## Online Dance Class

When I moved to Australia from the US last year, I had to say goodbye to my old ballet studio and my friends. Now since COVID-19, I have been able to dance online with my old studio on Zoom. Although I have not been at the studio for more than a year, I fit in with the class really well.

At the start of class, we share our ballet journals and then we move on to our warm ups on the barre. After warming up, we learn ballet steps like *port de bras*, *assemblé*, *changement*, *jeté derriere* and *battements tendus*. Our teacher watches us on the video and gives us comments on technique. Then we work on our dance.

I feel happy that I have had the chance to be able to dance with my teacher and friends that I missed so much.

— Tia, Year 4, Fairfield PS, Vic.



## Backyard Cricket

Although COVID-19 has been very disruptive, it has allowed our family to spend more time together and do some fun things in the backyard.

We really love cricket so we played cricket together each day. We played so much that we even wore two dirt patches in the grass at the batting and bowling creases! We pretended to be different teams and players from around the world. It was lots of fun!

— *Oliver, Thomas and Benjamin,  
St Pius X College  
and Willoughby Public School, NSW*



## Japanese Kawaii Drawing

When we were in isolation, we had so much time to do whatever we wanted, and I did SO much drawing and painting, nearly every day! Sometimes I painted my own style of art in my bedroom with watercolours and sometimes I did a tutorial on YouTube from 'Draw So Cute', which is Japanese Kawaii drawing style.

There are loads of tutorials on Draw So Cute and it shows you how to draw that character step by step on the video. You can pause it if you need to catch up or rewind a bit if you need to. I gave some drawings to my BFF on her iso-birthday from our car that was parked in her driveway. My little sister is five and she liked doing Kawaii drawings with me too. One day she concentrated so hard on her drawing, she fell asleep on the table – at 9 am!

— *Elodie, age 9, Blue Mountains, NSW*



## Lego

I like Lego because I can build anything and make things anywhere. What I make can be any size, I make giant and small things.

I like to follow the instructions but making up my own things is even better. I get to play with them after I build them, but I keep the delicate ones as statues on my shelf.

My favourite Lego piece that I've made myself is called Double Siren Head. I've played Lego every day of homeschool and I want to be a Master Builder one day.

— *Milo, Prep, Eltham North PS, Vic.*



# Lockdown Activities

## Geocaching

My sister Elliana and my two cousins Ari and Isaac and I have been geocaching for a while with our grandma, Nettie. We have hidden a few little geocaches around our houses, and are planning to make another one! The theme for our latest geocache is Lego. Ari chose to use a Minecraft pig and a zombie and Isaac chose a little land with skeletons, lava and more. Elli and I chose a café with lots of tiny features you would actually see in a real café.

Dadda (our grandpa) made the box for our geocache with two different levels. Our Lego masterpiece is set up on the bottom section with the boys' one on top. Our geocache has a lock on it with a three digit code that we put in the geocache hint!

— Olivia, age 10, Ballarat, Vic.



## Weaving God's Eyes

I am a girl who loves school and seeing my friends but it all changed when COVID-19 hit and I could no longer go to school. I was sad. I loved my friends and I was really going to miss them. As the holidays went by I started to wonder, 'Will I ever go back to school?'

My mum helped me take my mind off it by making God's eyes. I have never made them before. Now I will tell you how to make one!

You will need: • two sticks • sticky tape • different coloured wool • scissors

What you do:

1. Pick up the two sticks and lay one over the other to form a cross shape.
2. Join the sticks together with sticky tape.
3. Wrap the wool around and around the sticks until you're done!

I had lots of fun doing this. I hope you have fun too!

— Inez, Year 4, Fairfield PS, Vic.





## Creek Walks

I step out of the house with my family. I start to feel a breeze picking up but it's not a windy one and not a warm one — it's a perfect one! We run down a steep hill and move forward, left and right! We're finally at the creek. 'YAY!' I say.

We're walking down a damp pathway leading to the creek, where it gets a bit more bushy. I keep walking and I see happy families walking past with HUGE smiles. That just made my day! I see tall green trees and beautiful flowers. Another thing about this walk is that you see the fantastic afternoon light in the forest and it's always so magical!

Pleeease go on these walks like me because it really refreshes you, calms you and clears your mind. I hope you are all doing walks like me, it's great for you!

— Lila, Year 4, Fairfield PS, Vic.

## Wooden Fence Chalk Art

One day I was looking out the window of my house at our wooden fence. I saw some amazing animal shapes in the knots in the wood. My sister and I got out our chalk and coloured them in.

Soon enough we discovered not just animals but flowers, insects and other natural things. My favourite ones were of an owl, an emu and a chameleon. Sadly, the rain washed them off, but we can always create some even better pictures another time.

— Chloe, Bentleigh East, Vic.



## Arts and Crafts

Over lockdown, I enjoyed art and crafts, especially drawing and cutting up ribbon to stick down on things. My favourite drawings that I did are the picture of a horse and a picture of my sister. I liked to do my drawings at my new desk which is right near a window and I can look out and see the sun coming in. The picture of my sister is very colourful and bright and cute and the picture of the horse is black and white.

— Grace, Year 3, Vic.

**T**HE EXPANSIVE Big Top sheltered three rings, all of equal size yet greatly varying in popularity. In the first ring, only for the 'Reserved', local businessmen and their families sat sensibly, demurely, in their seats, admiring the stilt walkers weaving through elephants adorned with silk. The spotlight shone strictly on this ring and their gazes never wavered to anything beyond it. The stilt walkers projected a countenance of certainty and pride, their strides exceeding that of a panther. It was far from a fully democratised spectacle, however. The more clearly one sees this world, the more one is obliged to pretend it does not exist. The public saw only the centre and rear ring, which had been dimly lit by the mere glow of the spotlight. Darkness had queered the pitch of the scrupulous tightrope walkers in the centre, ambulating thin lines alongside juggling acrobats. And directly at the rear of the stage, concealed from the grandstand, lay an empty ring with naught but a single iron-barred cage housing the epitome of human nature gone astray. His calloused feet dragged across the coarse sand of the ring. The stench of his urination faded as it wandered to the other rings.

Arthur cowered at the cage's edge like a scrap of clothing, burying his congenital anomaly of a nose that earned him his mother's abhorrence. The rambunctious shoutings of the public abated not. They had flocked to the periphery of the ring to gawp at 'The Devil's Mutt'—the human beast with whom so few associated his real name, Mr. Arthur Tee. The rusty iron bars failed to deter them from savagely rattling his cage, as though to spur on the mutt's animal mannerisms. The showman, as though infected, shouted with them. Arthur remained in the cage's corner, grunting and spitting at the polished shoes of the belligerent gentlemen who, in their altitudes, had lost all propriety. Mr. Moore, a bacon-faced patron of the circus, considered Arthur's value to the act as merely profit, for, had he not attracted the majority of the visitors, the showman would have disposed of him immediately.

# Circus

'He is an imbecile, I tell you. The mutt wails through the night. God forbid that he be left in the dark.'

As the night wore on and the boisterous crowd receded, the final visitors to the circus comprised a gentleman with a young girl of affectionate disposition, from whom Arthur felt a certain warmth. Her curiosity overwhelmed her apprehension, and thus she cautiously approached the deformed man.

'May I have the pleasure, sir, of knowing your name?'

Arthur threw his arms grandly outwards to mimic the showman's haughty countenance. 'Ladies and gentlemen, tonight I reveal to you the creature crafted from the devil himself. The anomaly of human nature, the physically deformed man who is mocked and spat upon, the dough of the circus. The Devil's Mu—'

'The name by which you identify yourself, sir.'

Struck by her sincerity, Arthur cleared his throat in an attempt to conceal the hoarseness of his voice. And although his voice was unlike the soft music of the child's tones, he pronounced with clarity. His hunched spine protruded, yet his movements were supple. He gave the most subtle of bows. 'Arthur Teeh, ma'am.'

'Like the beverage.'

Between his parched, cracked lips, Arthur's smile revealed an incomplete row of teeth, all crooked, most chipped. He chuckled. 'Like the letter.'

'You can spell, sir?'

'Only my name,' he replied with diffidence.

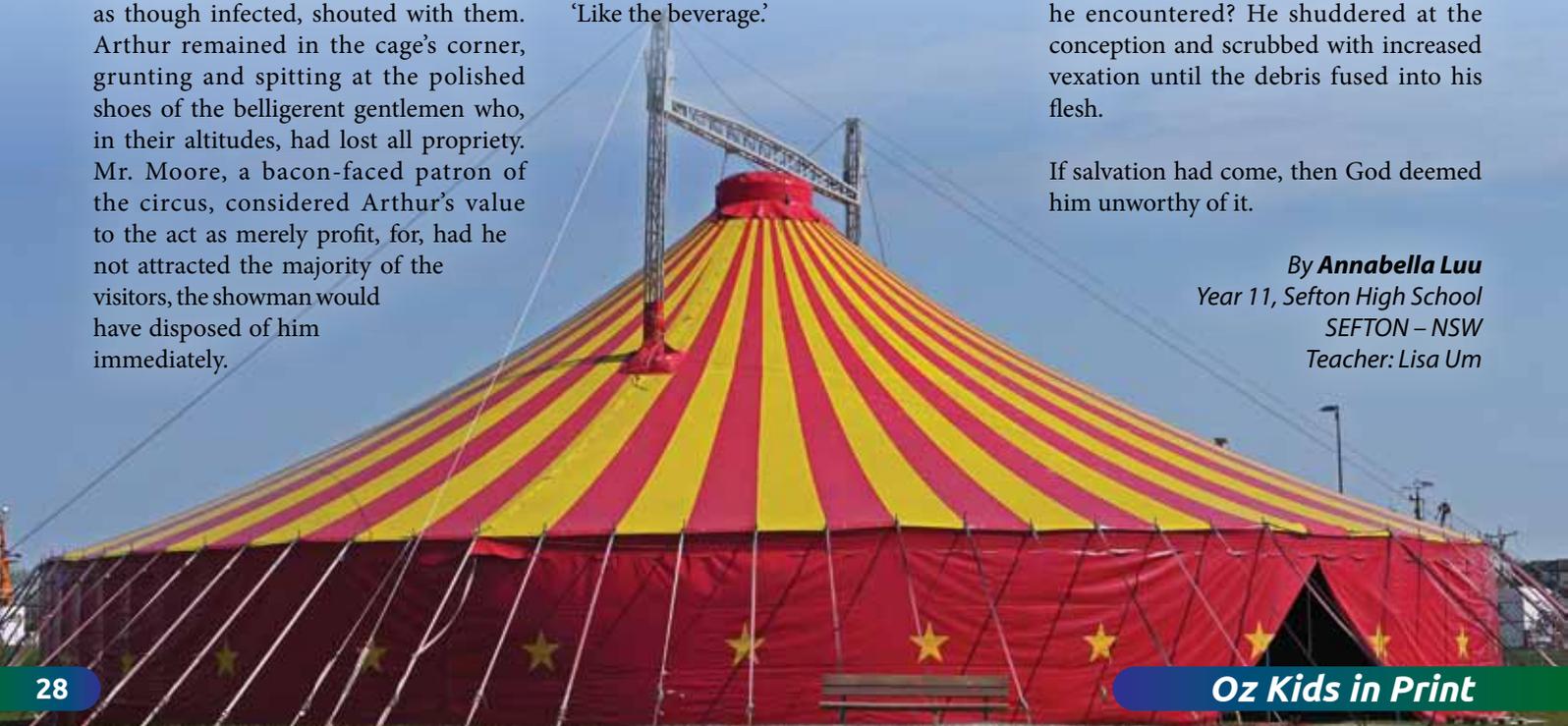
Why had God condemned such a gentleman to this place? Surely, one would not withstand such formidable sins without a reward. Her little repulsion to Arthur's physiognomy dissipated after he planted a gentle kiss on the child's hand, and upon their separation she left him with a silk handkerchief.

It went against the grain with Arthur that he was left to reside in the confines of the rusted iron bars. Evading the uncertainty and dangers of the dark, he desperately clung to what little light emanated from the faraway ring, in which the stilt walkers chattered in felicity. Since childhood, Arthur both dreaded and yearned for the prospect of success in the show, for the public's spending was the meaning of his life. The pegs holding down the Big Top remained driven into the soil, and would remain indefinitely as fetters to Arthur's freedom. He dared never to besmirch the circus.

He flattened the scrunched handkerchief the child gave him and began to wipe his face. The luxuriance of the delicate lace only formed a more horrid contrast with the grime it absorbed. He moved to scrub his hands, but the redundant rag expelled only more debris. Was this the wasteful result of what rare benevolence he encountered? He shuddered at the conception and scrubbed with increased vexation until the debris fused into his flesh.

If salvation had come, then God deemed him unworthy of it.

By **Annabella Luu**  
Year 11, Sefton High School  
SEFTON – NSW  
Teacher: Lisa Um



# Caring

“WHERE is Dad?”, I asked mum.

She didn't reply so I asked again. This time she looked at me and then ignored my question and continued washing the dishes.

I walked up to her and asked what the matter was, and then she told me to follow her to the couch to sit with her so she could chat with me about something important. I didn't say anything, instead just followed her to the couch. My heart was beating as I was scared that this wasn't going to be some good news.

“Look, darling, your father left me because...”

“Because what, huh! You can't even take care of someone properly”, I interrupted.

“Look, sweetheart, I know you love your dad so much but he thought I was annoying so he left me”, explained mum.

I was so devastated that I went upstairs to my room. After a while I got myself back together and played on my Xbox. Just then my mum enters my room and says to go to bed as it is 8:30. I got really annoyed of her but she said that if I didn't sleep then I wouldn't be able to concentrate in my class the next day. She tucked me in my bed but I was really angry because I had to listen to her all the time and her silly rules.

It was the next morning and I got ready for school and headed downstairs. I didn't feel like having breakfast but my mum forced me to eat it and that was it, I was done with her!

“Seriously, why do I have to eat! You tell me to do everything! I can't even make my own decisions! I have had enough of you nagging. So this afternoon I am going to dad's place and live with him! And no, I am not eating any oatmeal. If there is anything that I wanted to eat then that would be ice-cream!”

“But son, it's not nagging, I am just trying to care for you.”

“I don't care, I am going!”

That was it. I left her and after school went to dad's place! It was very stinky there because the trash hadn't been taken out for days. The next day I was extremely hungry but there was only ice-cream in the fridge and I wanted something more filling and warm. I also had a headache as I spent hours gaming and hardly had 2 hours of sleep. I asked dad why he only had ice-cream in the fridge and told him to



make me something warm to eat but he replied that he didn't know how to cook. That time I realised that I had it all wrong.

I was very ashamed but I managed to talk to mum and tell her that I understood why she did everything.

“You weren't nagging, you were caring!”, I told her. She forgave me and I followed her rules and everything worked out perfect.

By **Aresca Macwan**  
Year 8, Gilson College  
MERNDA – VIC  
Teacher: Mr Valderemao

# Dusk

The ochorous dusk  
engulfed a pale orb,  
as the moon shone on its horizon.  
You turned your head  
to the milky sunset,  
as the leaves bustled about  
in the crisp wind.  
Rivulets of brisk water,  
dropped onto damp kindling,  
on the now weary flames.  
The clouds laced the sky,  
like snowflakes on a windowsill.

By **Isabella Bauer**  
Year 7, St. Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Ms. Shelda Rathmann

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**S**OME people say that everyone has something unique, like a story to tell, or something physical, that they can hold... but, I have something different, I have a scar. My scar is not like any small scar, my scar, is humongous, and stretches right across my inner arm. Many of my friends tell me not to be ashamed of it, but I am. I can't help it! Every time, I look in the mirror, or every time I write something on just a piece of paper... I have to face the ugly scar. I know, that even though I wish, or hope that it will just disappear, it never does or will!

Now, let's start at the beginning, you are probably wondering, how did I get the scar? It is quite an interesting story.

One day, I was walking home from school, we live in the outskirts of a small town, so the walk home usually takes about 20 minutes, since I have to walk through a forest. I was walking through the forest, casually kicking sticks off the footpath, when I heard a strange scraping sound! The strange unfamiliar sound was coming from the other end of the forest! I looked around, one part of me wanted to be sensible and stay on the path, but the dangerous part of me wanted to go and explore deeper on the forest, unfortunately, the dangerous part of me took over. Oh how I wish I never went to explore!

I looked around, to see if anyone was there, and frowned. Nobody was around.

I swallowed, and walked off the footpath, to the scraping sound. The leaves crunched underneath my shoes, as I walked deeper inside the bush. Even though it was a warm day, I shivered and tried to hide my goosebumps. The scraping sound soon began to get louder and louder, and soon I appeared in the clearing, where I saw the most unexpected sight! My jaw dropped, and I stared at the monster.

No, it was not exactly a monster that was making the scraping sounds, it was a horrible, poor, old man, scraping a knife in his hands! I tried to scream, and run away, but there was a lump in my throat, and for some reason, I could not move my legs! I stood there, breathing in, and out, staring at the old man. "Hellooooo", he said, giving me an evil grin, sending shivers down my spine. "You can come closer, if you want... maybe we can become friends?" he asked. I gulped, and finally managed to squeak, "Umm... uh, I uh didn't uh come here uh I think I made a mistake!" and tried to run away, but the old man grasped my hand, and pulled me back!

"A mistake, huh? I don't think you made a mistake from coming here", he said, in a scary voice. Tears started pouring down my face, This is going to be the end of my life! This old man is going to kill me! He's probably a serial killer! I thought, struggling to get his dirty hand off my arm.

My life flashed through my head, my

family, my friends, my pets! No! I thought, this can't be the end of my life! There must be some miracle! Someone must come and save me! I thought. Finally, I managed to gather up my courage, and with all of the air in my lungs, I screamed, "HELP! SOMEONE COME!!!!". And then, I blacked out.

I woke up, with a horrible, bright light shining in my eyes. I sat up, blinking and stretching, I was absolutely confused, and I didn't understand where I was. Finally, my eyes adjusted to the light, and I realised that I was in a hospital in a nearby town. I recognised this place, because I came here when I broke my arm! My parents and Amelia (my sister) were next to me, crying and telling me that they were so grateful that I was alive! I frowned and asked them what happened, and what they told me, shocked me SO much!

Apparently, a man called Mr. Jones heard my scream, and came to my rescue! He found me with the strange poor man, that turned out to be a REALLY BIG WANTED SERIAL KILLER!!!! And all of the police in Australia are looking for him! Mr. Jones found him with a knife, cutting a simple or something into my poor arm! He quickly fought the serial killer, thank god he's a fit and strong man, and called the ambulance and police to quickly rescue me. I was taken to the hospital, in case of too much blood loss.

Now, I am fine, but I have definitely learnt not to let curiosity take over me! I thanked Mr. Jones SO much, and gave him a box of home-made cookies that I made, to show him how much I owe him. I am definitely grateful that I am still alive! The wanted serial killer is now safely in jail, in a big city, where he cannot escape from, and I am with my family safe and sound, in our cosy house! Phew! I hope that I definitely do NOT have this horrible experience again, and that the rest of my life will be peaceful!

So now you know how I got this unpleasant scar, and please tell me whether I should be proud, or ashamed of it, because I am stuck with this question for the rest of my life!!

*The End*

By **Elizabeth Graham-Higgs**  
Year 7, Lindfield Learning Village  
SOUTH TURRAMURRA – NSW  
Teacher: Melissa Cowgill

# Waiting On Life

“I WANT to be an orthopedic surgeon.”

“An oncologist.”

“A lawyer.”

“What are your goals for the future, Frankie?”

“Umm I’m not quite sure yet.” Her whole life, Frankie felt she was going around waiting for something. That at some point suddenly the light would not only turn on but shatter and she would realise her grand purpose and everything would make sense. But as she was nearing her final year of high school, she was starting to get skeptical as to why she felt just as in the dark, as when she was first asked to answer the seemingly boundless choice as a 12-year-old. She knew she wanted to backpack around the coast but this was not a full-time occupation and certainly not a comparable goal to the future cardiologists she was competing with.

“Hey Frankie, are you on the bus?” Piper yelled as she rushed to catch up to her.

“Yeah I am, reckon I’ll just sleep though, I’m that dead”, she said yawning. She sank into the seat disrupting the dust that had settled. “No one told you when to run. You missed the starting gun”, echoed in her mind. She wondered if she had wasted her life waiting to start living. On the walk home, she had dreamt of summer and from then on, she had spent every waking minute of the rest of the school year imagining summer. She felt nostalgic for a world she was yet know, the moments she was yet to live.

Summer had its own form of time. The sun beamed down through the cloudless sky blazing its face well into the afternoon. The days melted into one another, casting an endless haze on life. The fan offered no comfort to Frankie. She felt as though an oven door had been opened pushing stale, heavy and dry air sluggishly past her face. She had become increasingly itchy and restless sitting on the sofa as if she was allergic to the heat. She lunged off the couch and into her brother’s room and stood at his door silently. Looking around she searched for something to say, but a skateboard caught her attention.

“I bet I’m better than you”, Frankie exclaimed, Levi scoffed and sat up.

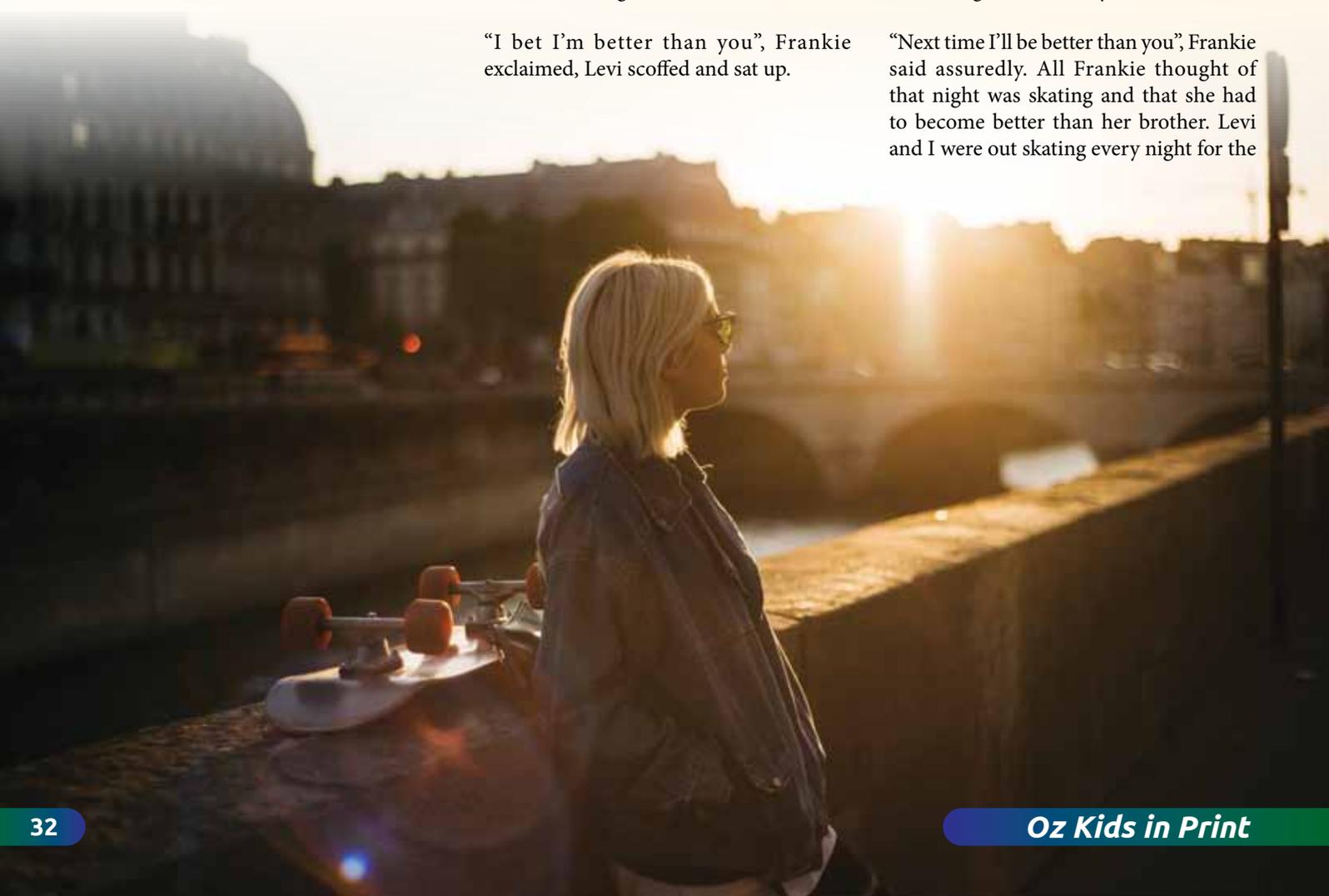
“At what? Skateboarding?” he said rolling his eyes.

“Yep.”

“Prove it”, he said putting his shoes on. Levi confidently stood on the board, bending down as he took a large step. Levi was throttled down the hill. As the air resisted he felt a rush of adrenaline overcome him. He was on an old rickety roller coaster with no seat belt being plummeted into the pitch-black emptiness. As the board lingered to a stop he was warmed with the soothing feeling of security.

“Your turn.” Frankie patiently waited as the board mounted its way over each piece of bitumen. She took a deep breath as she prepared to disappear down into the pitch-black hill. The skateboard began creeping. It gained momentum, then suddenly reaching its tipping point it hurled Frankie down the hill. Each time Frankie stumbled onto the board and it began the steep and rapid descent, the air offered a wake up call. Frankie’s whole body had been taken over by the sensation of cool mint toothpaste which lingered on her eyes.

“Next time I’ll be better than you”, Frankie said assuredly. All Frankie thought of that night was skating and that she had to become better than her brother. Levi and I were out skating every night for the



rest of that week, each time becoming undeservedly more confident.

Frankie grabbed the board and rushed outside to her driveway. She stood confidently on the board just as she had done on the hill, but it did not begin to roll and instead was stationary. Frankie was stuck. She lifted her back foot off the board and was projected forward as if she was expelled from a cannon.

Frankie did not skate for weeks after the fall, she had been disenchanted and scared. She did not want to make a fool of herself in front of everybody on her street and certainly did not want to be called be a poser.

Overtime Frankie built the confidence to leave the comfort of her smooth driveway and venture to the unknown, the skate park. She hid behind her board, worried she would see someone she knew and instantly questioned as to whether she could skate. At the start hopping on

the board and pushing took a string of calculated efforts. But gradually Frankie could do one more part of a trick or just push a little more recklessly without fear of disrupting the balance. Frankie became hooked on the indescribable sense of freedom skateboarding provided her.

Bennie was a regular at Frankie's local skate park. He was intimidating at first, a stern-faced guy who looked like he surfed the obstacles. He glided as if he was in the water and not on harsh unforgiving concrete. Frankie felt a sense of comfort when Bennie was at the skate park. Now and then they would grow sick of their repeated failures of a trick and would collapse.

"When I get home, I have to do a maths assignment", Bennie said, wiping the sweat from this forehead.

"Well, why are you here Bennie?"

Bennie smirked, "because I don't want to do my assignment, I just want to do this".

Frankie understood this feeling. It was one she had worked to bury and instead think of the long-term goal. Even though she wasn't looking forward to the long-term goal set for her, a 9-5 job.

"Bennie, what do you want to do in the future?"

"Well... first on my list of making my life something worth living is, backpacking around the coast."

Frankie smiled and a familiar sense of warmth filled her, "Me too". Frankie skated every night of that summer with the backdrop of a painted sky, the relief of coolness in the air and the comfort of finally realising that she did not need to wait until the right moment to start living.

By **Hailey Harris**

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Ms Rathmann

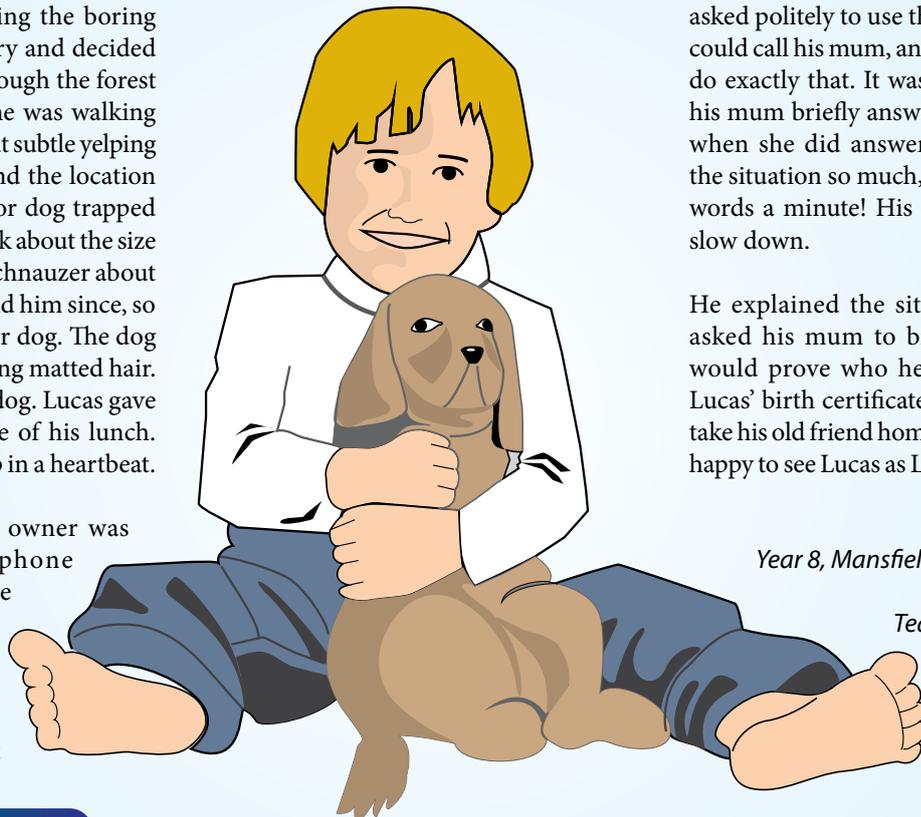
## Just Like Any Boy and His Dog

**L**UCAS is a 13 year old boy who works at the bakery to earn a little bit of money for his family as they didn't have quite much of that.

One day, Lucas was walking the boring 10km journey to the bakery and decided to take a different path through the forest to cure his boredom. As he was walking through, he heard a faint but subtle yelping in the distance. Lucas found the location of the noise and saw a poor dog trapped under a small but heavy rock about the size of a laptop. Lucas lost his schnauzer about 2 years ago, and hasn't found him since, so he decided to help the poor dog. The dog was filthy and had really long matted hair. He pulled the rock off the dog. Lucas gave him some water and some of his lunch. The dog ate Lucas' lunch up in a heartbeat.

He didn't know who the owner was because there was no phone number or collar so he took him to the animal shelter, to see who owned him. The nurses at the animal shelter scanned his microchip, and what

surprised Lucas was that it came up with his name. He finally remembered him; he had a flashback of him taking Archie, his dog, home from the shelter.



Lucas was so excited to take his long lost dog home, however, the nurses said he couldn't take him home without proof that he was the owner. He didn't have any ID on him, so that was a big negative. He asked politely to use their telephone so he could call his mum, and surely they let him do exactly that. It was a few rings before his mum briefly answered the phone, but when she did answer, Lucas prioritised the situation so much, that he talked 1000 words a minute! His mum asked him to slow down.

He explained the situation slowly, and asked his mum to bring anything that would prove who he was. She brought Lucas' birth certificate. The nurse let him take his old friend home, and Archie was as happy to see Lucas as Lucas was to see him.

By **Elijah Rantala**

Year 8, Mansfield State High School

MANSFIELD – QLD.

Teacher: Aleisha Quirk

**M**Y UNCLE is an inventor. One day, I was searching for the attic in my Uncle's house.

I found a very strange machine with many dials, buttons and levers. On the side, there was a button that said 'ON'.

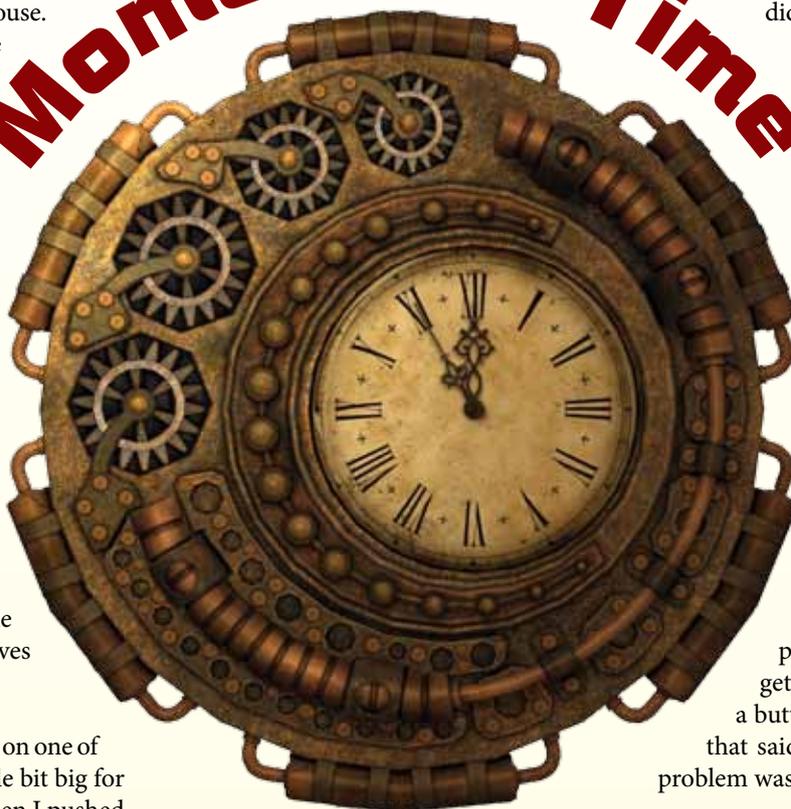
I went closer to the machine. It looked like an oven with more buttons and levers. There was something on the top of the machine that said 'Time Machine 01'. I was very mystified by it and went down to the house. I wanted to ask my uncle what this suspiciously big machine was, but then I remembered that he told me to stay here while he bought parts from the mechanic and the mechanic lives far away from here.

I went back to the attic and put on one of my uncle's helmets. It was little bit big for me, but I didn't really care. Then I pushed the 'ON' button. BEEP!

The machine started whirring and rumbling. WHOOOOSSHH!!! I was suddenly in the machine, trapped in a sea of moments!

I was amazed with this machine and suddenly saw a lever that could move all around in front of me. So I pushed it left. The machine went to the left. I tried pushing it to the right. The machine went to the right. Instead of going forwards, left and right, I steered it properly. It was VERY hard! It took a while to get used to.

# Moment in Time



I tried throwing the machine on the sand. It didn't work. Surprisingly, it didn't break. I tried blowing on it and it didn't work. I didn't know what to do and it was getting late. So I gave up and did a silly crocodile snap and threw it again the tiny machine but this time on the rocks.

Then, when I lifted my arm from the machine, it dropped onto the sand by itself and grew bigger.

FINALLY!

I pressed the 'ON' button and climbed inside. And soon I was in the memory sea. But there was another problem. I didn't know how to get back home! And then I saw a button next to the steering lever that said 'RESET'. Unexpectedly my problem was solved.

But then I got control. I suddenly saw a picture of me building a giant epic sand castle. So I steered to that memory wave. When I splashed it, I didn't get wet, for some reason.

When I splashed it, I was on the beach, with a tiny machine in my hand. So I put the machine in my pocket. I had fun building the sand castle again and again. It was SO big I could fit inside. I went in the sand castle several times, until the tide went in a bit. But then I panicked. How was I supposed to get back home to my uncle's house?! I went behind a hill so no one could see me.

I pressed it and in one white flash I was back in my uncle's attic and still inside the machine. I got out and went down to the house. And just in time! My uncle came back! I quickly explained to him my adventure and asked if I could always use it. And he said I could! But with one condition. Always ask PERMISSION.

*The End*

*By Janna Safia*

*Year 4, Aitken Creek Primary School*

*CRAIGIEBURN – VIC.*

*Teacher: Mr Uniacke*

## The Realm of Youth

Let us travel to the land where music swells,  
in fanfares of long forgotten time,  
where pixies jig amongst the oaks,  
and fire burns of salt and lime.

Let us dwell beneath the realm of man,  
Unbeknownst to our foes,  
Looping chains of daisy stems,  
Twisting sorrow into bows.

Let us plunge into the world of mischief,  
Falling, fleeting, facing fear,  
But when finding everything has faltered,  
What endures is still right here.



Let us face a throng of wilting souls  
Forging brilliance, breaking chains,  
Let us face unbridled pessimism,  
And tightly grip what still remains.

O, come then, onwards, upward bound,  
Towards the sky, unfaltering, beguiled,  
For none have proved to be as charming,  
As the true heart of a child.

*By Molly Waters*

*Year 11, Queensland Academies | Creative Industries*

*HOLLAND PARK WEST – QLD.*

*Teacher: Ms. Gleeson*

# Ambassadors



☺ **Paul Collins** has written many books for younger readers. He is best known for his fantasy and science fiction titles: **The Jelindel Chronicles** (*Dragonlinks, Dragonfang, Dragonsight* and *Wardragon*), and **The Quentaris Chronicles** – co-edited with Michael Pryor – (*Swords of Quentaris, Slaves of Quentaris, Dragonlords of Quentaris, Princess of Shadows, The Forgotten Prince, Vampires of Quentaris* and *The Spell of Undoing*). His trade books published in America are *The Earthborn, The Skyborn* and *The Hiveborn*.

Paul has edited many anthologies which include *Trust Me!, Rich & Rare* and Australia's first fantasy anthology, *Dream Weavers*. He also edited *The MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian SF&F*.

His recent fantasy series is *The Warlock's Child*, written in collaboration with Sean McMullen. His book, *Slaves of Quentaris*, was listed in *1001 Children's Books You Must Read Before You Die* (UK, 2009). His latest book is *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*.

Paul has been short-listed for many awards and has won the Inaugural Peter McNamara A Bertram Chandler, Aurealis and William Atheling awards.

Other than his writing, Paul is the publisher at Ford Street Publishing, a children's specialist publishing everything from picture books through to young adult literature. Two books, *Pool*, by Justin D'Ath and *Crossing the Line*, by Dianne Bates, were short-listed for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. A third, Shane Thamm's *My Private Pectus*, was short-listed in the Territory Read Award. Paul spends much of his time travelling around Australia giving writing workshops to students from grade four to Year 12.

Paul's websites are: [www.paulcollins.com.au](http://www.paulcollins.com.au); [www.fordstreetpublishing.com](http://www.fordstreetpublishing.com) and [www.creativenetspeakers.com](http://www.creativenetspeakers.com).

**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](http://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. ☺



☺ **Meredith Costain** is a versatile writer whose work ranges from picture books through to novels, poetry and narrative non-fiction. Her books include CBCA Honour Book *Doodledum Dancing, Disaster Chef!, Daddies Are Great!*, novelisations of ABC TV's *Dance Academy*, and tween series *A Year in Girl Hell*. Her best-selling series, the quirky *Ella Diaries*, was shortlisted for both the REAL and the WAYRBA children's choice awards, and has sold to 24 countries. Her latest series, *Olivia's Secret Scribbles*, features Ella's 'naughty little sister', Olivia.

Meredith lives in inner-city Melbourne with a menagerie of pets, who often wrangle their way into her stories. She regularly presents writing workshops for children and adults around Australia, and enjoys helping writers create stories based on their own experiences. To find out more about her books, pets and early writing years, visit [www.meredithcostain.com](http://www.meredithcostain.com).

# Thunderbolt Girl

CITIES are busy. Cars rattle past on the bitumen, spraying tiny pieces of gravel on the workers fixing the holes in the road. Businessmen march down the sidewalk to their buildings in their crisp suits and gleaming sunglasses, while a phone is at their ear. Buses and trams fly past to their next destinations. Everyone in the city is busy. Too busy to notice the young girl standing on the edge of the curb.

She is so close to the edge that one nudge from one of the strutting businessmen could knock her straight onto the bitumen. She is so different from her environment it is almost unsettling. Her dress is plain white without a scratch or a tear, an extreme rarity in their modern society. Her hair is a dazzling white-blond, which blows windswept, but doesn't tangle. Slowly, she reaches a pale hand to the sky, and extends her pointer finger towards the clouds. A bright white lightning bolt shoots up towards the sky, illuminating the city in a bright white light. She tilts her head at the sky and closes her eyes. Slowly, she drops her hand, and the lightning bolt retreats back inside her skin.

The rare few who see her, see this moment lift up their phones to take a picture, capturing the image in time. But all of them are disappointed to realise that the girl and her extraordinary power are gone, as if they were never there.

Some say she is a god, some a superhero. Nobody knows if she really exists, or if she is just a figure of people's tormented imagination. Only few have seen her, witnessed this oddity, others will just laugh and brush it off as just a dream.

Then one day, the busy city is hit by a storm. A supercell. Windows slam shut, curtains flying closed behind them as if the tenants in those houses wish to block out the storm altogether. People sit crouched in their houses, headphones on to block out the horrific noise. Children cry and perch in their mothers' arms.

Except for one.

Livvy, a young black haired girl with purple glasses leans out her window, extends her hand to catch the raindrops.

She looks up at the sky to see a face materialise. It is the girl. The one people think of as a god. Her white blonde hair floats out from her face, windswept in both directions. She looks chaotic, evil. Her mouth never opens but Livvy can hear a voice talk.

*This storm has been brought on because your people have no respect.*

*They do not care about the real world.*

*If they continue to kill the environment like this, I will kill them all.*

Livvy shrieks. As she looks into the devilish red eyes of this girl, the mythical girl everyone talks about, she thinks how horrible she looks. How manic. Livvy's favourite dream had always been about her, this legendary girl who could make lightning from the tips of her fingers where she floated in an imaginary world, not causing trauma.

*The human race will be finished. I will restore the world to its proper form.*

The girl is replaced with an image of humans collapsing in the streets, supposedly dead bodies surrounding them. The girl appears again, a fierce glare again pointed at the earth and the city the humans had built.

"Who are you?" Livvy whispers shakily.

*My name is Autumn.*

"Are you a God?" Livvy asks.

No.

"What are you then?" Livvy asks.

*You ask too many questions, Olive.*

The image of the humans appears again, this time Livvy one of the survivors, standing petrified as a collection of corpses surrounds her. The girl reappears.

"What can I do?"

*You must restore nature to the Earth.*

"How?" Livvy asks, but the voice did not reply.

"Livvy!" Her younger sister, Gardenia, bounces in. "Can I borrow your teddy bear?"

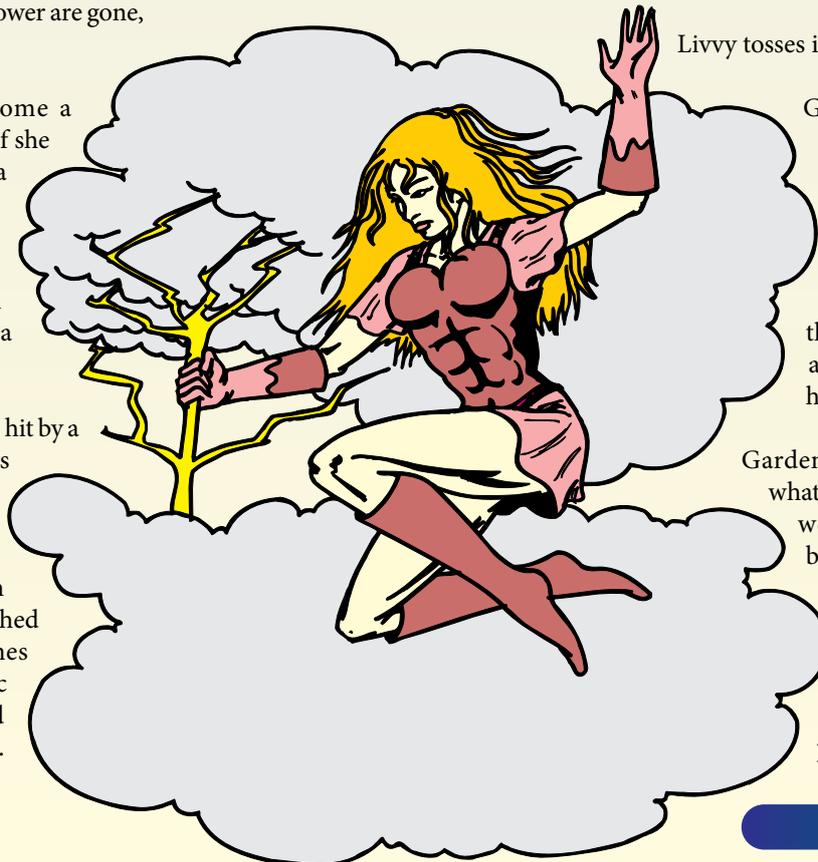
Livvy tosses it at her without replying.

Gardenia plucks it off the floor and tucked it under her arm. "Are you OK?"

Livvy gives her a vague nod, not turning away from the window or letting her thoughts stray from Autumn, and the task she had given her.

Gardenia cranes her neck to see what her sister was doing. "You're weird", she concludes, and backs away to her own room.

Livvy turns her attention to the flower box below her, hanging from their fifth storey window. She plucks a bright purple violet



and drops it towards the ground. Livvy does not expect it to work, but the flower inserted itself into a crack in the ground. Seeds spring up, and more bloom until the entire curb is brimming with a rainbow of flowers.

*Good work.*

The girl reappears, this time smiling. She moves forward, descending upon Livvy, growing smaller and smaller until she is Livvy's own size. She floats over to the window and smiles at Livvy. This time when Livvy hears the voice, it is smaller, kinder, and coming from the girl's mouth.

"Thank you", the girl says. "If you continue to spread this message, the world will be good again. When darkness spreads throughout the world, it takes only one person to bring out the light."

She floats away, disappearing until Livvy had only the memory remaining of her. The storm subsides, leaving behind bright blue skies, fluffy white clouds, and a vivid rainbow, Livvy's only reminder of the girl and the goodness she had brought. The rain dries up, windows flew open and faces appear behind, in wonder. Livvy turns around, knowing nobody will know

it was indeed her who had sent the storm to a close, and knowing nobody would probably ever know. She was left behind one and only one mission – to bring back nature into the Earth.

When darkness spreads throughout the world, it takes only one person to bring out the light.

**By Maisie Fullerton**

*Year 8, Our Lady's College Annerley*

*ANNERLEY – QLD.*

*Teacher: Kim Brett*

# REFLECTION

I sit here, looking over the glistening lake  
as I see my reflection looking back at me.

I look down and I see...  
a man who is inconsiderate,  
a man who has forgotten who he is,  
a man who is nothing.

★ ★ ★

I went down a path,  
a steep spiralling path  
of danger and misfortune.  
And it led me to a dark shallow pit,  
where I felt trapped, suffocated –  
I was stuck.

I promised myself  
that I could improve as a man,  
mentally and physically.  
I wanted to see a different person  
looking back at me  
every time I saw my reflection.

I wanted to see myself glisten  
like the lake in front of me,  
how it magically reflects  
the sunlight beaming down  
on its shimmering surface.  
I wanted to feel proud.

But my past follows me like a shadow.  
It affects my daily life  
and how I see the world around me.  
It affects how the world sees me –  
a man without purpose.

However, I hope you can still call me Dad.  
Please forgive me.

**By Monica Nguyen**

*Year 11, St. Dominic's Priory College*

*NORTH ADELAIDE – SA*

*Teacher: Ms. Rathmann*

# THORNWOOD MANSION

**H**ELLO everyone! My name is Amelia Wilson, and I am 12 years old, and live in Australia. I live with my parents, Amanda and James, and younger brother, Thomas.

Anyway, I am like most people I know. In fact, I think that I am like most other people in Australia. I go to school, I play with my two best friends, and I do most things that a normal 12 year old girl would do. Well, this was, until one day...

I didn't even realise that someone was even moving in next door, until one day, I saw the moving truck parked in front of the old mansion! A couple, maybe in their early 50s were unloading a big leather sofa out of the truck. My mum walked next to me and said, "Oh! I see that a new couple have moved in next door". And she smiled and left me staring at our new neighbours next door. I watched them for a while, they were quite strange though. They both had unhappy looks on their faces, and they

were both dressed in complete black. I mean, don't you think that is strange?

The next day, mum forced both Thomas and I to go with her, to give our new neighbours a box of chocolates! I honestly did not want to go! I mean, I was not busy or anything, it was just that I did not really want to go inside the strange old mansion, and meet our weird neighbours! I was so scared of that freaky place!! And just the thought of going there, made my spine tingle!

Thomas clung on to me, as we walked up the old mansion's driveway. We both gave each other nervous looks. Mum remained herself, as she casually walked up the old, worn steps, and knocked the half rotten, and cracked door. A few moments later, a lady appeared at the doorstep, she was wearing a really stained t-shirt and torn jeans. She looked like the women I saw moving the furniture yesterday.

When she saw us, she didn't even acknowledge us! She looked us up and down, and then turned back inside, and yelled out, "GREG, LILY?! OUR NEIGHBOURS HAVE COME TO VISIT US!!! CAN YOU COME DOWN?!". And then turned to us and said gruffly, "Yeah, come on in". Thomas and I looked at each other and he gave me a 'I'm creeped' look and I gave him a 'same' look. Then, we followed the strange lady into the dark hallway.

The first thing I noticed when I first entered the house, was that it was PACKED with boxes, and smelled HORRIBLE! I gulped, and looked around. The hallway had lots of portraits of people wearing big coats, and frilly dresses, like in the olden days. We were soon led in to what seemed like a dining room. A big musty chandelier hung from the ENORMOUS ceiling, and an extremely long dining table stretched from one end of the dining room to the other.



I noticed that Thomas and mum were also staring at everything in awe, examining all of the furniture and pictures, and just staring wide eyed at everything. I mean, I couldn't blame them! This was quite a big surprise! I finally swallowed, and quietly asked the lady, "So, do you have any children?" She looked at me, and raised an eyebrow, "Yes. I do, Lily. She's 16". I smiled, and just said, "Oh. That's nice..." and looked away, pretending I was interested in some random picture of an man and lady on a beach or something.

Suddenly, there was a loud crash upstairs, and I jerked my head sideways, to see what was going on! It turned out, that a door was just being slammed, and that some people were having an ENORMOUS fight! Then, two people, a man and girl, stomped downstairs, yelling and screaming at each other. When they finally saw Mum, Thomas and I, they froze, looking sort of embarrassed, and shocked. Mum looked so bewildered, she just said, "Oh, well... I'll just leave the chocolates on the table, here..." and then, she just grabbed us, and ushered us out of the house.

"Well, that was not planned", I said as soon as we were out of their house. "Yeah, I'm really sorry, that was quite a shock." She said, "Maybe next time, they'll be in a better mood..." she said, looking back at the old mansion. "Or maybe they're all just crazy?", Thomas said.

We all sighed, and walked in to our much more pleasant household. When mum told dad what happened at dinner, he said quietly, "Can we talk somewhere else, Amanda?" and they both disappeared into the study. I could not hear what they were saying, since the study door is very thick and soundproof, so I just went upstairs to get ready for bed.

I went to sleep that night, wondering what was going to happen after all of this was sorted out. Maybe our new neighbours were just moody? Or maybe they were crazy after all... Everything was confusing me.

I woke up the next day, and ran to the window straight away, for some reason, my senses just told me to do so. I saw the man that was fighting with the girl yesterday, tackling the hedge that had overgrown way too much. I sighed, pretty normal. I'll just have to wait for more evidence that they were crazy. I was just about to leave the

windowsill and get breakfast, when I saw the girl, this time, properly.

She had long, straight black hair, that went down to her waist, and she was extremely tall and slender. She looked a bit like a goth, but I knew that mum and dad would call me rude, if I asked her if she was a goth. She also looked quite mean, so I thought that I had better not ask her. She walked out of the house, raised an eyebrow at her father, and just walked past, holding her nose high in the air, like her father was a peasant or beggar! I wasn't allowed to treat my parents like that! And I knew that what she just did, was very rude!

I scowled at her, though I knew she couldn't even see me. I went down to breakfast, and quickly ate my cereal. Then, I told Thomas what had happened, and he told me that we should definitely 'investigate' our new neighbours. I sighed, Thomas was only 9 years old, and he definitely did not understand that spying on our new neighbours would just cause trouble. "Thomas, we can't just 'spy' on our neighbours! That would just cause trouble, and we would get punished if we got caught!", I told him, but he didn't even care, and just went to 'spy' on them!

For the next few days, Thomas kept on spying on our new neighbours, I sometimes helped him. It turned out, the lady's name was Jaqueline, the man was George, and the girl was Amy. Thomas learnt some more things, but he didn't want to tell me, unless I joined his spying 'team'. Whenever he would say this, I would just sigh and leave his room, saying, "I'll never join your 'secret spy team', and you know that!".

A few weeks later, Mum, Dad, Thomas and I decided that we should probably say hi once again to our new neighbours, as they might be in a better mood now. We knocked on the door, once again, but this time, the whole family answered it. They seemed much more happy and energetic this time... I thought maybe they were just tired and moody from moving before.

We walked in the house, this time, it was much more neater and well organised, but it still gave me the creeps. The lady prepared a nice dish for us to eat, and we all had a nice chat. It turned out that they were quite a normal family, like us! They just inherited this house from Jaqueline's great grandmother, and they only found

that out a few months ago! They thought that they could maybe do a few renovations around the house, and turn it in to a nice modern house. My parents and I agreed it was a nice idea, but Thomas didn't like the idea for some reason! He kept on making dumb excuses like, "But isn't this a heritage house?" or, "But your great grandmother probably didn't want it changed and rebuilt!". And I just thought he wanted them to move out, for some strange reason, and so I didn't pay much attention to him.

At home, mum and dad had a 'serious' talk about manners to Thomas. They said that it was extremely rude, and that he should be more encouraging and polite to our new neighbours. Thomas just stomped back upstairs, and stayed there for a long time, sulking. I had to go up to him, to talk with him. He sobbed and finally told me, "I just feel -sob- like something is -sob- suspicious with that strange family". I told him that the family next door was absolutely normal and that he should not worry. But then, he got angry, and pushed me out of the room and locked himself up.

The very next day, I heard screaming and crying from next door, and I ran to my window to see what happened. It turned out that Thomas was right! It was the police! Apparently they had come because our so called 'new neighbours' had stolen the house from a poor old grandma, and taken it for themselves! I was so shocked by this news, that I immediately went to find my brother and apologise for not believing him! I saw that he was smirking at me, but I didn't care. I grabbed him by the hand and told him that we needn't see what was going to happen! The police arrested the family, and the girl turned out to be 19, so she was also put in real jail.

A few weeks later, an old grandma moved in to the house. She is very nice, and bakes Thomas and I cupcakes! She has done up the house now, and it now looks much more welcoming and comfortable. There is lots of flowers in the garden, and the furniture inside is nice and clean. Even though it has now been two whole years... I still remember my old, evil neighbours.

*The End*

By **Elizabeth Graham-Higgs**  
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SOUTH TURRAMURRA – NSW  
Teacher: Melissa Cowgill

# Café Melbona

**B**REAKING news, a new virus, COVID-19 has hit China.'

'COVID-19 hits Europe, 40,000 cases in Italy, it has hit Spain, the UK, Germany and France.'

'Soaring cases in the USA.'

'Donald Trump orders 1 million masks.'

'3 million cases worldwide, as we all go into lockdown.'

I turned on the TV. The first word I heard was 'Coronavirus.'

'Shut up', I told the TV. I was so tired of everyone saying, 'We are all in this together.'

I sighed as I logged in to Google Classroom, since school was closed, like gyms, pools, restaurants – everything! I didn't like video calls, it didn't feel like actually catching up. Just like Kindles are not the same as reading a book.

I wanted to see my friends since I had no siblings. My parents were separated, so I was always with either Mum or Dad. Sure, I was bored, but maybe all I needed was my imagination?

My mum had been stressed lately. I think she also missed her friends. One night I found her crying on her bed. She was too sad to even notice me coming in.

'Are you okay, Mum?', I asked.

She turned her head towards me. 'Hug?', she asked.

'Always.' We hugged each other and I asked her what was up.

'It's just—' she began. 'I feel alone, especially when you're not here.'

The next day, when Mum went for her run, I decided I wanted to help her feel better.

I knew Mum loved coffee. We couldn't go to cafés, so why not make my own? I made a menu of coffees including her favourite: flat white. I added snacks (chocolate, muffins, brownies) and stuck the menu on the kitchen wall.

When Mum came home and saw 'Café Melbona', her face changed completely.

She gave me a humongous hug.

'Madam, could I please have your order?' I served her a flat white and a brownie, then I stopped and thought. I was pretty impressed with myself that I had made her happy.

15 years later...

I ground some coffee beans. I peered out at the bustling crowd, then glanced at the sign on my café: Café Melbona. The echoes of laughter filled my ears as I remembered the first menu I ever made, and how I wrote a story about it.

**By Zac Kurzbock**

*Year 6, Clifton Hill Primary School  
CLIFTON HILL – VIC.*



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Pictured: Marjory Gardner, Meredith Costain, Phil Kettle, Marc McBride, Paul Collins and George Ivanoff.

# Echidna's Easter Egg Hunt

**E**VERY Easter, all of the Australian animals would gather in Bilby's small burrow for the biggest and most special event of the year. The Big Bush Easter Egg Hunt. Each year, Bilby would leave the eager animals waiting in his burrow and would go out into the bush to hide all of the eggs.

At least, until last year. All of the animals began to argue. The hunt became less fun. Everyone was too competitive. Half of the animals quit, saying that if no one could have fun together there was no point of the Big Bush Easter Egg Hunt.

This year, only Echidna, Dingo, Wombat, Big Red Kangaroo, Small Grey Wallaby, Platypus and Native Hen came to Bilby's burrow for the egg hunt. As per usual, while Bilby hid the eggs, the animals again began to argue and boast. "I'm going to find the most eggs", Dingo declared.

"No, I am", Platypus argued.

"No, ME", Small Grey Wallaby shouted! "I'm the fastest!"

"I'm the biggest!"

"I'm the best!"

"No, I am", all of the animals argued.

Echidna, a shy and peaceful little creature with chocolate-coloured fur and sandy golden spikes sat in the middle of the arguing with his little webbed feet over his ears. He didn't like arguing at all. In fact, he had only come to the egg hunt this year because his best friend Koala had promised to come with him. However, Koala wasn't there.

Echidna approached the arguing animals, shyly, as always, and told them, "Koala is missing. We should all go find her together". "No WAY", Big Red Kangaroo said stubbornly. "You're just trying to trick us", cried Platypus. "What? No. Koala is missing!" Echidna yelped. Wombat



scowled. "When we leave, you'll go find the eggs and keep them for yourself." Echidna cried desperately, "This is not a trick! I need your help!" All of the other animals agreed with Wombat and refused to go with Echidna. Echidna, being a shy creature, stopped arguing. However, he didn't give up.

When Bilby returned, all of the animals except Echidna raced outside. Instead, Echidna walked up to the kind old Bilby. "Bilby, I think I will have to miss the egg hunt this year", Echidna said. Bilby looked sad, for the egg hunt was one of the only things that made him happy. If everyone left, he couldn't run it any more. "Oh... Okay", Bilby sighed sadly.

"I will be back when I find my friend", Echidna said firmly. Bilby looked hopeful. "Okay, good luck!" he waved his small black, pink and white tail in farewell. Slowly, Echidna waddled off.

He waddled far and wide. He crossed rivers, climbed mountains, risked close encounters with dogs, humans and feral cats. Anything to find Koala. Soon he began to grow tired. He thought he could not go on for much longer, but he knew he had to help his friend, so he kept waddling forward. Echidna's determined attitude paid off, for he found Koala on a highway, about a mile away from Bilby's burrow. She was in trouble.

She was injured and limping, on a road with thousands of cars hurtling towards her. Echidna froze. Koala needed help, but

cars were big, and cars were very scary, and he was only a small echidna. Still, he knew he had to do something. As he watched, something changed inside of him. He no longer felt shy and scared. He felt... angry. Angry at the cars for hurting his friend. Angry at the other animals for not caring... and angry at himself for letting his fear get the best of him, preventing him from helping Koala.

He waddled out onto the road. SKID!!! A car screeched to a halt in front

of him. He continued on, feeling braver. Still, the cars continued to stop for him. He was no longer scared. Not at all. He kept going until he reached Koala. "Echidna!" she cried. "Ow", her leg looked sore and she could hardly walk. How would he move her safely off the road? "I'd carry you home", Echidna said, "but I'm too spiky!". "Then what do we do?", Koala asked. She looked terrified.

A car in front of them honked grumpily. Echidna didn't know that cars were machines. He, and most of the bush animals, thought they were living creatures. Alive, and dangerous. Koala jumped, but Echidna still did not flinch. "Don't worry, I'll think of something", he said. He tried. He really tried, but he didn't. The cars got angrier. All hope seemed lost.

But then... "Coming through", said a voice. The voice belonged to a human. Humans were scarier than cars. Everyone knew that. Echidna still did not run, and Koala couldn't. As the human got closer, Echidna saw she had kind eyes. That she was a friend. "Let's get you to my surgery", the veterinarian said.

Meanwhile, all of the bush animals returned to Bilby's burrow. Their arms/paws/beaks full of chocolate eggs, bragging about what eggs they found and seething about the eggs that they lost. Bilby didn't say anything. The animals sat down and when Bilby finally spoke, his voice was teary. "Ever since I was a little Bilby, I loved chocolate eggs. Every Easter, I loved hiding these eggs so you could find

them. It filled me with joy. Now I realise it was not the Easter eggs that made me so happy. It was seeing you help each other hunt for the eggs and be filled with such joy when you found them. Together”, he sighed. “Now the hunt does not give you that joy any more, so it doesn’t give me that joy”, Bilby continued. “The game became a competition. All you cared about was if you had more than anyone else, and it has driven everyone away.”

All of the animals realised this was true and began to feel sad. “So now I realise that there is no more point of the Big Bush Easter Egg Hunt. I will no longer hide eggs for you. This is the last egg hunt”, with that, he slowly, and sadly, hopped off. The animals felt shocked – and guilty. They knew what they must do.

Echidna was set on the ground by the kind vet, Koala beside him. Koala’s leg already

looked better, after surgery. Echidna had been kept in a small enclosure whilst Koala was treated. Later, the vet released them both near the highway where she had found them (but not too near). “The egg hunt will be over”, Koala said sadly. “Let’s go back anyway, just in case”, Echidna said.

When they arrived at Bilby’s burrow, they were astonished at what they could see.

They were in the middle of the festival. Around Bilby’s burrow, fun was everywhere. There were games and market stalls all around. Running the festival were Dingo, Wombat, Big Red Kangaroo, Small Grey Wallaby, Platypus and Native Hen, who had seemed so vain and selfish at the egg hunt. “EASTER GAMES OVER HERE!!” Dingo called. “HEY! Echidna!” Platypus called from an egg-decorating stall. “You found Koala!” Echidna, who used to be so shy, found himself calling

back; “YEAH! You should have seen us! There was a car and a human and a...” He darted over to tell Platypus the whole story. Smiling, Koala continued to walk through the festival and soon she found Bilby, sitting on a throne, under a banner which said, ‘Easter King’, weeping with joy.

Now there is a new tradition in the bush for Easter. Echidna, Koala, Bilby, Platypus and their friends organise the great ‘Easter Festival’, to get everyone together for Easter. It is held every year around Bilby’s burrow. Everyone comes to see it together and it is the most fun, the most enjoyable and the most delicious festival in the bush.

By **Alice Bergman**  
Year 6, Fahan School  
LOWER SANDY BAY – TAS.  
Teacher: Mrs Ingrid Heather

## BOOK REVIEW

## James Gong – The Big Hit

Author: Paul Collins

Illustrator: Matt Lin

Publisher: Hybrid Publishers

ISBN: 9781925736441

RRP \$16.95

*James Gong – The Big Hit* is a must read for young readers, particularly those with a passion for action and adventure.

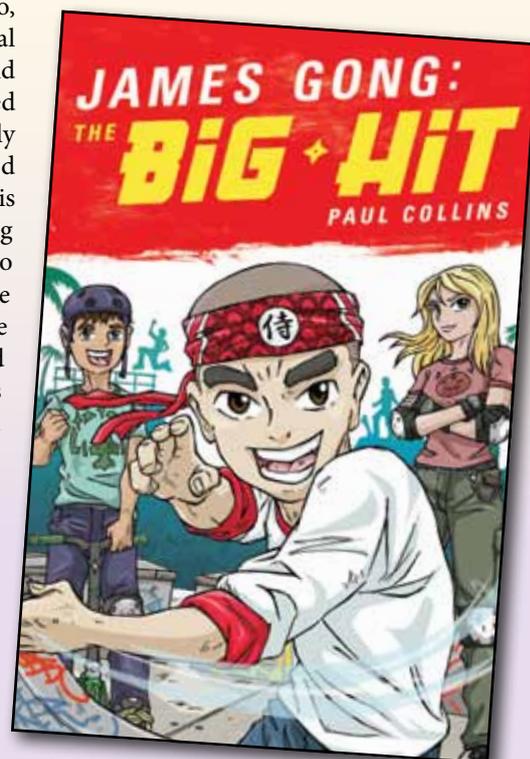
James is a young boy who, he would grudgingly say, is perfectly content with staying out of the spotlight, having two best friends, and harbouring a crush on his sister’s beautiful but best friend, Amber. However, that all changes when his taekwondo moves attract the attention of a Hollywood director, who wants him to star in an original production. James immediately jumps to accept, the possibility of fame and Hollywood limousines and finally being someone his crush can idolise too good to pass up.

However, some things are too good to be true, and he soon realises that not everything—or everyone—is as simple as it seems. Towards the end of the book, James starts to see his journey in a different light and learns many valuable lessons as well as discovers things about himself and his friends he would have never known.

Despite being a story about taekwondo, there is no required knowledge of martial arts for readers to be able to understand and enjoy the book. Perfectly balanced with the often mischievous and frankly crazy things children get up to, and hilarious, engaging dialogue, this story is fast paced, filled with action, and nothing less than entertaining. Action scenes are so well-written and described that it feels like we have been pulled into the book and are witnessing James in real life. Combined with the flurry of activities and chaos James is constantly involved in, this book is a whirlwind of adventure and delight.

However, it is not without its introspective and heart-touching moments, seen through James’s compelling narrative, which is what truly makes *James Gong – The Big Hit* stand out. So, if you are looking for a fun, interesting and engaging read, look no further.

Reviewer: Marian Lim  
Audience: 9–13-year-olds



# WAR IS AN INKBLOT



I take a deep breath and I'm transported. I can hear my tortured screams "Mama! Papa!". I can feel the man ripping me from my parent's embrace. I see the last glimpse I ever had of their faces. They told me they would join me in Britain in a week. It's been years since I've seen them.

I'm transported once more, to a carriage in a train. "Clutter Clutter Clutter." The wheels groan against the track. My stomach is a pit of mixed emotions. I'm so happy to be finally leaving the bomb torn Austria. Apparently, this

**G**UNFIRE and rushing wind scream through the sky, burning my ears. The enemy plane is just a few metres away. If I can get this shot, we win the battle, I aim, shoot, and hit my target. But not before he hits his. The German plane explodes into a fiery cloud of nothingness. The plane beside me, the one belonging to my best friend and adopted brother Tommy, explodes as well. A hoarse scream struggles to escape my dry throat. Not Tommy. No, he can't be hit. Not Tommy. The remains of his flying vehicle fall to the ground, and I zoom after him. I jump out of the plane before it even lands, and sprint over to the wreck. My hands dig through metal sheets and propellers, trying to see some glimpse of my brother. He's not dead. He's not. He can't be. I find the body. I struggle to pull him away from the machine. I lie him down on the ground, and cold, dead, eyes stare back at me. Then they blink.

The sound of gunfire and exploding planes fades away. All that I can hear is the rasping laughter of my brother. I roll onto my back, next to him, and glance up at the cloud littered sky. We lay there, laughing as everything disappears. There are no planes flying above us, no wreckages in sight. We shrink from full grown soldiers into little boys once more.

"Lunch time boys!" Mother's voice cuts across the laughter. As we stand up, eager to eat, she speaks again, "You boys weren't

playing that silly war game again, were you?"

"It's fun ma!" Tommy explains, as we ramble up to the house.

"It's no good running around and pretending to die. The war is real. Not some silly game."

"OK Mother, we won't play it again", I say. Mother's not my real Mama, you see. My real Mama is all the way over in Austria. I used to be in Austria too, until the British government came and took me to Britain. They took me on a thing called the Kinder transport, and they said that Britain was the safest place for me.

We eat lunch and then go to play outside again.

It's bedtime now, and I can hear the soft, puffing snores escaping Tommy's mouth, like a train. I can't sleep, though. It always takes me hours to finally drift off. I hate bedtime. I have nothing to do while lying in bed, so the memories wander their way to the front of my mind.

From the comfort of my bed, I can see myself and my real family, huddled in the basement of our house in Austria. I can hear the deafening explosion of bombs, just a few streets away. The smell of gunpowder burns my nostrils and sucks water from my eyes.

new country will be safe from the war. But I'm worried about starting life again in a completely new country, Britain.

My mind transports me back into my bed. The memories have finished playing. At least for tonight. I know they'll be back again tomorrow night. They never fail to come back to haunt me.

It's the next morning, and I'm sitting at the table, eating oatmeal with Mother, Father and Tommy.

"Boys, we have to tell you something", Father grasps Mother's hand, and looks solemnly at Tommy and I.

"What is it?" Tommy asks.

Father takes a deep breath, "The government has told us that they will give us the money to send you two to Australia", the sentence floods out of his mouth like a dam wall that's been broken.

"And?" Tommy asks.

"And we accepted", Mother replies.

I can't believe it. Just as I'm starting to get used to Britain, I have to move again. I know how to speak English, after years of learning, and I'm starting to love my new Mother and Father. I don't really know much about this war that's going on, but it seems to be like a destructive inkblot.

Starting out in Germany, and spreading its deathly black ink to Austria. But the inkblot of death won't stop there, it is growing bigger, it's coming to Britain.

"But Mama and Papa won't be able to find me in this new country!" I whimper.

"Son, it's been years. I don't think your Mama and Papa are coming", Father shoots me with his words.

I bow my head in despair. I think I've always known. Jews weren't allowed in Austria. My parents were Jews. Father voicing it just made it a whole lot more real.

"Why are we going to Australia? We could go to America instead!", Tommy asks. I think he's trying to break the tension.

"Australia is very far away. It is unlikely that the war will reach you there", Mother answers.

"When do we leave?" Tommy asks.

"Tomorrow."

I'm sitting on a chair on the deck, watching Tommy play cricket with some other boys. Tommy kept on complaining to Mother and Father that he wanted to move to America, instead of Australia. He has read about it in stories. But Mother and Father said that Australia is where the government wants to send us so that is where we have to go. We boarded the boat this morning. Mother and Father hugged us and said goodbye, but unlike my real parents, they didn't offer any false promises about following us to the new country. They did say that we can come back to Britain after the war. But it seems like this

war is never going to end. I can't believe the change it has caused. I don't know who has caused all this, but for some reason, they hate Jews like me, and it's like they want to conquer the world. It seems if they have to ruin many people's lives to do so, they won't hesitate. Tommy hits a six. The boys cheer. I was just starting to settle in with my new family. The ball lands in the ocean. The boys groan. My life was torn away from me, not once, but twice. Tommy pulls a bread roll that he was saving for later out of his pocket, and they use it as a cricket ball. It doesn't work well, but it'll do. My lot in life isn't fair, but there's nothing I can do about it. I'll just have to make do with what I've got.

Finally, we've arrived in Australia. It was a long journey. Tommy made quite a few friends. He was always playing games like cricket and croquet. I just sat on the deck and watched. I wasn't brave enough to go talk to people. I don't like people. It was people that made my life this mess in the first place. Oh well, at least I'm in a safe country now. Once we got off the boat, a man and woman were waiting for us. They speak English in Australia, which is good. At least I don't have to learn a third language. Tommy and I went into a car with the man and lady.

"How was your journey, boys?", the lady turns around and asks us. She has kind, sparkling eyes.

"Oh, it was great! I played sports and made friends!", Tommy replies.

"And what about you?" She cranes her head around the front seat to look at me.

"It was all right", I say, politely.

The lady nods. She doesn't push me to say more. I like this lady. And the man. He whistles while he drives, like a hopeful bird. I think these two people are my new parents. But I miss my old parents. My real Mama and Papa, and then Tommy's Mother and Father. I don't really know what the future will hold for me in this new country called Australia. Australia is an island, so far away from everywhere else. I don't think the inkblot of war will reach me here. Not on this tiny little isolated island. Finally, after years of running, I'm safe.

It's true. After years of running, I really am safe. It's been so many years since my boat ride to Australia, 80 years, in fact. And it turns out, after two massive journeys, three sets of families, and three different lives, I was able to finally settle down in Australia. I never did end up moving back to Britain, but I didn't mind. I was happy in the island country. Today, I look back, as a ninety year old man, in horror at all I had to go through. It's not fair that any child should have to experience war. The current year is 2020, and there hasn't been a world war for almost 80 years. I hope it stays this way, but honestly I don't know. There has been fighting going on between the US and Iran, after an Iranian General was killed. There have been missiles launched, nuclear weapons built, and threats made. I've been through it once, I don't want to go through it again. I'm worried for my grandchildren too. They're only young. They shouldn't have to go through war either. But if the inkblot comes back, there is nothing we can do to stop it. It'll want revenge.

By **Charlotte Landherr**

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## — Lost —

**B**ANG! The sound of a shotgun echoed around the woods. Sam knew it wasn't safe there; he had to get out of there fast. Sam was an 11 year old boy from the dark scary city of Fang Flesh. He had recently run away from home after he overheard his dad threatening to leave. Sam was in his bedroom one dark gloomy night and had prepared a falling apart backpack stuffed with food and water that day. Sam didn't want his parents to hear him so he left in the dead of night. When

he was finally out of his bedroom window he ran up the street and into the hills. Thankfully they were only one street away from the hills. When Sam was finally in the hills he stopped and stared into space. He knew it wasn't the right thing to do but he didn't want to turn back now because he was scared his parents would get angry at him and ground him for life.

After about a day Sam was worn to the bone and couldn't take another step.

Maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all. After a couple more days of walking he heard the sound. BANG! What was it, thought Sam, after a while he finally figured out it was the sound of a shotgun, he had to get out there and fast. Sam sprinted his way along the muddy, windy path. He was getting tired and fast. Instead of looking in front of him he was looking behind him for anyone chasing him and

*Continued on page 46*

then CRASH! Sam lost consciousness for a couple of minutes and when he woke up again he was winding along the twisty muddy paths in a rusty ute. He wondered who was driving it. He slowly turned his head to discover what was driving the ute and to his awful surprise there was the ugliest and scariest man in the whole entire universe sitting next to him.

Sam tried to escape but it looked like the monster had already thought it through. Oh no, disaster struck, the door was locked.

“Oh man, I’m dead meat”, thought Sam aloud.

All of a sudden the monster took a sharp right turn and Sam flew out of his seat and into the front window.

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!” screamed Sam.

“What did you say?” said the monster in his low gruff voice.

“W-w-what’s your n-n-n-name?”, stammered Sam.

“The name’s Seth, now shut up and sit back”, said Seth.

Wow this guy really needs to learn some manners, thought Sam to himself. When they pulled up outside a house that looked like it matched Seth’s

personality entirely, Sam thought “Oh no, a haunted house”. He didn’t know if it was Seth’s house or not so he asked. “S-s-Seth is th-th-this your h-h-house?”, stammered Sam.

“Yeah it is. You got a problem with that?” growled Seth.

“N-n-no”, stammered Sam again.

When he entered, to his surprise it wasn’t as bad as he thought it was going to be. He only counted about 13 spider webs from the doorway to the living room which was

about three metres. You might think 13 spider webs in three metres is quite a lot, but in a haunted house that’s barely anything. All the spider web kinda stuff was fine with Sam though but the thing he absolutely wasn’t looking forward to was meal times. He didn’t know if the food was going to be delicious or absolutely revolting.

Although Sam’s bedroom wasn’t that bad, the rest of the house was pretty awful. When it came for breakfast the next morning Sam felt absolutely horrible.

“Hey kid, come down and eat”, growled Seth through a speaker in Sam’s room.

Sam quietly tiptoed down the ten flights of stairs. By the time Sam got down to breakfast he was absolutely starving.

“All those flights of stairs have made me starving”, said Sam.

By then Sam was beginning to think that Seth wasn’t that bad after all.



“Well that’s good”, said Seth, “you have a big day ahead and you have an enormous breakfast as well. You have scrambled eggs on toast with cooked apple, grapes, mango, orange and a glass of milk”.

“MMMMMMMM”, said Sam, his mouth was watering by then. “What do I have to do today?”, asked Sam with a mouth full of food.

“Well first of all you have to help me do some gardening then I have a surprise for you Sam.” I wonder what the surprise is, thought Sam.

Later that afternoon when Sam was out in the garden with Seth planting some yellow tomatoes he heard a car pull up outside the house.

“Sam, close your eyes and stay there”, growled Seth, but this time it sounded friendlier.

“OK” said Sam. So many thoughts were going through Sam’s head at that moment. Is it secret spies, is it the FBI, is it the police, is it kidnapping people, is it elephants? Then an awful but joyous thought went through his head. “Is it my parents!?” said Sam a little too loudly.

“Sam is that you!”, said two familiar voices.

Sam couldn’t help himself; he knew Seth had told him to stay there but he couldn’t help it. Sam sprinted to where he heard what he thought was his mum and dad’s voice. “MUM! DAD! WHERE ARE YOU!?”, screamed Sam then BOOF! Sam ran straight into his parents. “Mum! Dad!”

Wwwwhhhaaaaa! Sam and his family all started crying. “Mum? Dad? Is it really you?”

“Yes honey it’s us. We have some talking to do, we were really worried, but we will do that when we get home. Please say thank you to this very kind man for saving you.”

“Thank you Seth. You are very kind”, said Sam between sniffs.

“You are welcome, Sam, just don’t run away again, Sam. It is very dangerous”, said Seth.

“I’m so sad this is probably the last time I will see you”, said Sam. “It’s OK Sam, I will visit you”, said Seth.

THE END

**By Akon Baak**  
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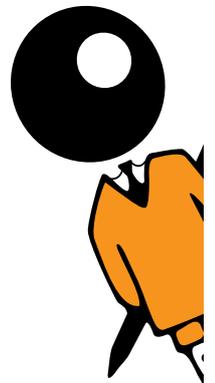
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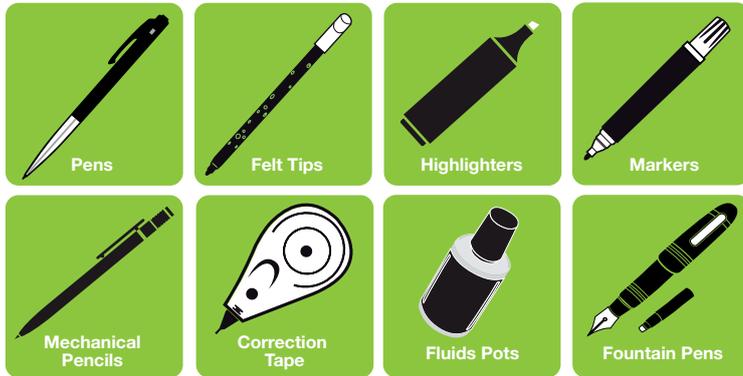
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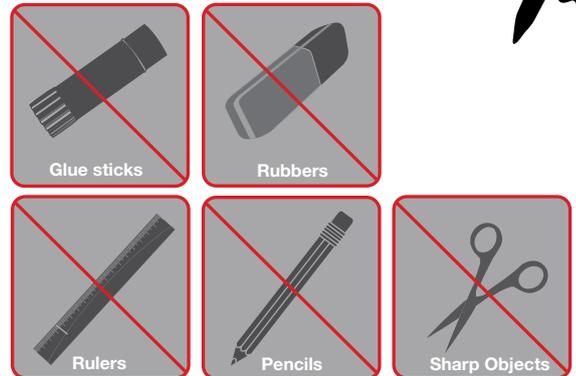
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