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November 2013

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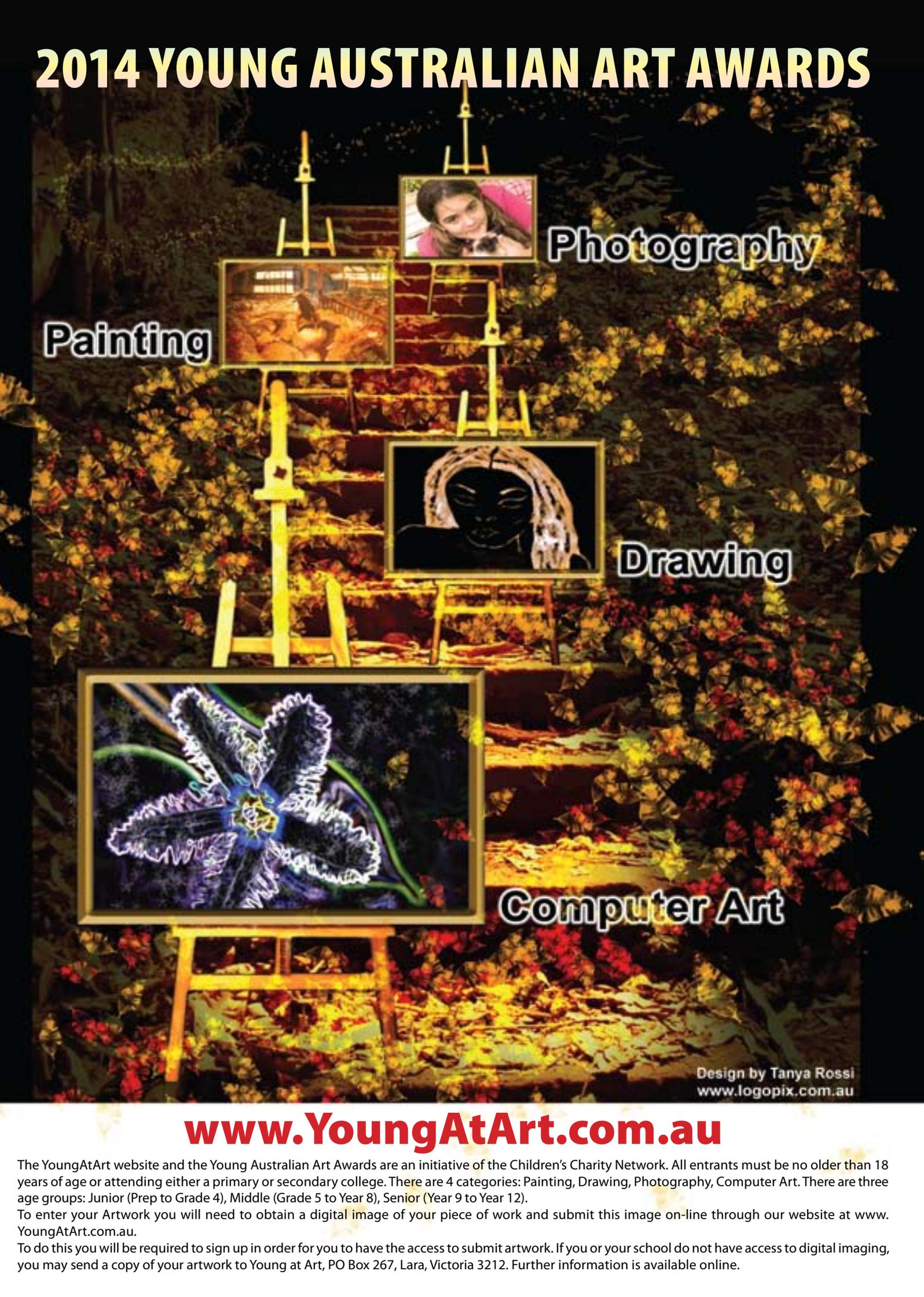
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FREE ENTRY

**TO STUDENTS IN PRIMARY OR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Proudly supported by the Australian Government

2014 YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



Painting



Photography



Drawing



Computer Art

Design by Tanya Rossi
www.logopix.com.au

www.YoungAtArt.com.au

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.YoungAtArt.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.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Another year over and what a wonderful selection of submissions we have had. Congratulations to this year's Winners in the 2013 *Young At Art Awards* and *Young Australian Writers' Awards*.

A reminder that one thing that will not be tolerated is 'plagiarism'. Plagiarism is considered a moral offence. To use (copy) someone else's work for your own gain is against the rules. Those entries will be refused.

We look forward to more great entries next year.

Enjoy the festive season; please stay safe.

Keep on writing in 2014!

ENTER ON-LINE at
www.ozkids.com.au



**KEEP ON WRITING
(TYPING)!**

Carol Dick
Managing Editor

**CHILDREN'S CHARITY NETWORK
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BOOK REVIEW

Flora's War by Pamela Rushby



Ford Street Publishing

Ages: 11+ PB Price: AUD \$18.95

ISBN: 9781921665961

Reviewer: Jenny Mounfield

'Cairo, 1915

We can always smell them before we see them.

Today it's bad, really bad, but not as bad as the first time, because then we had no conception of just what we'd see when the wooden doors of the train slid back.'

When I read the blurb for this book my first thought was, Oh, not historical fiction! But on reading the opening lines above, how could I not want to know more? What follows is Flora's story: how she came to be in Cairo with her father in 1915 as the city filled with soldiers preparing for war; the friendships she formed and ultimately how her dreams of glittering parties and fun were replaced by train-loads of wounded and dying men fresh from the shattered shores of Gallipoli.

"Much later, after everyone had gone, Gwen and I were in my room.

'And just what was going on with the debonair William?' I demanded.

'We-e-e-e-ll.' Gwen looked at me, eyes sparkling.

'Gwen! You didn't! Did you? Did you actually kiss him?'

Gwen nodded.

'You did? Really? So what was it like? Was it wonderful? Tell me!'

'What was it like?' Gwen pretended to think about it. 'Well, to tell you the truth, it was just sort of prickly. William has a moustache, you see.'

'Prickly? Is that all?' I was horribly disappointed."

While *Flora's War* is set in a time of war and documents Flora's volunteer work

with soldiers, at its core it is a coming of age story. It's a story about a girl on the brink of womanhood learning the value and commitment of friendship and love, as well as other important life lessons, such as the paradoxical nature of human kind.

It is also very much a story about Egypt. Through Flora's eyes, readers see her father's archeological dig, are led through the shadowy corridors of her opulent and somewhat mysterious rented home and are taken into Cairo's maze of back streets. Rushby has done her research so thoroughly that even now, a day after finishing this book, I can still see the pyramids pressed against an endless heat-hazed sky and smell the dry earthiness of sunbaked stone.

With the one-hundred year anniversary of the battle at Gallipoli less than two years away, this book will be an invaluable resource in the classroom. I can think of no better way for young adults to gain an understanding of exactly why Gallipoli is such an important part of our history than by reading *Flora's War*. As for my view of historical fiction: it would appear an amendment is in order.

Pamela Rushby has written well in excess of 100 books for young people, perhaps her most notable being: *When the Hiphicks Went to War* (Winner, Ethel Turner Prize for young people's literature, New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards 2010 Notable Book, Children's Book Council of Australia Awards 2010). Find out more about Pamela's writing and workshops at: www.pamelarushby.com

Jenny Mounfield is the author of four titles and several short stories for kids and YAs. Her reviews have appeared both in print and online. She lives north of Brisbane with her husband and three grown children.



Anna

She stood quietly upon the platform, her eyes bright with knowledge of all that had come to pass. Indistinguishable sounds echoed loudly, as the brightly dressed people bustled purposefully around her. A faint smell of coffee and bagels wafted from a nearby café, hidden where the sun had not yet reached. The station itself was spread across many platforms, each more vibrant and colourful than the next. Metallic orbs hovered above, a clear reminder of authority. “Keeping the citizens of Posthumous safe” or so they say.

She had grown that year, in more ways than one. Her hair was a rich shade of ebony, and flowed in waves, adorning her pale, rosy skin. Fiery green eyes, framed by long lashes, shone from her petite, oval shaped face. She stood tall amongst the crowd, dainty yet nimble. Never again would she allow history to repeat itself.

Her stature remained unmoved as she observed a silent boy, standing on the opposing platform. He was long and wiry, his face thick with acne scars. The expression written upon it, however, was blank with adult like composure. He did not text nor stare around in excitement the way other children do, but straight ahead. Yet, it was his eyes that were the most peculiar, a cold, arctic blue. They seemed to beckon to her, terrified, like an animal calling wildly for release. Silently, once a minute, his fingers twitched.

A train glided soundlessly into the station, casting a faint shadow over the boy's awaiting platform. The doors clattered open and revealed a swarm of excited tourists, business men, and families. A gentle electrical murmur hummed as the train slid out of the station, leaving as quickly as it had come.

It had only obscured her view for a minute, though when she looked again the boy had vanished, lost in a sea of faces. Scanning the crowd she noticed him, moving swiftly along the platform.

The twitches had worsened profusely, and now consumed his hands, arms and neck. Yet his poise remained unchained, as if a fog obscured his senses. His body spasmed uncontrollably, a final time, before ceasing, motionless against the crowd. Turning, he looked back towards her. As if he could see for the first time.

Where was he? Who was he? He remembered a name, a face. Anna. She had been standing on the platform, not a moment ago. His immense desire to reach her consumed him as he pushed against the startled faces of the ongoing crowd. He felt his heart rate pulse, his breath catch within his chest. Anna. A horn blew as another train approached, yet he barely noticed it. He was close now, close. A man pressed in front of him, the last obstacle. His view was obscured by the heavy boxes he carried, and he walked clumsily, catching the boy's foot with his step.

She saw him fall, unable to stop himself. The ground loomed beckoningly as he tumbled, over the edge of the platform. He mouthed her name, silently, as a tortured sound of metal twisting and tearing enveloped him.

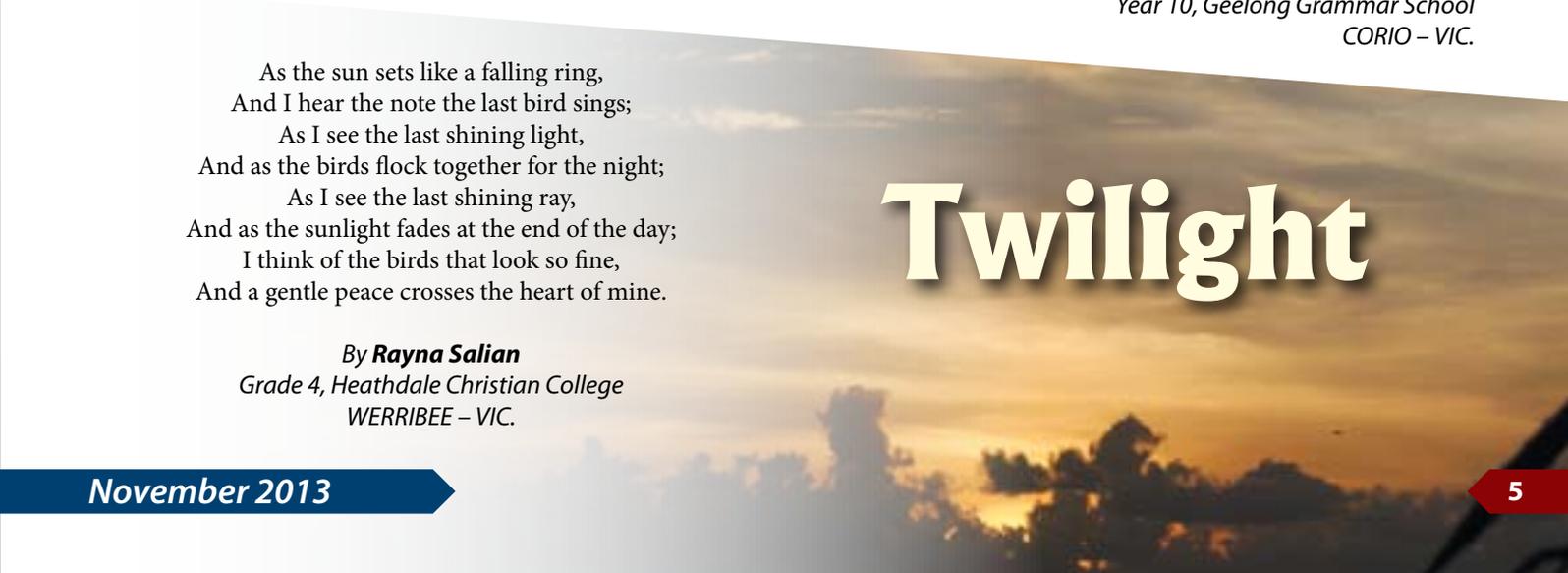
By **Olivia Moffatt**

Year 10, Geelong Grammar School
CORIO – VIC.

As the sun sets like a falling ring,
And I hear the note the last bird sings;
As I see the last shining light,
And as the birds flock together for the night;
As I see the last shining ray,
And as the sunlight fades at the end of the day;
I think of the birds that look so fine,
And a gentle peace crosses the heart of mine.

By **Rayna Salian**

Grade 4, Heathdale Christian College
WERRIBEE – VIC.



Twilight

Cat and Rat's Fun Day Out

A CAT named Miki was sitting on a mat with a rat named Ratty.

"Hello", said the rat to the cat.

"Hello", the cat said back.

"Nice day to go out for a walk, isn't it? Do you think we should go out for a walk today?"

"Yeah, I think we should."

"Then let's go, okay."

So they went out to go on their walk. They picked up flowers and favourite things. They found piles of leaves and jumped in them. They had lots of fun. Then they felt hungry and decided to go home. So they went home and ate. They had a fun day but were exhausted. They were now best friends. They are always nice to each other and now give little presents to each other. They like each other and sleep together.

The next day they went for a walk again. This time they met a rabbit. They asked if she wanted to walk with them.

"Yes", said the rabbit. Her name was Raby. The rabbit asked if they wanted to visit her friends; Emily the puppy and her mother Daisy.

"Yes", said Ratty and Miki.

So they followed the rabbit and asked if they could be her friend. The rabbit said



yes. They became friends and soon they were at Emily and Daisy's house. They knocked at the door. There came a voice.

"Who is there?"

"It is me, Raby."

"Come in."

So they came in and introduced Ratty and Miki to Emily and Daisy.

"Emily and Daisy look beautiful", whispered Miki to Raby.

"Yeah, I know", whispered Raby back.

"Can we play some games?" whispered Ratty and Miki to Raby.

"Okay", whispered Raby back.

"Guys, I think now we can play some games."

The first game that they played was pass the parcel. They had fun. Miki won the big prize. The little prizes went to the rest of them. Then they played tag. First Ratty and Miki were 'it'. They got Raby. Then Raby got Daisy. Daisy got Emily and then they stopped.

Miki and Ratty got hungry and said they wanted to eat. They were going to watch a movie, *The Sound of Music*, afterwards. It was long. In the middle of the movie Miki and Ratty fell asleep. Emily slept on the couch and on the other side was Daisy. Raby slept on a small mattress. Miki slept on one side of a mattress and on the other side was Ratty. When they woke up Miki, Raby and Ratty had to go. So Raby led the way to Miki and Ratty's house.

They had a treat there, then decided to go to the park. They went and played at the park. They soon had to go to a birthday party. It was time to go, so Miki and Ratty said goodbye to Raby and went to the party. They played games, ate cake and sweets and then they went back home. They had had a nice day and now they were going to be friends forever.

THE END!

By **Jasmine Alisha Hamit**

Age 6, Harrisfield Primary School
NOBLE PARK – VIC.

In the Jungle

The jungle is as green as green with nature everywhere.
The jungle is so thick and dense it seems that nothing is there.
But don't you get me wrong, it has things both big and small.

It has never-ending fun that lasts for one and all.

When you venture into it you'll see amazing sights,
you can hear amazing sounds through both the days and nights.
But the jungle can be dangerous so be careful please my friend.

The jungle will go on and on and it may never end.

By **Patrick Gordon Hubbard**
Age 7, Summer Hill Public School
SUMMER HILL – NSW

The NAUGHTY Little Dragons!

ONCE upon a time there lived three little dragons. Their names were Luke, Harry and Roddy. They were very cheeky. Their mum said, "Go into the garden and pick dragon berries!"

So the naughty little dragons instead flew into the village to scare the villagers. As they flew they discussed the best way to scare someone. Luke said to his brothers, "The best way to scare someone is to creep up on them and ROAR!"

Harry said "NO WAY! The best way is to hide behind a corner and jump out in front of them and roar".

"I know what", said Roddy, "The best way to scare someone is to dress up in a superhero costume and when people start to crowd around us, we then rip off the costumes and breathe fire everywhere. That will send them screaming!"

Luke and Harry yelled "NO" at the same time. Luke said "My way is better; I want to scare people my way".

Harry replied with "My way is better than yours, let's do it my way".

Roddy yelled at both his brothers "If you don't stop arguing we're going home!"

Luke and Harry both stopped arguing and turned to look at Roddy and pretended to listen to him, but were both planning to do their own thing. So when Roddy said "It's time for scaring the villagers", Luke and Harry did as they each planned.

After the villagers had been sent screaming back to their homes by the naughty dragons it was time to meet up with Roddy. He was furious with Luke and Harry! To punish them both Roddy chased them and blew fire on their tails.

By this time it was getting late and they headed home. When they got home their mother was furious with all three of the naughty little dragons. Their mother roared "LUKE, HARRY, RODDY, get straight to bed NOW!"

"But mum, we are so hungry", whined the three dragons.



"No excuses, I'm sending you to bed because you didn't do as I asked, instead you flew into the village", said their mother.

The three naughty little dragons were puzzled as they had not realised their mother knew where they had gone. So they took themselves off to bed without dinner. But when they got to their bedroom Roddy, the naughtiest of the three, whispered "I have an idea. Let's breathe fire and make a big hole in this wall so we can sneak into the village and eat all the pies". Luke and Harry looked at one another and said "That's an awesome idea!" and this time they did as Roddy suggested.

Later on their mother who was worried that they were hungry brought them some dinner. But she saw the big hole and was so angry that she almost saw fire. She flew to the village to check. She found fat little dragons. The three brothers had to mend the wall. After that they were exhausted!

Their mother brought them orange juice to reward their hard work and the naughty little dragons all said sorry to their mother for being soooooo naughty. It was already past their bedtime so their mother tucked them into bed and said "Thank you for your hard work repairing the wall but please be good tomorrow".

The End

By Liam Tonev

*Year 2, Padbury Catholic Primary School
PADBURY - WA*

Love

*By Sascha Zenari
Grade 6 - NSW*

A whisper through the silver leaves,
A twinkle in the stars,
A song carried gently,
All the way from Mars,
The chuckle of a newborn deer,
Prancing through the plains,
A trickle of a dying stream,
Waiting for the rain,
A symphony of laughter,
Chorus down the street,
A beam of gleaming light,
A cat about to leap,
A rap upon my door, upon the darkened night,
And there you gave me,
A sharp and sudden fright.
Love can be many things,
Twisted through the seams of life,
I'm certainly glad you showed me,
A piece of that tonight.

IZLA'S LAST WORDS

THE Fae danced about joyfully, oblivious to Izla's presence as she carefully drew nearer, concealed in the darkness by a shaggy mane of black hair. Her blue eyes were focused on the fairy's graceful movements, smelling their blood made her thirsty. Izla stealthily moved forward, then quickly leaped at the nearest fairy, sinking her pearly teeth into its neck. The others quickly fluttered away from her reach.

The taste of the rare fairy was sweeter than she remembered; after all it was difficult to get their blood. No animals dared move when Izla was nearby, they sensed her presence. Once not a drop of the blood remained she sought out a lost, lonely deer before her thirst was finally quenched. As Izla wiped the red blood from her lips, the crack of a twig caught her unaware. Grinning, she spun around to find its source.

Izla let loose a malicious laugh into the darkness. "The huntress hunted", she shrieked, her voice sounding like nails being drawn over a board.

"Who would hunt a great huntress such as yourself?" a deep voice responded.

With lightning speed Izla raced to where the voice had emanated. She scanned overhead trying to see past the thicket of trees, finding that moonlight was her only company.



"Then again I could always hunt you!", taunted the voice, letting out a dark laugh that arose from beyond where she stood.

"Reveal yourself", she yelled at the darkness.

"What, so you can drink my blood? I don't think so!" He clicked his tongue.

"Coward" she muttered, quickly looking around, "He could be anywhere".

"Coward? Am I not hunting Izla? The great Izla, princess of evil!" he mocked. She growled in reply.

Izla, searching quickly, detected no tracks anywhere and strangely no scent. She now stood in a clearing with trees surrounding her. The moon shone above like a silver disk.

"Show yourself, coward", she hissed, fear slowly sinking into her dead heart.

Suddenly surges of pain radiated through Izla's back. She looked down to see the tip of a silver blade protruding from her stomach. Black dust sprayed out as she fell backwards onto the hard ground. A black figure knelt over Izla, hair fell around his face and his dark blue eyes observed her mercilessly.

"Coward, am I?" he challenged, his voice echoing through the trees. "I killed Izla, the most dreaded and mightiest vampire in our entire Underworld!"

As the black dust poured from the wound, a golden orb of light appeared then darted through the forest, lighting its way as it went. He leaned closer to her ear, taunting her spitefully. "See that Izla, the last piece of your soul".

"W—who are you?", she croaked.

"Loro, the killer of monsters and my own kind... as in you", he smiled wickedly.

"Y—you are a traitor to the Underworld" she croaked with her last dying breath.

"Yes I know" he answered, walking away from the pile of black ashes that was once Izla.

By **Mikayla Brooke Dewstow**

Age 16

MAIDA VALE – WA

Performception

The lights are tinkling on my body
Slow actions begin to form
Melody runs through my hands
The key unlocks a feeling of peacefulness
A world of notes shivers through my body like an earthquake of steel
The final note is like a volcanic eruption
A slight second of pause runs through my body
My feelings of insecurity cover me like snow on a hill
A loud eruption sings like a bell
PROUD PERFORMCEPTION!!!

By **Brenton Potter**

Year 5, Narre Warren North Primary School
NARRE WARREN – VIC.



THE BRAVE MONKEY

ONCE upon a time there was a family and in this family, there lived a monkey. This monkey was not just any monkey, all his life he had dreamt of being in the circus, but he had no idea how to get in to one or how he would find it. Not only that but he was frightened of going somewhere all alone. You see, he was only allowed outside when the youngest daughter took him for a walk. The monkey had his own collar and lead. The name on the shiny tag read 'Bernie', and this is the story of the time Bernie ran away to the circus, performed in his very first show and then returned home feeling much happier, all in the space of a week.

One Monday night, when everyone was asleep, just three hours after Bernie's evening walk, Bernie snuck out onto the street, taking with him a little blue backpack, in which he had packed yoghurt, bananas, sultanas and his drinking bottles filled with his favourite apple and blackcurrant juice. Quickly, he ran off down the road and to the train station. Before he left, he put a note on the kitchen table, this is what it said - 'Ooh ooh oo ooh'. (Which in monkey means, 'I'm just going on a little adventure to the circus to learn some tricks and improve my somersaults. Don't worry, there will be no need to send out a search party. I shall be back after the show at 8 o'clock on Friday. Please come and watch if you can, I love you all. Bernie?')

When Bernie reached the train station at eight thirty he was glad that he had just arrived in time to catch the last train of the night that went to Circus Warrumbungle, over in the park. Bernie found an empty seat and started to read the comic he had brought with him. It was his favourite comic, about a little monkey called Curious George who liked to explore. The train ride was long and boring but totally worth it. When the train slowed and the driver announced Warrumbungle Circus, Bernie picked up his comic and skipped happily off the train. There towering above him, blocking out the moon, but lit up by the lanterns hanging from trees standing nearby, was the Big Top!

Bernie got absolutely too excited, he skipped right through the front opening



of the tent and almost fainted. Swinging from metal poles twenty feet above him were at least a dozen monkeys, just like him, all doing somersaults and standing on their heads, some were even balancing on the tight rope, with nothing for them to balance with except their tails! Over in a corner stood a large cage and there inside were six sleeping lions. As Bernie stared, mouth agape, they suddenly woke up, stood on their hind legs and twirled as if they were practising ballet. The male was in a separate compartment from the females and his name shone bright in the candlelight. Even though it was engraved in the same colour as the cage Bernie could still see 'Jacarei'. He decided to stay far away from him.

Bernie soon found the Ringmaster and told him he would like to learn some circus tricks, maybe perform in a show and then invite the other monkeys over to his house for a party, dinner and if they were allowed, a sleepover. It took the Ringmaster a few minutes before he was nodding his head and started speaking directions to Bernie, explaining when his first training session would start, which was the same time as everyone else, 7:34 am sharp.

The next day was a dream come true for Bernie, at first he didn't know a single signal but as the day went on he soon learnt not only to hang upside-down by his tail for a full five minutes, do a full set

of twelve somersaults in a row, he learnt to jump through a ring of fire, balance on a tight rope, swing on the trapeze and learnt how to juggle. Bernie also learnt to swallow fire and then make it appear on his hands, and how to blow so the fire caught something and it burnt away. After a full week of training and even practising in his spare time Bernie, Friday finally arrived. He and the other monkeys were allowed an extra hour and a half free time to sleep, eat and freshen up before the show that night. Then the monkeys would all pack their bags and go to Bernie's for a sleepover.

The show started at 7pm, Bernie got so completely excited jumping around, that he almost caused his costume to rip, but luckily it didn't. The monkey's act was third and when Bernie somersaulted out with the others he stopped. There in the front row stood his family that he had run away from to come learn some tricks. When the mother saw Bernie her jaw dropped and so did the rest of the family's jaws.

Bernie quickly caught up to the others and the rest of the act went smoothly, then at the end of the show, the Ringmaster congratulated him, and they both shook hands. The Ringmaster then told the other monkeys to grab their night cases and go over to Bernie's for the night. The other monkeys couldn't believe their eyes and ears, ran to their suitcases and packed everything that they would need such as their toothbrushes, pyjamas, clothes and beach towel. They then made their way over to where Bernie and his family were waiting, and then when everyone was ready, they made their way to the train station.

When they arrived home that night the family made a sign to put on their front door and this is what it said: 'OUR HOME IS HOME TO THE BRAVE MONKEY AND HIS FRIENDS'. Bernie certainly was a brave monkey, a brave monkey indeed.

The End!

By **Samantha Douthwaite**

Age 12,

Glennaeon Rudolf Steiner School

MIDDLE COVE - NSW



Never Forget Me

push him on the swing and draw with him again. When everything would be fine, and everything would be back to normal.

One day mum and dad got a phone call. They said that Jimmy's sister was really sick and no matter what happened he could never forget her. Jimmy didn't understand, why were they so nervous? Why was mummy so sad? His sister told him she was coming home soon...

The doctors said that Jimmy should come more, that she wouldn't be around forever. On Jimmy's last visit, his sister gave him a note, but told him not to open until it was time. But time for what? What did she mean? Why did he have to see her to urgently? It was too much for his little 8 year old mind to take in. Then one day, he wasn't allowed to see her, but mum and dad were...

They went to a party, but everyone was sad. People wore black clothes instead of

colourful ones. Mum and dad cried a lot. His sister was sleeping in a box. "Come back!", Jimmy cried to her, "wake up!" But Jimmy's sister was still asleep. She looked beautiful and was wearing less makeup than usual. He yelled to her, but she never moved, or woke up! Jimmy wept and wept. "When is she going to wake up?" Jimmy asked his mummy. Mummy had sad eyes when she looked at him, Jimmy had a feeling she was never coming back...

Ten years later he sat in her room, laid a bunch of roses on her bed and walked out of the house forever. He opened the last note he ever got from her. 'Never forget me, but let me go. Let go of your past, and look to the future. I will always love you, Katie. Two hearts.'

Jimmy loves his sister, even though she isn't there, he loves her as she is.

By Isabella Plant
Year 8, Age 13
CRIB POINT – VIC.

JIMMY loved his sister. Even though she was different. Even though she looked different. He loved her hair, her smile, Jimmy loved his sister as she was. His sister used to play with him, she used to push him on the swing!

But things changed. Jimmy's sister had cancer. And was losing her hair. She had to be in the hospital a lot. People looked at her like she was an alien, like she was different, not human. She got really sad, mum said it was a teenager thing.

Jimmy was only 8. And his sister was 16. They lived in a nice house near the beach. But Jimmy's sister had to live in the hospital. He longed for the day when she would come home. The day she could

Ballad – Angel



One April day,
The sky was grey,
The wind stabbed at my skin.
It was really cool,
I had just come from school,
To buy my second budgie.
Angel's what I called her,
She felt like a daughter,
And I love her so very much.
She flew like a jet plane,
But I loved her the same,
Her beauty and grace took my breaths away.
But one very sad Sunday,
She truly took my breath away,
As she fell to her knees and lay down.
And her grace and beauty,
Could no longer hypnotise me,
As she had none left in her small soul.
Every year on that day,
I look at the sky and say,
Dear Angel you've made me so proud.
I just wish you were here,
And she whispers in my ear,
I love you too, just the same.

By Student Age 11
WAITARA – NSW

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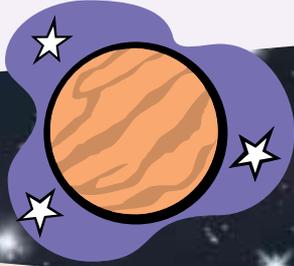
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Our Solar System

Space is a place that is marvellously great.
The Solar System's one but the planets are eight.

Venus is almost the same size as the Earth, they have been called twins ever since their birth. Venus is the hottest planet in space, it has special clouds that trap air in the place. Venus has a transit with the sun, and if you ever watch it, I'd imagine it would be fun. Venus spins the wrong way around. If you ever try to walk on Venus, you wouldn't touch the ground.



Mercury is the closest planet to the sun but a trip from Earth to Mercury is certainly not fun. Mercury's temperature is hot in the day but cold at night, the temperature never ever reaches just right. Mercury has fewer than two days in a year – to this I say it's particularly queer!



Earth is the planet we live on you know, where there is water which flows and trees that grow. We breathe oxygen in and carbon dioxide out, and if we didn't have these, we would be in serious doubt. We're the third planet from the sun. As to aliens we have none.



Mars has a colour that's especially red. If you ever try to walk on Mars without a suit, you'd be dead. Some people say there are Martians on Mars. There is a chocolate named after the planet called Mars Bars. No oxygen to breathe in, nothing to breathe out, and apart from that all, Mars has a serious drought.



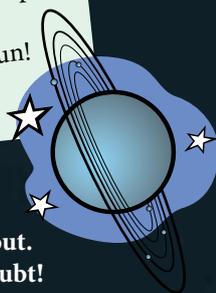
Jupiter is the biggest planet in our solar system. The person who discovered Jupiter was obviously full of wisdom! Jupiter has massive storms all over, that is why we can't send a brave rover. Jupiter's most famous feature is the dark red spot – it's bigger than what you would call a very big clot. Jupiter has zones that are red and white. If you ever manage to stand on Jupiter, you'd feel very light.



Saturn has a unique system of rings made of ice, rock, dust and more fabulous things. Saturn takes a long time to orbit the sun. Saturn is also the least dense planet, when you'd think it would weigh a ton! One of Saturn's moons is called Titan you know. It has some strange air which gives it a lovely glow.



Saturn is not the only planet with rings – **Uranus** has them too. Uranus is a gassy planet which makes it particularly blue. Uranus is as beautiful as beryl, but Uranus has so many storms, you'll go there at your own peril. Uranus's orbit is such an enormous one, you'd have to live several lifetimes to go around the Sun!



Neptune is the last planet in our Solar System. Its moons are so small you could easily miss them. Neptune is named after the Roman god of the sea. He had such wonderful powers I wish he'd give some to me. Neptune is the planet with the icy cold gusts – the space probe that went there must have been so robust!



Our Solar System is amazing to learn about.
I'd love to visit space one day without a doubt!

By **Brigette Lill**
Year 4, Loreto College
KIRRIBILLI – NSW

Dog at the Beach

BOUNDED on the golden sand of the sun-kissed beach. I raced down to the glistening water and it sprayed up like fireworks as I ran across it. Suddenly, I halted. The turquoise water lapped at my heels, urging me to jump in and embrace its cool temperature but I ignored it. A small wisp of air entered my nose, and it was merged with the smell of food.

Energy soared through me as I ran along the beach. Stray, broken shells stabbed at my paws and washed up seaweed attempted to trip me up but I valiantly strode through. Then I finally reached the barbecue. The smell was stronger now, wafting up my nose with extreme intensity. My mouth watered and my stomach growled like thunder.

I took small steps forward, savouring the joyous moment. Soon my excitement swiftly built up and my hunger climbed and climbed. Then... I saw it. The man had freshly thrown it off the steaming barbecue and it had landed expertly on another man's plate. I gazed lovingly at the succulent steak. The sun reflected off the juices that were running down the sides of it, creating glittering rays of light that radiated from the chunk of meat.

I resisted the urge to run up and snatch it from his grasp and gulp it down in front of him. I figured he didn't deserve the torment. Instead, I casually waltzed into the barbecue area and pretended to look

like I was searching for my owner, but as I ventured closer and closer I prepared myself to grab and run. Soon, I was right next to it. I opened my jaw wide and swiftly snatched the steak from the plate.

I took off down the beach. The cacophony of angry shouts behind me grew fainter and fainter as the distance between us increased. Finally, the whispering of the wind and singing of the waves drowned out the shouts completely.

I set my steak on the wet sand and began to gulp it down with gusto. I impaled my acute teeth into the flesh and the steak melted in my mouth. I tore it apart and forced it down my throat; the delicious taste danced across my taste buds and I tried desperately to savour the taste as it slipped down my throat.

When I was finally satisfied that every last morsel was devoured, I happily laid my head onto the soft sand. The cool water brushed at my paws and tickled my toes pleasantly. Warm rays of sun washed over my body, soothing me, and I let myself relax and go limp. I felt my eyelids droop and begin to feel heavy. Letting them fall I soon fell into a deep sleep, with the sand as my pillow, the sunshine as my blanket and the symphony of the ocean as my lullaby.

By Lana Louise Cummings

*Age 12, Craigslea State Primary School
CHERMSIDE WEST – QLD.*



Eternal Othob of the Abyss



In the dark abyss of deepest night,
Whence came no life, came no light,
There lives yet one who does breathe,
Of the foul air of the inner earth,
And yet of soul, of heart, is dead, is dearth,
Eternal Othob!
The Things of the depths praise him so,
Where he reigns in the underworld low,
And crawls over mounds of carrion in mindless slumber,
Surrounded by mad demoniac legions of infinite number,
Dreaming of the day he might rise again from the endless mist,
And crush the lighted world of man in his vengeful fist.

By Matthew Harper-Gomm

*Year 9, Kambrya College
BERWICK – VIC.*

Jenny

OUR group ruled Year 9, and everyone knew it, so when Jenny came in the middle of the year, we were always going to be the ones to set her straight.

We were all seated in the unhomely dark classroom of 9F. I could see the teachers had desperately tried to jazz up the room by pinning educational posters on every wall. Now it just looked claustrophobic and it felt like the walls were caving in around us. There were four rows of greyish single tables with hinged tops that would screech painfully when they were opened.

Jenny came slowly into the room with her head lowered and took the only seat left. Next to Brittany! I couldn't believe it. Brittany was the queen bee; whatever she did everyone followed. Her eyes perfectly round, the colour piercing blue and they somehow always knew when you were lying. Brittany was the girl who everyone wanted to look like; she was what people saw when they thought of a Barbie. You could smell her fruity scent from a mile away; wafting around the school like it was her territory. But there was sweetness to that fragrance that was too sugary; it was what I imagined a fairy tale princess to be wearing. She was smiling but I could see beneath that

smile she wasn't warm. Yet I would never say that to anyone.

Although Jenny didn't say much as she sat down I could see Brit giggling and making gestures to me and the others. I know Jenny saw but she pretended she didn't. Her face went bright red and she just looked endlessly down into her page. That class would have been horrible for poor Jenny.

It kind of continued like that until Jenny knew not to hang around us and kept to herself. I knew that one day we would take it all too far, and we did. Thinking back I feel terrible I was a part of it. We were all in the change rooms after swimming. While Jenny was in the shower we stole her towel off the door. And (at Brit's instructions) I jumped up and took pictures of her. She desperately tried to cover herself, crouched in the corner. Her face went as red as a beetroot, her eyes were huge like giant green marbles bulging out of their sockets.

As we were running away all I wanted to do was smash my phone with the pictures on the ground so they never got out. But it was too late the others were already asking me to text the photos to them. I am not sure what Jenny did but when we went back to the change rooms at lunch, she was gone and in that short

period of time a photo of her had been emailed to all the students in Year 9.

The next day was Wednesday but Jenny didn't come creeping into our English Period One class, in fact she didn't come to school at all. But if shower shots of me had been posted on Facebook and emailed to everyone at school, I don't think I would turn up either. Tuesday came around but Jenny didn't. I was scared, I couldn't believe what I had done and there was no way to take it all back. My life was better than ever on the outside but I could feel all the guilt inside me about to burst out like a spring being pushed down and suddenly released.

Every day I would beg that Jenny would slowly walk through the door but she never did. Some mornings I thought I saw her, but it was just a dream. I sent her texts and emails but she never replied. She had closed her Facebook profile. Her phone would always disappoint me with the mechanic, "leave a message after the tone, beeeep." Whenever I heard that noise I would picture Jenny alone and scared.

A long week later our homeroom teacher casually announced that Jenny wasn't coming back to school. We all looked guiltily at our desks. Yet the teacher didn't know what had happened and we weren't going to get ourselves into trouble. Brit had carefully deleted all evidence of what we had done.

I should have stepped in and I shouldn't have allowed myself do that to anyone. Poor little Jenny, the person I had helped to torture was now gone.

By **Sally Shaw**
Year 8
TORQUAY – VIC.



What If

What if the ground was in the sky?
What if the human race could fly?
What if the sun didn't shine?
What if there was no such thing as time?
What if our hearts couldn't beat?
What if there wasn't such a thing as heat?
What if fire didn't burn?
What if the world didn't turn?
What if there was no moon?
What if life went by too soon?
What if there was such thing as time travel?
What if there was no such thing as trouble?
What if fruit was never ripe?
What if there was no light?
What if there never was a sun?
What if earth's time as a planet was done?
What if the sky was not above?
What if there was no such thing as love?
What if...
these things were real, what would the world be like?

By **Bella Sweeney**
Year 5, Methodist Ladies College
KEW – VIC.



I wonder...

One day it clicked,
And I wondered why,
Why the grass is green,
And blue the sky
Why the world is round,
And the sea so deep
Why the valleys so low
And the mountains so steep

I wonder how
The world came to be,
Was it Adam and Eve
And their apple tree?
Did we evolve from monkeys
Or is the Big Bang true?
How do we know this,
Is what I'm asking you!

I wonder if
A cure for cancer could be made
Or if the centre of the earth,
Could be found with a spade
I wonder if
We'll ever understand
How the galaxy can possibly
Continue to expand?

"Hello?!" "Hello?"
And I hear my name
I realise I've been
Daydreaming again!

By **Eloise Toomey**

Year 9

FORRESTERS BEACH – NSW

The Camera Is On Me

I watch you, watch me though my small little screen.
Are you wondering who's behind it?

I am filing images, snap shots in my mind,
but I don't dare to show.
I have always been silent, behind the shadows,
lurking,
watching,
filing knowledge in books,
that no one will ever see.

I have seen many things,
more than you will ever get.
I rather listen than to say.
I rather understand than to commit.
My eyes comprehend the images,
but my mind doesn't always understand.

In every place worth observing,
you will see me.
I seek more books, to be placed,
on the shelves of knowledge.
My knowledge, My shelves

By **Miranda Plowman**
Year 4, Ivanhoe Grammar School
IVANHOE – VIC.



Temple of Elements

IN A land far far away there was a secret temple. It was called the Temple of Elements. In the temple there was a school to learn about various elements such as fire, water, earth and air. There were expert teachers for all the different elements. The teachers teach each student to control the elements. Then they can do tricks with them like make nunchucks out of lightning or swords out of fire. Now you know about the temple, let the story begin.

One day a student named Oliver found the temple and joined the teachers as they tried to teach him how to control all the elements. Day by day he trained hard with the other students. He began to be very good at controlling these elements. He made weapons out of ice and armour out of lightning and many other great things. The teachers were very impressed and they thought the four teachers of the four legendary elements should teach him.

No one in centuries got to learn from the teachers of the four legendary elements except one student who is somewhat unexpected. So Oliver was learning fast but inside the other teachers felt despair and sadness for they thought that Oliver would turn evil just like the other students who learned from the masters. This student's name was Zeng. He too was a fast and good learner just like Oliver.



After five years of training Oliver learned how to control these four elements. He didn't turn against the teachers but one night when it was full moon the great ninjas of darkness attacked the village

where the secret temple was hidden. All the students and teachers fought hard. They were about to be defeated when all the students attacked with snow at the same time as the ninjas attacked with lightning. All the students, teachers and ninjas were wiped out but not dead.

Then suddenly two people got up from each side. But the person from the ninja side wasn't a ninja. No, said Oliver, you are Zeng. They each made a leaf sword and fought and kept on fighting.

A few hours later Oliver struck Zeng with his new water sword and almost defeated Zeng, but Zeng had a secret weapon, it was a bomb that explodes tornadoes. Zeng quickly threw the bomb. Oliver quickly struck Zeng with his water sword and killed him then he dived for the bomb trying as hard as he could to stop it. He sacrificed himself in the process to protect the village.

Then slowly the teachers, students and ninjas got up and defeated the ninjas and the ninjas never came back. Then Oliver's best friend Penny found him and together the students and teachers made a memorial for him.

The End

By **Romit Dave**

Age 10, Riverton Primary School
PERTH – WA

Grim Change

I have moved around for a long time
trying to find shelter
I left my friends behind
as black as tar the heavens have opened
like my eyes, wet drops roll down
what a grim change, rocking on a boat!
crashes of thunder, bolts of lightning flash
rocking my little world
Is it true? Can I see something?
Hark! It is there I saw it flash!
Jolt, and the boat snaps in two
I am plunged into cold darkness
the darkness devoured my old and new life...

By **Cameron Pozza**
Year 6, Saint Peter's College
HACKNEY – SA

Damien Holmes and the Phantom Chocolate Eater

"MMMMWWAAAA!" laughed my mystery Phantom evilly as he devoured my divine chocolate.

"Chocolate is unhealthy, chocolate is bad for you, chocolate is..." my mum barked continuously at me, complaining about the 'C' word. I wasn't even listening because I'm Damien Holmes, yes, the famous detective. I don't take any orders, I send them all. Today I'm investigating the desirous Phantom Chocolate Eater. I'll set chocolate as enticement and I'll stay up all night!

It's 10:15pm and everyone's asleep, well except me. I'm in the kitchen, the chocolate is in the fridge and I'm going to stay up all night... ZZZZ.

I woke up at 6:00am; I scanned the fridge carefully for the chocolate. Gone. He'd struck again and it's up to me to save all chocolate before chocolate becomes extinct and I die of lack of delicious food and would be forced to eat revolting and repulsive vegetables!

"Hey Damien, can you put the telly on for me?" It was Dad; I looked at him

disgustedly. Then I had my first suspect. Definitely traces of chocolate on his mouth. I turned the TV on. I was ready to trail him day and night, far and wide. It's time he faced truth, justice and law.

It was time for bed. I made sure everyone was asleep except me and the 'C' Phantom. I heard someone scuttling down the stairs. I concealed myself in a goliath pillow on the couch. I could hear its ominous footsteps and his urge to pilfer my chocolate. I got ready to jump on him. "Damien Holmes does it again!" I thought. I jumped on him and then I couldn't believe my eyes.

It was Mum. The malicious chocolate hater is the chocolate phantom eater? "Mum?" I said in astonishment, trying to sound surprised but it was clearly her. "DAMIEN!" she roared. Lights turned on all around the neighbourhood. "That's Damien Holmes to you, missy!" I replied professionally as I held out my gun (water gun) and some handcuffs (paper rings) and the authorities (Dad) came in to the crime scene (kitchen). I

snatched the chocolate and ate it from her as she thundered at me.

The phantom got sentenced to a life sentence of cleaning up my office (my dirty bedroom) and doing my chores for a month, justice is served. As for me all of my guns (water guns) are in interrogation (are in the bin) but I don't care because I've got a better gun (newest water gun). But I've got to keep an eye out because evil sinfully always lurks around the corner seeking vengeance, and so do I seeking more cases because I'm Damien Holmes, the detective and crime-fighter.

By **Ojas Ghuge**

Age 11, Warrigal Road State School
EIGHT MILE PLAINS – QLD.



An Idle Rainy Day

It's a cold, wet, rainy day,
There's nothing to do, so inside I stay.

Watching my pet cat sleeping,
I hear cars whizzing past and beeping.

I think about all the things I could have done,
On a day shining brightly with the sun.

I could have climbed trees,
Or just had some fun.

Or have gone to take the dog for a walk,
While hearing all the different birds squawk.

I could have learnt how to play baseball,
Or gone sightseeing to McKenzie Falls.

Unfortunately, I can't,
So I sit here watching my boring, old cat,

Instead of doing all that.

My cat finally gets up, stretches then yawns,
As I prepare for a new dawn.

Hoping this rain will go away,
And make haste for another day.

By **Shara Nazrin Hamit**

Age 11, Harrisfield Primary School
NOBLE PARK – VIC.

Mirrored

I. Seeking

I see his face sometimes.
Cold and senseless and still
As it was when in the silence of a truce
We salvaged what we could from the wreck
Of shattered limbs and blood.
I am glad I did it.
Inched into No Man's Land
Crawling because there is a scorched circle
In my leg where flesh had been
In the settling of blood, over
Dark faces and white, now grey in the pallor of death,
Trodden upon, in the great red wallowing
Mist of nowhere. I can't find him at first.
It is a gruesome task now that I think of it
A hideous duty which wears upon one, wears
Like the fiery rain upon our ears until we
Give out and give in; and winded wretches,
Eyeless, limbless, soulless
Wrecks of ourselves, we go home
To die, I suppose. Chance, or Providence
Has granted him a different fate.
Better or worse I can't tell.
Moving between bodies limp and bloodied, sheathed
In a shroud of mud, which served, at least, in death
A purpose other than to impede and pollute;
Peering into faces, soulless things, unseeing eyes
Uniform colours, grey and red – life and death
For once in union.
I see all these things and neither cringe nor weep for what is
But, stupid and dogged with the daze of death,
I look for him.

II. Him

Him.
The boy like me on our first day under
A Turkish sun.
Peering across No Man's Land from behind the parapet
Each with a fistful of gun, him with red ribbon fastened
Around his wrist. A patriot, I think, and raise my gun,
Smirking a little. A sniper rifle can bridge miles.
I am fearless, I say, and yet the blood rushes from my face
And sweat replaces it, and my hands are suddenly
Slick and shaking.
He lifts his gun too, points it, finger on the trigger.
And then something happens. I'm not sure what.
Maybe we look at each other too long.
White and wide-eyed, in a long terrible moment
When the rush and roar about us dies to nothing –
The difference of nation and blood and allies
In those few metres between us, those metres
Of No Man's Land.
And yet in my mind there are only two of us,
Two under the same sun, on the same earth. I forget war
And valour and honour; I forget patriots and sides – because his eyes
Are like mine, him, like a mirror image of myself, small and young and afraid.
I cannot kill one of my kind.
My gun drops.
So does his.
I suppose eyes can bridge miles too.



III. Over the Top



Dawn, a blood-red spread of sky
Ominous and glowering at the horizon. We charge,
Valiant and hot-blooded, fresh steel in hand, not yet drawn blood.
Time ceases to be. It's a different realm, where clash and cry
Sound together in a single, great roar; where I am running – thrashing – bayonet
Flailing in my hands. And then he is there
His gun levelled at my heart, the ribbon streaming from his wrist like blood.
And again it is quiet and again
It is only us, and again I am still, frozen, waiting.
His eyes meet mine – something in them, something
Not quite apology; we soldiers don't apologise. But something akin to it. I brace myself
For death.
His gun is point-downward, and I am not dead.
We look at each other for a moment, and for a moment
I think he is smiling at me, and I forget where we are.
And then he crumples, and I am running again
Something hot and angry and hopeless powering me through a hail of bullets
A storm of fire, and then I, too, am struck.

IV. Found

In the aftermath of the storm
Of a death-thunder, a rain of blood – I suppose
One ceases to feel, and it is as if
We've tuned ourselves out, the way a radio fades to static
To a humming and a murmur and then a void.
That's how it is. The rest of the world
Moving out of focus, only faces
Faces. Lips white and laughless.
We used to laugh a great deal, the lot of us
Friends, and friends of friends, and yet
I cannot cry,
I cannot touch them. I cannot stop.
They are watching me, his people.
Watching me, hatred and horror in their eyes;
Me, blood-stained and tattered, groping toward them.
Faintly the sound of something, someone else
Breaching layers of silence, recalling me;
I move faster. A few gruelling metres
And I am there,
A body's length away from their trenches and then
I see him.
His wrist wrapped in ribbon, glowing redly in
The half-lights, his eyes wide open, his shirt
Steeped in blood. I touch his hand.
Cold like death and dark and void. I can't stay here,
I can't stay here with the people about me
Watching in the close settling dark and the half-tears
In my eyes. I've got to close his eyes,
The thing they do to the dead. I lift my hand,
Force myself to look.
He's smiling. I close his eyes.
Around me a great rustle and a murmur like night sounds but it's
Men – mine and his.
In the half-lights I can see half-tears like mine, and they're taking off their hats.
One by one.

By **Evangeline Yong**

Age 15, The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School
MELBOURNE – VIC.

SPACE

In space
Distant planets
Wander around aimlessly
Galaxies
Inundate us with
Natural myriads of colours
Our solar
System elongates out
Several miles
Meteors
Shatter and leave
Our planets stock-still
Solar eclipses
Are captivating and enthralling
Stirring up an adversity
Space...
Is a
Pandora's box.

By **Kamalinee Kamalakaran**
Year 5, Amsleigh Park Primary School
OAKLEIGH EAST – VIC.

The Stars

Slowly, the stars
Glinting, shaded with a bright face
With warmness as a sun, proceeds
Surfaces, leading the way
Across the deep ocean land
And dancing across the silver linings.

Twirling, twirling and twirling across the blue sea
Arms wide, feet pointed
Delicate and dainty,
Passing through the ocean
Slowly, the stars
Ballerinas, twirling through the night.

By **Nicole Chan**
Year 6, Sutherland Public School
SUTHERLAND – NSW

A Night in the Churchyard...

I KNOW there is something behind me. I can hear the scrunch of leaves as it takes a step. I can hear the slow breath and feel the warmth of it, beating against my back.

I turn around and nothing is there. No shadows. Only the dark grey stones. Underneath lies the spirit of the past. Sometimes, the moon is completely covered and I can't see anything, it's pitch black. The sky is getting darker and darker. A gush of wind blows me off my feet. I fall with a crunch, on the autumn leaves under the chestnut tree and shiver.

“That was either just the wind... or something, terrible, dreadful and frightening is going to happen”, I whisper to myself, trembling as I slowly stand up.

It's nearly five in the morning, but the sky is getting darker every second. I can no longer see the glittering stars that were there not long ago. I'm freezing, even though I have four layers on. Something

makes a grumbling moan behind me, I turn around for the millionth time and this time, it's in my sights. It has mouldy brown hair, yellowed teeth and a smooth white gown, covered in spider webs. I scream at the top of my lungs still hoping not to wake those below me. Then suddenly, I feel dizzy...

I rub my eyes then look around. I am in my very own bedroom and nothing had changed. I rub my eyes again to check I wasn't dreaming. Did I sleepwalk back or did someone find me? I feel something in my hair: a leaf... from the chestnut tree I fell under. My hands were dusty from the dirt. I asked Mum if she had gone anywhere last night. She hadn't. Worse still, I never sleepwalk.

But what actually happened last night? Who was that ghost? How did I get home?

By **Selena Zheng**
Year 6, Korowa Anglican Girls' School
GLEN IRIS – VIC.



Ambassadors



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

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

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

Paul Collins was born in England, raised in New Zealand and moved to Australia in 1972. In 1975 he launched *Void*, the first professional science fiction magazine Australia had seen since the demise of the joint Australian and British production *Vision of Tomorrow*. His first fantasy novel for younger readers was *The Wizard's Torment*. Paul then edited the young adult anthology *Dream Weavers*, Australia's first heroic fantasy anthology ever. This was followed by *Fantastic Worlds*, and *Tales from the Wasteland*. Paul's recent works include the highly successful fantasy series (co-edited with Michael Pryor), *The Quentaris Chronicles*, to which Paul also contributes titles (*Swords of Quentaris*, *Slaves of Quentaris*, *Princess of Shadows* and *Dragonlords of Quentaris*); *The Jelindel Chronicles*, in which *Dragonlinks* was the first title, and *The Earthborn Wars* trilogy, of which *The Earthborn* was the first title. Visit www.paulcollins.com.au for more. ☺



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

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

Meredith Costain lives in Melbourne with a menagerie of pets: five chooks, a cat, a kelpie and a red heeler, which often feature in her stories. Her work ranges from picture books through to popular fiction and non-fiction for older readers, and she is the literary editor of national children's magazines *Challenge*, *Explore* and *Comet*. Meredith's books include the series *A Year in Girl Hell*, *Dog Squad*, *Bed Tails* and *Musical Harriet*, which was adapted for television by the ABC. Her picture book *Doodledum Dancing*, illustrated by Pamela Allen, was an Honour Book in the 2007 Children's Book Council of Australia awards.

Meredith regularly presents writing workshops for kids and adults in libraries and schools, 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. ☺



☺ **Jeni Mawter** (J.A. Mawter) is the best-selling children's author of the hilarious 'So' series: *So Gross!*, *So Feral!*, *So Sick!*, *So Festy!*, *So Grotty!* and *So Stinky!* (HarperCollins) as well as the Freewheelers adventure series: *Unleashed!*, *Launched!* and *Extreme!* (HarperCollins). Jeni's picture book *There's a Sun Fairy in Our Garden* was based on her family life with her three children. She has also published fiction, non-fiction, poetry and verse narrative for the education market.

Jeni's enthusiasm for words and books is infectious. She inspires both children and adults. With a Master of Arts in Children's Literature Jeni has taught creative writing at Macquarie University, the NSW Writer's Centre and the Sydney Writers Centre. She presents at numerous other schools, conferences and festivals and is a speaker for the Lateral Learning, Show & Tell and Speaker's Ink speaker's agencies.

If you'd like to find about Jeni's books or to get some hot writing tips please visit www.jenimawter.com



Gone

HOW did I let this happen? Why did I let her come? How did this happen? These and many other questions speed through my mind in this moment. All questions that I can't answer. Questions that I won't answer.

How did I let this happen? I think again. This question keeps on recurring in my mind. Going round and round, eventually making me dizzy. My knees give way and I fall beside her. I stare straight into her eyes. Her empty, dead, eyes. The eyes of my sister.

I reach forward and touch her hand, not cold yet but already losing heat. "Annabelle!" I whimper, but she doesn't move, and I just can't see why. "Get up!" I scream and again she doesn't move.

"This is my fault", I think as I jump back from her, as if I was burned. I sit against the wall, my knees tucked up to my chest, rocking slowly, on my way to insanity.

I feel wet and realised I'm covered in a red, slippery and slightly sticky liquid. Blood, Annabelle's blood. There's so much. I wouldn't have thought that such a small girl could hold so much blood. "She was only six", I say aloud to no one. "She was almost seven." I remember she used to say that a lot, I guess that's all that's left of her. Memories. Things remembered. I crawl close to her and look at the gaping hole in her stomach. As I stare at the wound I

relive the last few hours, forcing myself to admit what has happened.

"Where are you going Izzy?", her voice had chimed.

"Somewhere fun, where you're not allowed", I'd remarked, ruffling her hair.

"Oh", she said. "Can I come?" I'd laughed.

"Do you know what 'you're not allowed' means?", I'd asked her, she just giggles. She looked adorable at that moment: her golden, wavy, shoulder length hair looking very neat and pretty, her big, bright smile bringing out her dimples, her big, green eyes shining up at me, her face slightly flushed, and her little, light blue dress, patterned with yellow and pink flowers, made her look so small and delicate like a China doll.

"Please!", she'd begged. "Please, please, please." This time I'd laughed.

"I guess you're old enough", I'd said. I took her hand and walked out the door, calling to mum as I went. "Mum! Me and Anna are going out!"

"Okay", she'd responded. "Be back in two hours tops."

"Okey, dokey." We'd walked out the door, me carrying my six year old sister. She's seemed so small in my arms, propped against my hip. "We're going somewhere

scary", I'd whispered in her ear in my spookiest voice.

"Where?" she squealed.

"An abandoned haunted house." I'd then started to talk like Dracula. "You in, or are you too chicken?" I'd mocked her, tucking my elbows in to make chicken wings.

"I'm not chicken! I'm not chicken!" She'd jumped up in distress to apparently prove her point.

"All right. We're meeting Alicia there", I said to her.

"I like her", stated Annabelle. She started to hum as I led her by the hand to the unused factory me and my friend Alicia hang out at. Once we get there Annabelle demands, "Where's Alicia?"

"She's either inside or not here yet", I'd said, slightly frustrated with her. She always asks so many questions. I'd taken her to the front door.

"There aren't really any ghosts, right?" She'd sounded scared and worried, so small and innocent.

"No. Ghosts don't even live in Australia", I'd assured her. "You'll be fine with me. I promise", I'd added when she'd still seemed a bit uncertain.

We walked through the front door, side by side. Annabelle reaches for the doorknob and turns it. "It's locked", she said. I stepped

forward and stood in front of the door. I paused, as if building up momentum, then slammed my foot into the door as hard as I could. The door had banged open, making a deafening racket.

“No it’s not.” I’d said so confidently and cockily, filled with self-satisfaction. I strode in the door then turned and realised that Annabelle had stayed by the door.

“Are we allowed?” she’d asked.

“I don’t see a sign saying we’re not”, I pointed out. “Do you?”

“No.” She then trotted up to me and past me. She started running up some very unstable looking stairs. Me and Alicia had never been up there. “Come on Izzy!” she’d called.

“Be careful!” I’d called after her. She had turned and run, forcing me to follow. Why did I bring her here? I’d thought. She was on the third floor when I caught up.

“Let’s go in here!” she’d said. She didn’t wait for my response, I suppose it wasn’t actually a question, she just ran in, and as she did

the floorboards creaked menacingly, as if they were living things.

“Come back Anna!” I called, but I was already moving, knowing she wouldn’t listen. But I wasn’t fast enough, the floor gave way and she screamed. I tried to reach her, but I was too far away. I’d hit the floor hard, but no real damage had come to me. But I’d heard Annabelle gasp. I had to know she was okay. When I got to her the sight was awful. She’d landed on a sharp piece of wood jutting up out of the floorboards. It had gone straight through her stomach.

“Izzy!” She’d cried at seeing me, her voice sounding weak and small. “Izzy!” she called again, but all I did was stare. I stared at the blood coming out of her delicate bird-like body, the piece of wood completely out of place among all the red, the terrified look in Annabelle’s face.

And that was all I did. I watched as my sister’s life ebbed away, as she died.

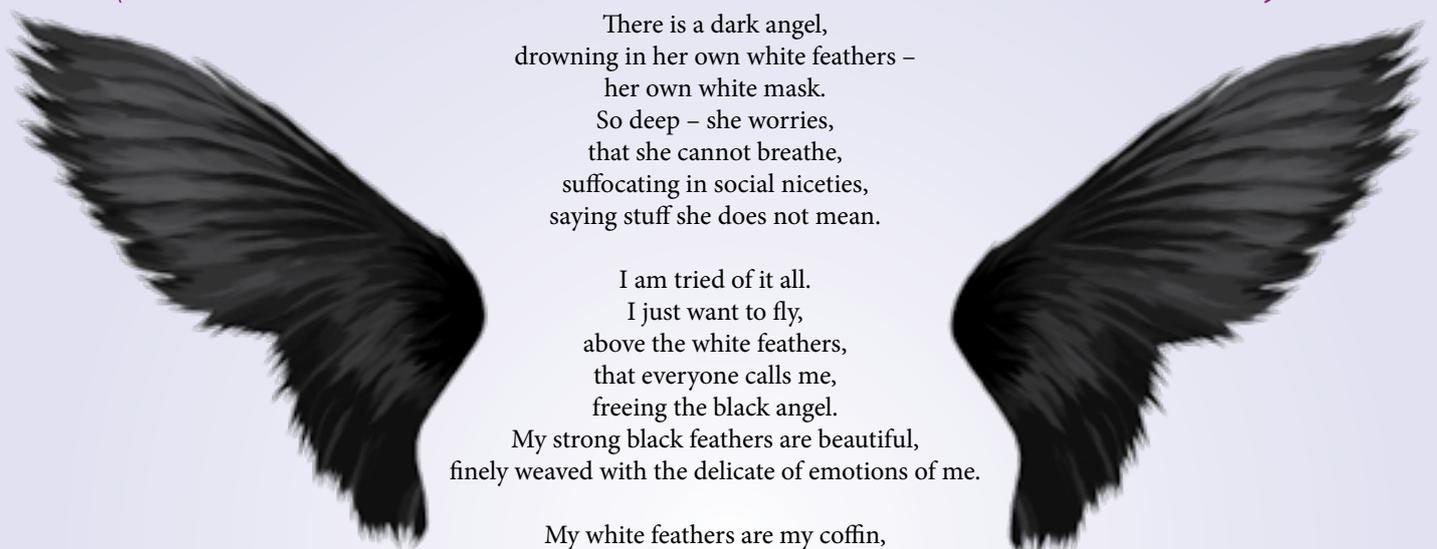
Now she’s completely dead, all I can still do is stare at her, knowing it’s all my fault, that she was here, that she was killed by a piece of wood, that she’s dead.

Dead, I think again and again. She really will never come back to me, I hear someone enter and call out. “Izzy? Sorry I’m late, my mum held me up.” I barely hear the voice of my best friend calling down to me, her voice making its way through the hole in the floor. I don’t move at all, not even at her voice. I’m so still I’m not even breathing, there’s no rising and falling of my chest. Absolutely nothing. It’s as if I’m frozen. Completely unable to move. Sound is a blur, I hear a scream, and the creak, then the snap of more floor giving way, then a soft thud, but all this comes to me very vaguely and muffled. Then there’s a soft touch on my arm. I’m rocking again, but I never thought I’d moved. I still feel so still, so empty. As if I’m not even here. It’s like I’m fading away, disappearing into nothing. And I realise I am.

And now, I’m just as gone as her. Annabelle.

By **Amelia Spence**
Year 6, Fahan School
SANDY BAY – TAS.
Teacher: Amanda Evans

Dark Angel Buried Under White Feathers



There is a dark angel,
drowning in her own white feathers –
her own white mask.
So deep – she worries,
that she cannot breathe,
suffocating in social niceties,
saying stuff she does not mean.

I am tired of it all.
I just want to fly,
above the white feathers,
that everyone calls me,
freeing the black angel.
My strong black feathers are beautiful,
finely weaved with the delicate of emotions of me.

My white feathers are my coffin,
trapping the real me.
I do not want them,
but I feel I need them –
at least for now.

What colour are your feathers?
Black or White?

By **Miranda Plowman**
Year 4, Ivanhoe Grammar School
IVANHOE – VIC.

BOOK REVIEWS



Meet our intrepid book reviewers: Eleanor, Billie, Fionnarr, Jasmine, Maya and Caitlin, from Princes Hill Secondary College, Victoria.



Reviews Coordinators: Meredith Costain and Pam Saunders

Wildlife

by Fiona Wood (Pan Macmillan)

This is Fiona's Woods second book, with links to her first novel, *Six Impossible Things*. *Wildlife* starts with 16-year-old Sibylla becoming famous as the model for a new perfume, with her face appearing on a billboard. She begins to receive attention from boys for the first time, and gets her first kiss.

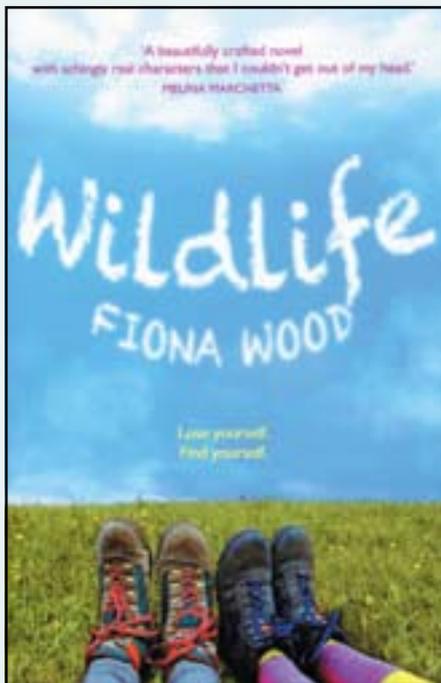
Sibylla also faces other changes as she is a boarder for a term at an outdoor adventure school camp. Lou (from *Six Impossible Things*) is also at the camp. Writing in a journal is her way of coping with the grief that is weighing her down. Holly, another girl on the camp, is selfish and mean. Each of them is learning about being a true friend, the nature of love and how to fit in.

to find the murderer and it leads them to the most unlikely suspect.

This is a well written and enticing book, with echoes of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries. It progressed well and is unlike anything I've ever read. This book would be suitable for teenagers aged 13+.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

– Billie Theodoridislaw



I had mixed reactions to this book: although I thought it was wonderful in places it didn't always engage me. It should suit girls from 14–16 who enjoy reading about the ups and downs of friendship.

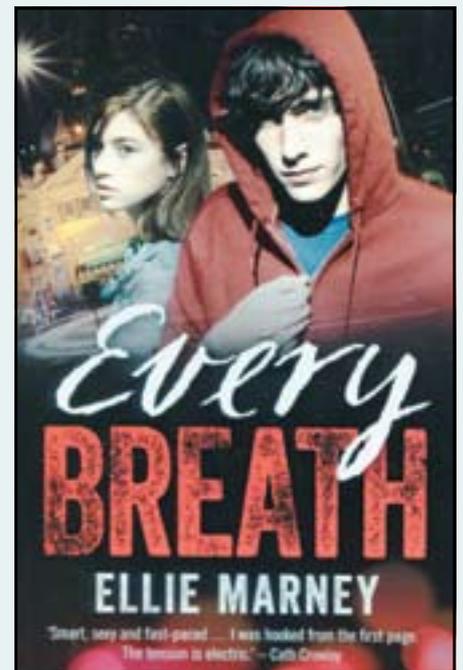
Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

– Maya Wilson

Every Breath

by Ellie Marney (Allen & Unwin)

Every Breath is a mystery/thriller and follows the path of two 17-year-olds. Rachel Watts and James Mycroft are two-doors-down neighbours. When Watts moves to Melbourne from the country, she befriends Mycroft, a troubled genius with a passion for forensics. When Mycroft wants her help investigating a murder, she finds herself unable to resist. Together they try



Joyous and Moonbeam

by Richard Yaxley (Omnibus/Scholastic)

Joyous and Moonbeam is about the friendship between Joyous, a 33-year-old man who is intellectually disabled, and a troubled teenage girl who Joyous calls Moonbeam. Joyous has been bullied both at school and at home, but despite this he has an amazingly positive outlook on life. He takes the bad bits and works them around, because life, in his words, 'is all joyous'. Moonbeam, on the other hand, is deeply pessimistic due to the disintegration of her parents' relationship.

Although they both have completely different takes on life, they help each other. Joyous shows Moonbeam how to look at the world with new eyes to see that life is worth living, whilst Moonbeam shows Joyous the true meaning of friendship and independence.

This is an amazing book, but quite serious. It is told from three different points of view, and I rather liked the sections where Joyous is speaking, because his made-up words are quite brilliant. I would recommend it for adults and young adults, ages 14 and up.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

– Eleanor Russell

Flora's War

by Pamela Rushby
(Ford Street Publishing)

Flora's War is a historical fiction romance novel. Flora is a 16-year-old Australian girl, who travels to Cairo each year to assist her archaeologist father. This year it's 1915 and Flora and her friend Gwen are volunteers, driving the wounded soldiers from the battlefield of Gallipoli to the hospital. More and more soldiers are coming in and Flora and Gwen aren't the only ones finding it hard to cope.

I enjoyed the start of this book very much as the detailed descriptions give a real sense of place. The writing here was well paced and flowed well. The storyline was interesting and I was engaged by it. However, as I read on the pace slowed and the book became less exciting, as some parts seemed unrelated to other events in the book.

I would recommend this book to readers aged from 11–14 who enjoy historical fiction with a romantic flavour, or a light read.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

– Jasmine de Palma

The Vanishing Moment

by Margaret Wild (Allen & Unwin)

The Vanishing Moment is about two teenage girls, Arrow and Marika. Arrow is an only child, living a life of misery because of something that happened to her when she was younger. This event shatters her life – her family moves away and her mother becomes a completely different person. For some reason though, Arrow is drawn back to the site where it all began.

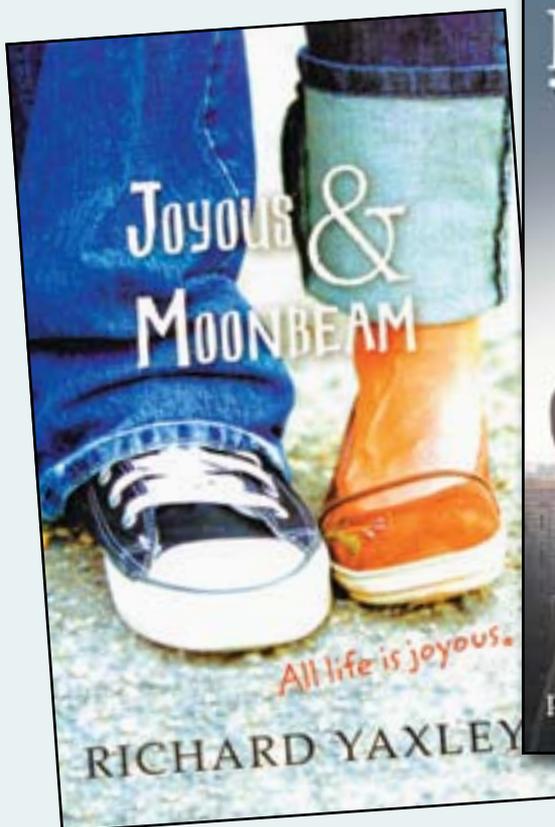
Marika is a totally different person: a happy, responsible and caring older sister, until she makes a horrible mistake, and her family is torn apart. Unable to face her family any longer, Marika goes to Shelly Beach for some time off, where she meets Arrow. The girls' stories become intertwined and they decided to switch lives, so both of them can have a break.

The Vanishing Moment is a strange book. Although the plotline is interesting, it was a bit predictable. The story is not overly gender specific but as both of the main characters are female I would recommend this book to girls aged around 12–14.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

– Fionnbarr Russell

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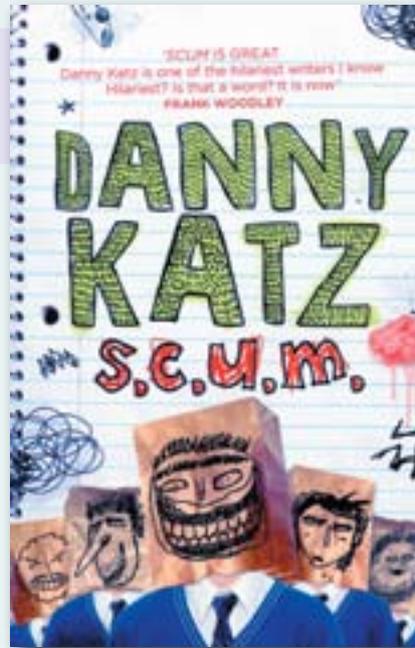


BOOK

S.C.U.M.

by Danny Katz (Allen & Unwin)

S.C.U.M. is about a day in the life of Tom Zurbo-Goldblatt. He is an (almost) typical Year Nine student in a typical state school. He and his best friend Ravo previously started an organisation called Students Combined Underground Movement (S.C.U.M.), but suddenly their group starts falling apart.



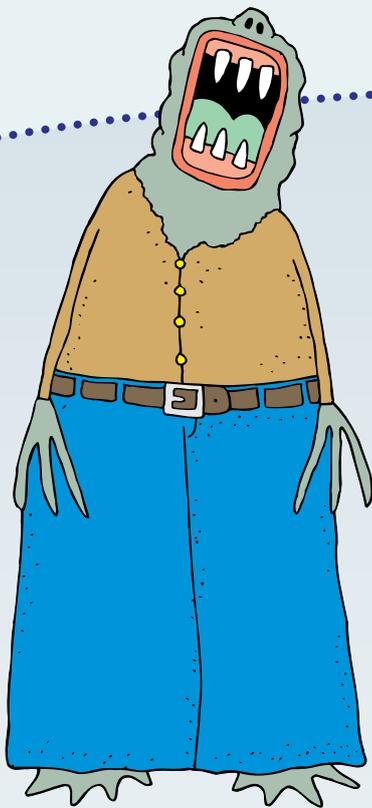
REVIEWS

Tom will have to face the ultimate test of survival against the badass ninjas of stupidity and death. Or is it too late to keep the students of S.C.U.M. united?

I recommend this book to people aged 13+ and for people who love comedy. I enjoyed this novel because it was absolutely hilarious and had a great storyline.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★

– Caitlin Dooley



Monster Cries

ONE day a hairy monster was crying loudly in his cave. It was in the forest. The monster was so loud that people from other countries could hear him. The monster even cried in his sleep.

The next day one man named Robert Power flew on a plane to find out who was crying. Robert had mind-reading and brain-washing powers but was too shy to show them off. He travelled a long time and finally found the monster. When he discovered that the noise was coming from a monster he stood there wide mouthed. Robert thought fast and every time the monster closed his eyes he ran behind a

tree. Robert used his powers but with no success. The monster was still crying.

Robert read the monster's mind and all the monster wanted was true love. When he knew what the monster wanted, he felt sad. Robert decided to make the monster's dream come true. So for days Robert searched for true love. He looked and looked all over the world except one country, Australia. It had been a year and Robert still hadn't found a true love for the monster.

Robert felt guilty for not finding a solution. He thought and thought until he got a good idea. The next day he found a huge boulder and got a carving knife and started carving. It took him three months to finish the carved monster. Robert gave the monster the carved statue he created. Nothing happened. The monster continued crying.

Robert tried to think of another plan. All of a sudden there was a flood from the monster's tears. Robert needed to do something fast. The sun was still shining and a rainbow appeared. He decided to get the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Robert felt like giving up. Nothing would work. Back on his plane he flew to the end of the rainbow, but then he realised there was no end of the rainbow!

When Robert reached the middle of the rainbow (at least he thought it was the middle of the rainbow) there was something glowing...

Robert got closer and closer to the glowing thing. He opened the plane door and activated the auto pilot. He then just managed to grab the glowing thing.

Robert wished he had every single power in the world so he whispered "I WISH I HAD MORE POWERS!" and that's what happened.

In a wink of an eye, Robert had all the powers. When he tried to close the door he accidentally punched a hole because of his super strong hands. Robert knew things were going wrong already and wished he had his normal powers back. Robert got back to monster business. Robert wished with all his heart that the monster would accept his friendship. IT WORKED! The crying monster wanted true love, true friendship.

The End

The moral is: Always trust in your heart.

By **Raphael Hadfield**
Age 9
MELTON – VIC.

The Dragon Slayer

AS I step up the steps on to the hard platform, I cried. I have broken the law and I must die, I know it but, but I'm too young to die! The guards pull me to a halt. I gulp as the judge calls out my name. "Tom Henry, well, well, well! You have been convicted for robbery, your sentence...." He pauses for a moment before in a harsh voice declares: "DEATH, by hanging."

Time freezes as I absorbed his words, just as I expected, now I have to die, but then a plan formed in my head. "Take him away", said the judge. I shuddered as the guards began to drag me away.

Finally in desperation I cried out "Please grant me one wish!"

"All right! But make it quick, I'm a busy man."

"Let me slay the dragon that terrorises this village instead, please I beg you!"

"But that would be a lot more painful and a harder task than instantly dying by hanging! Young man you are not making this easy for yourself, are you sure?"

"Yes! Thank you!"

"Very well", says the judge. "Your quest will begin tomorrow. If you succeed, you shall be spared, but on the other hand, if you fail the scene won't be pretty. Now go back to your cell and rest up, you've got a long day tomorrow."

The next day I hiked up the long and rugged rock path to the dragon's lair, with my whole body full of fear it made it hard to carry a backpack full of metal armour and a long silver sword. As I struggle up the mountain I noticed big blobs of greenish goo all around the place. At that time I didn't know what the strange blobs were, but I was soon going to find out.....

When I reach the cave where the dragon lives there were so many blobs that I was practically

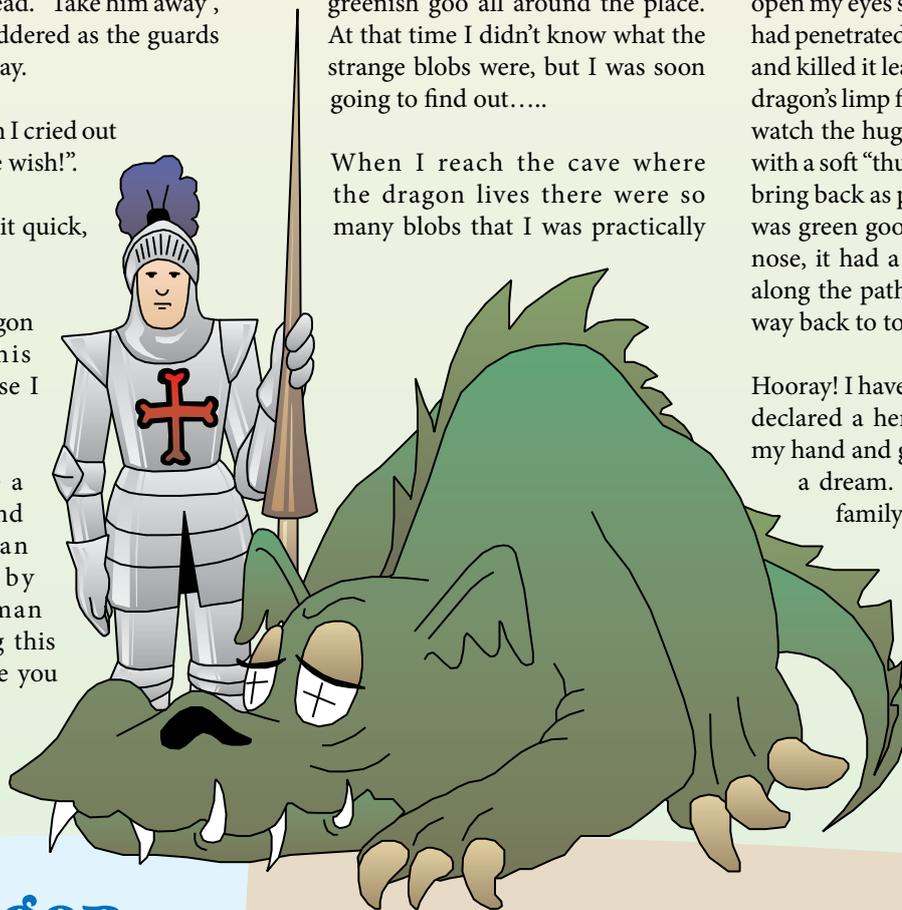
swimming in it. I enter the gloomy, wet cave and stared into the darkness and two eyes stared back at me.....

AHHHH!!!! I screamed as the dragon leaps out of the cave with its teeth bared and its bloodthirsty eyes burning in to mine. I stretched out my sword to protect myself but I knew it was no use, I was going to die!

I shut my eyes and wait for my body to be ripped to pieces. But it never happened. I open my eyes slowly to find that my sword had penetrated the dragon's soft underbelly and killed it leaving a look of shock on the dragon's limp face. I pull out my sword and watch the huge dragon fall to the ground with a soft "thud" then I slice off its head to bring back as proof and as a trophy. There was green goo oozing out of the dragon's nose, it had a cold! That was all the goo along the path. Then I slowly started my way back to town.

Hooray! I have come back home and been declared a hero. The town leader shook my hand and gave me a medal. It's all like a dream. I'm now at home with my family and I'm one of the richest and happiest people in the country. I may have had a sad beginning but I have a great ending.

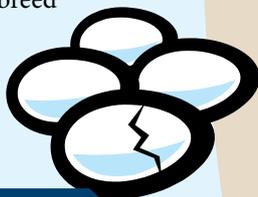
*By Bryan Lee
Age 10, Essex Heights
Primary School
MT. WAVERLEY - VIC.*



Dragon Oldgee and Wistim

There are hundreds of Dragon eggs
Some are big and some are small
At breeding time there are hundreds
of different types of Dragons
That want to breed

*By Portia McKay
Age 6
WATSON - ACT*



A TAURUS'S POEM

In this small, warm little bed, a Taurus wearily rests her head,
Don't wake her up, although she's not asleep, she's all this time been counting sheep!
She has a wild imagination, and if you need it she'll make a creation!
She's reliable, kind, persistent as well, she's a bundle of giggles, and that's jolly swell!
So when this Taurus lays to rest, don't wake her up, for she's not a pest!

*By Isabel Kelly
Year 4, Trinity College
ALBURY/WODONGA - NSW*

THE MAGNIFICENT NINTH

SWEAT dripped off my nose, sticking my shorts to my thighs and making blotchy artwork of my uniform. The afternoon sun glared at us all, the hard hats useless at this time of day, but we marched on, left right left, as we had for the past three days.

By dusk on the third evening we were nearing El Alamein, a small oil port community East of Alexandria. Sixteen thousand of us, the Australian 9th Division, crept forward through the desert as the last red light vanished below the far horizon. Faintly we could see manned defence posts ahead: the Poms.

A loud crack of gunfire filled the dry air, not ours, but nobody dropped to the hard ground and we hurried forward to our posts; slit trenches dug in the open ground of the stony sands of Egypt. We unloaded our cargo – sand-bags, mostly – and set up our defensive positions for the night. Before dawn, we would attack the Axis.

“Robert”, a low voice called. Murmurs had started up all along the line, but as I got comfortable leaning against my pack, I knew that voice anywhere.

“G-day mate. Enjoy the scenic march in?” I said, finally feeling the burden lift off my shoulders.

“Yeah, beauty of a sandstorm that last one was, ay?” chuckled John, a mate of mine since Tobruk. He was six feet tall and lanky, but strong, very skilled in hand-to-hand.

“How’s this”, he continued, “Front row seats! The Poms don’t know what they’re missing.”

I nodded as my mind went back to our arrival. All we saw of the Brits was their eyes and their guns, no royal welcome for the “Magnificent 9th”.

As the night dragged on and the stars stretched out across the sky, a loud bang would ring out every now and then, and another, like a too-frequently visiting relative who nobody likes but has to endure. Like war.

“Something to eat, gentlemen?” said the quiet voice of James, a friend John and I had picked up along the way. He was only a kid, sixteen at most, but a good laugh, and a great shot.

We shared around some dried bread.

“Don’t be stingy with the axle grease”, sang John as he layered on the butter.

Soon the three of us were singing, others laughing and talking, some staying quiet and thinking of home. When the general came around to tell us it was almost time, we took up our 25pdr artillery and started up our war cries.

“If you want to see your dear Fatherland, keep your head down, Alleyman!” we boomed. And with that, the first wave of Axis jumped out from behind their posts, firing at the air and shouting.

And suddenly John was jumping over the sandbags with young James, yelling, “V is for victory!” and beaming down at James, who laughed madly.

Now no-man’s land was swarming with soldiers in the dim light. I yelled encouragement to the boys, but stayed behind the line, shooting at any Heinies that got too close to my mates or me.

My eyes scanned the field and found James again, bubbly little Jimmy, as he skipped straight into a mine. My heart stopped and I froze. Not James. And then I was screaming, firing wildly as I jumped the barricade.

I found John a few metres in front of me, mowing down the enemy, spraying them with bullets. He fought so proudly, killed so efficiently. Although he hated it more than anything else, war was John’s calling. In other circumstances, I might have been happy for him.

I knew he had nothing, no girl waiting for him back in Australia. I knew that he valued the lives of others far more than his own, because nobody’s life would be risked if his were lost.

Things were moving very quickly now, and I saw John buckle in front of me. He turned away from the enemy side, looked back at me and smiled. I think he even laughed. He dropped to his knees as his eyes, now looking so pure and innocent, observed the scene around us. As I gaped



in horror he said something, tried to shout something to me over the din as he made a 'V' with his fingers. All I could do was nod as he smiled a last, audacious grin, and slumped to the sand.

I couldn't move. I had been struck dumb with disbelief, and I could only flick my eyes from scene to scene as men slaughtered each other, not wanting to kill but fearing for their own lives. Suddenly, I wondered for the first time why I was here. Why was I killing these people and why were they taking my mates away from me? How many of these men didn't even want any part in this war, had girls waiting for them back at home?

I had Eleanor. A warm feeling spread through my chest as I thought of her, of the tiny bump in her stomach as I hugged

her goodbye, telling her I would be home soon. The warm feeling spread throughout my body down to my hands and feet and I fell to the ground, numb, the sounds of the war around me muted.

Now I was lying next to Eleanor.

Her loving smile glowed and flickered in the dim light, and I smiled back at her. But my own smile faded as I thought of John, and then of Churchill, his confidence, that bold smile as he waved his v-shaped fingers in the air for the cameras. V is for Victory, he had said.

I could no longer see victory in war.

But Eleanor smiled at me still, her face a radiant beam of light, like the sun rising over a bleak desert, bringing hope. I

gazed wondrously into her eyes, and saw a child. A healthy baby girl, born in a free land, she will never go without. She will hear tales of her father, who loved her more than life itself but had to leave to protect her, fight to ensure he could give her the life she deserves. She will grow into a beautiful young lady, nourished by the unconditional love of her precious mother.

My gaze fell then from Eleanor's eyes, grew heavy and wouldn't stay open, wouldn't give me one last glance at my darling wife. But now I was at peace.

Now I could see that Churchill was right.

*By Jasmine Hodson
Year 11, Marymount College
BURLEIGH WATERS – QLD.*

FEAR OF GHOST!

SUDDENLY the phone rang. Tom ran out of the chair to answer it. No one was there. He put it down and sat in the great armchair. He waited for the next call, but the phone made no sound.

When Tom was walking to his room to get his book the phone rang but still there was no reply. Tom thought that he was just hearing the phone. Once more the phone rang but this time voices were audible. Tom felt a shiver down his spine. Immediately he thought, maybe I should end this line.

Tom finally went to his room to get his book. He saw something moving. He immediately came out of his room. He peeped into the room slowly, who is there? Is it a ghost? Tom moved away from the room. A shadow at the back of him moved and Tom was paralysed. At the same time the phone rang. He panicked more. He was so frightened that he didn't dare to answer the phone.

Tom struggled to go to sleep that night. Instead he spent time watching television. He dozed and fell asleep. For a while he didn't hear or see anything. Suddenly a scary laugh spread across the room and Tom was flabbergasted. He has tried not to think about it but it kept whizzing through his brain. He tried to put the sounds out of his mind. Soon he fell asleep.

The next day Tom was still worried about the ghost. Slowly the dawn turned into dusk. His fears started to take grip over him. He felt someone behind himself. THE GHOST!!!!!!!!!! He was scared but has tried hard to get over it. "Show yourself!" Tom demanded. "I can't", said the Ghost. "How can I see you? How can I hear you?" Tom questioned. "I am in your mind." A deep voice came from inside. He didn't understand what it meant.

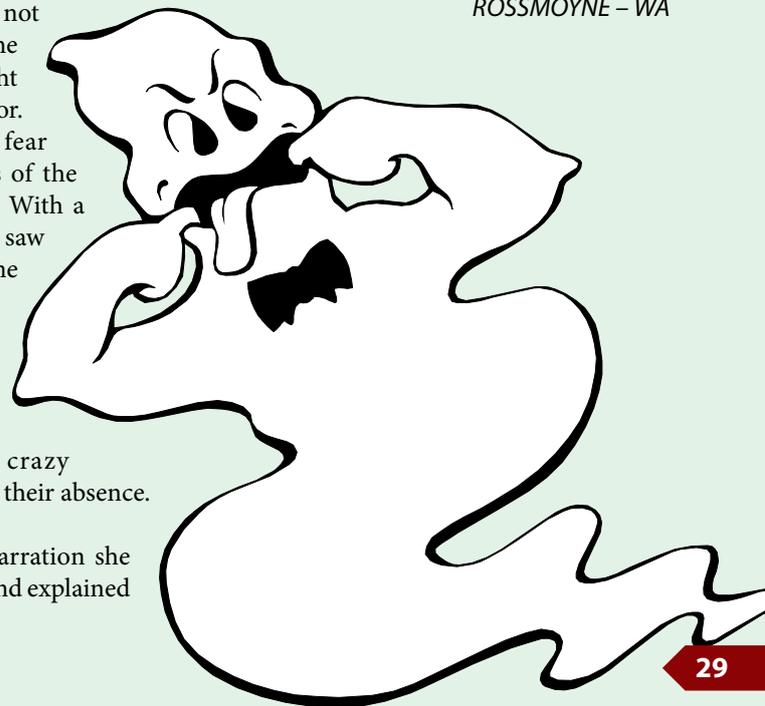
Tom was going to his room to get his book. As he was walking up the stairs, the door-bell rang. He was terrified. Tom was so petrified he could not move a muscle. Though he was nervous, he thought he must answer the door. He peeped with great fear through the glass sides of the giant, brown, old door. With a great breath of relief he saw his parents, who had come back from their short visit to his granny. Tom in excitement hugged his mum and was so relieved. He quickly started narrating the crazy events that happened in their absence.

After listening to his narration she brushed away his fears and explained

to him how the fear took over him. She even showed how the shadow works and how you sometimes see it and it just disappears into thin air. His mother said because you have such a fear that even small breezy sounds make you scared. You believed in those unknown fears, and named them as ghost.

Tom laughed because he had a fear of something that was so stupid. He said all that I was scared of is a FEAR of Ghost!!!

*By Monica Rallabhandi
Year 4, Rossmoyne Primary School
ROSSMOYNE – WA*





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ACROSS THE SEA

*“Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage.
The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict.”*

That’s what my Maadar Borzorg always said.
Before she watched her children die,
Before the Taliban came
Before I learnt that hell was real
Hell was just another word for earth

Afghanistan is my home
My greatest love and my greatest tormentor
The rolling hills
The rocky mountains
The roaring river
The hidden land mines hungry for human flesh
Slaking their victims like a wolf in the night

The mines have claimed many lives
and many more limbs
Baba walked with a wooden leg
The mine stole his smile when it took his leg
The mine took his stories too
Baba told us once of a better land
Free from bombs
Free from terror
Free from the Taliban

I’ll never know if he was talking about heaven
Or somewhere else somewhere real
But he is dead now.
They all are.
It’s only me.
It was the stories I followed.
Across the sea.
In a rickety boat.

Alone; but surrounded by people
All trying to escape
But it didn’t work.
We merely traded one prison.
For another.
This prison was different.
It was clean, and bright.
I longed for home while trying desperately to avoid it.
I came for freedom.
We all came for freedom.
But it is not here.
Here is only another cage.
There is blood running down their wrist.

Their arms.
Their chests.
There are tears running down their faces
But their eyes are empty
Cold and dark.

Without joy, without love, without hope.
Before this place I’d never seen a man cry.
Baba taught us it was a great shame to cry.
There is much shame here.
They have taken my dignity.
So I took my blood.
They have taken my voice
So took my speech
They have taken my hope
So I took my life

By **Simone Geurts**

Year 12

Mount Lilydale Mercy College

LILYDALE – VIC.

A Most Fantastic Dream

I had a most fantastic dream
Of lollypops and rainbows
Of jelly river here and there
And everlasting TV shows.

Cars were made of eagles
So you and your car could fly
And houses were made of delicious
never ending Pie.

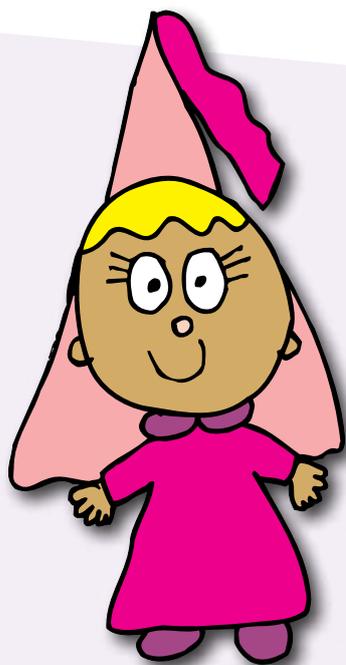
Jails did not exist
Nor people who are bad
Happy people strode everywhere
And no-one was feeling sad.

Schools had free dress day
every day of the year
In class kids could whine and sigh
and boo and talk and cheer.

Presidents were elected on account of
whether they were fair
And if they weren't
they would have to sit in the naughty chair.

The rivers were made of strawberries and cream
But,
thinking about it
it's all just a fantastic dream....

By **Molly Waters**
Year 4, Robertson Primary School
ROBERTSON – QLD.



The Happy Princess

Woeful am I,
I am beautiful, impressionable and rich
But then, being rich makes me miserable.
I boast, which makes the other kids dislike me.
My father is in the government, my mother is a skilful leader,
But me? I'm a girl with no friends. My mother says I am a delightful child,
But most kids disagree. You see this is my predicament, being lonely.
And it is only now that I am being truthful with myself, for I have always been mean.
And when the others told me so, I said "I don't know what you mean!"
Oh, how can I live with zero friends! This really isn't fair!
They tell me I'm disgraceful to the children everywhere.
But now I know! It hit me just right now! I will be much, much nicer
To all my good true friends! Then they will save me the embarrassment of being the only girl who has no friends.

By **Sophie Whatling**
Year 5, BRONTE – NSW

TORNADO VALLEY



Our safe house is roughly 150 metres from our front door. We can't have it too close to the house because the tornado is likely to destroy our house leaving us trapped under rubble in our safe house.

to be expected when you are underground just after a tornado and storm had hit. We always made sure that our supplies in the safe house were up to date and that nothing was damaged.

WE ALL have our stories to tell. Some may be bad or sad, or some happy and exciting. To each of us they mean something. It may be a loss, a journey, a memory etc.

I have many funny and happy stories to tell and share, but it just happens that this one I am about to tell you isn't. This was an occasion in my life.

Now when I say "occasion" I'm sure you immediately think of a birthday party or Christmas or Easter. I wish! This occasion just happened to include the loss of my father, the destruction of my town and community and the happiness of my mother.

It all started like this. We were all sitting around the dining table eating our Sunday night roast when we were startled by a siren. This siren was one that had been constructed in the town centre to warn people about frequent tornadoes and to get in our safe houses immediately. As we all got up in a hurry I accidentally knocked my plate of roast pork and vegetables and it went plummeting to the ground. I just stepped over it and continued on. We often get very little warning that a tornado is going to hit.

As we rounded up the dog we headed out the door to be hit immediately with strong gales of wind. Loose objects were already dismounted from the ground and above our heads in the whirly sky.

In our safe house we have everything we may need for up to a week. We have a set of double bunk beds bolted to the ground, a food supply to last us just over a week, candles, batteries and torches, a gas stove, 50 litres of water and blankets and doonas strapped down for warmth. I have been in our safe house many times. The longest I have been in there is 28 hours. It's not very comfortable in there but it keeps us safe.

Mum grabs our dog Marley by the collar and we all run toward the safe house. In the distance I could see the twirl of the tornado heading for us. Dad lifted the outside latch of our safe house and mum chucked Marley in there. I was next to go in. The door is a squeeze to get through because the smaller it is the safer it is.

The twister was right across the paddock from us now. "Hurry Lillian" said Dad as he pushed her in. The only person left to come into the safe house was Dad. Mum shoved me and Marley in the corner and held onto a handle while offering a hand for Dad to grab. Dad had almost grabbed Mum's hand when he was suddenly swept away. "Steeeevvveeee" Mum yelled, panicked. "Daddy" I shouted. It was too late. We had already lost Dad and we had to hold it together to keep ourselves safe. Mum just managed to pull the door down and latch it up before we could hear the tornado right above us. Mum sunk down in the corner bawling her eyes out.

The reality sank in. Dad had lost his life saving his family's life whilst a tornado was hitting North Dakota. Immediately in my eyes Dad was a hero. He put others before himself and that would have taken a lot of courage. For hours Mum and I sat there cuddled in the corner grieving for Dad's loss. We barely ate anything however we did keep our fluids up. Eventually we fell asleep huddled on the bunks.

When we awoke we heard nothing but silence. I sat up and knew that every time a tornado attack occurred the citizens of the town were expected to attend a memorial service for those whose lives were lost in the town square. Mum soon awoke and she said it was best to stay put in the safe house for another few hours. We could tell that it was daylight because beams of light were starting to peek through tiny gaps in the latched door on the roof. It was freezing down there but obviously that was

I must have fallen back asleep. I was awoken a few hours later by my mother ensuring me that it was safe to go out. In the hurry into our safe house we had knocked the ladder and it was no longer safe to use. Mum and I climbed up on the bunks and swung ourselves over to release the latch and scramble out of the safe house. When we were completely out mum closed the door and did up the latch on the outside.

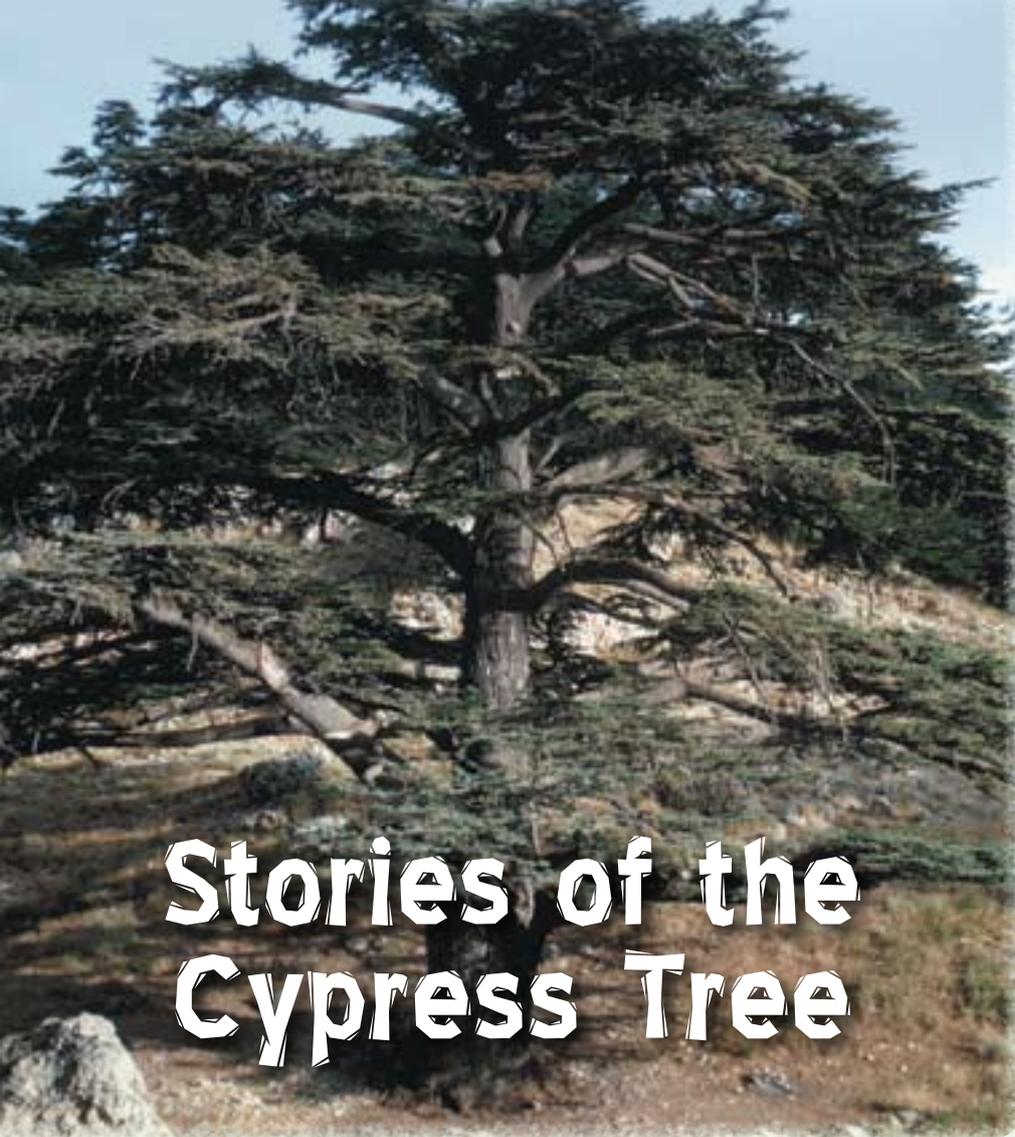
This tornado had demolished the town. In sight I couldn't see one house left standing. Mum and I were lucky because we only had to walk a few, well, what were blocks to get to the city centre. Roads were cracked and there wasn't a car in sight. When we arrived roughly what seemed to be the city centre we were surrounded by other mourning families. It looked like Dad wasn't the only one who had lost his life. They didn't call out a list of the names of the lives lost. We just were there to automatically respect those who may never be found again.

Once the ceremony was done Mum and I headed back to the safe house until we knew what to do next. Eventually we heard knocking at our door of the safe house. Mum climbed up and opened it to find policemen evacuating us to a new location.

That's how I ended up here. Mum and I are currently located in Western Australia in a destruction camp. Here we are well looked after and we are able to share our stories openly with other sufferers. I will never forget Dad. His body was never found but he is always in my heart. He is my hero.

Mum is coping better now. She has made some new friends at the camp as have I. There will always be an empty spot in our body and lives where dad was but he will never be forgotten by us or our community.

*By Maddison Campbell
Year 8, Cressy District High School
CRESSY - TAS.*



Stories of the Cypress Tree

Elizabeth

11 o'clock, 12th of July 1921

The leaves were crunching beneath Elizabeth's feet as she took the slow steps towards the Cypress Tree that had been her escape from reality for exactly one year now. And tonight it was going to offer her a final escape.

It was funny, how the meaning of the Cypress Tree was so relevant to the events that were to take place that night. The Cypress Tree symbolism was to understand the role of sacrifice. Tonight Elizabeth was going to make the ultimate sacrifice so that her family would live in peace. They would no longer have to tip toe around her, wary of what she heard and saw. It wasn't their fault. They thought she was insane. The doctor had told them to be careful round her. That if she heard violent things it might give her horrific ideas and send her spinning further into insanity.

She could see it was hard for them. The stress was taking its toll. It was visible on their faces as they tried to smile. Gradually the stress of dealing with Elizabeth was

pulling them slowly, painfully apart. However tonight Elizabeth would make her escape from this world that she had waited in so long. She would make a sacrifice so that her family did not.

Elizabeth reached the tree and ran her fingers along the bark. She smiled. She had come here often to give her family moments of peace. And to give herself time far from the world that she did not belong in. She slid off her satin slippers and reached for the nearest branch. Her fingers grasped the branch and with a heave she pulled herself up. Strangely calm and at peace Elizabeth continued to climb up the tree. When she was almost seven metres up the tree, she inched towards the trunk. When one arm was clasped firmly around the tree she used her other arm to pull the rope that had been hanging loosely round her waist. It slid off her waist until it hung down. She pulled it back up and tied to the branch above her. Still in her unusual state of calmness, Elizabeth slipped the loop over her neck.

At 13 years of age, Elizabeth Mareens leapt to her death off the Cypress Tree.

Georgia

11:01 pm, 12th of July 1951

Mason's warm hand was clamped over Georgia's brown eyes. His other hand was tightly holding hers, pulling her in various directions.

"Mason, where are we going?" she asked, giggling. Mason was a hopeless romantic who loved to surprise her. Georgia loved his surprises but even more she loved the way he looked at her when he surprised her. The sweet love, the way he followed her every move. As if all he lived for was to make her smile once more.

"The meaning of surprise, Georgia, is that you don't know. And because it's a surprise I'm not telling you", he replied with a flirty undertone to his voice. "We're here."

Georgia could feel his excitement as he pulled away his hand. He stepped out of her line of view and behind him she saw a large, old cypress tree. Georgia loved trees and was always trying to encourage people to be environmentally friendly. Especially when it came to cypress trees. They were her favourite.

"I love cypress trees", she whispered. There was a sort of magic in the air that Georgia didn't want to ruin. As she turned her head and looked into Mason's eyes, she felt that magic become more intense.

"I know. That's why I found the tallest Cypress Tree I could to show you how much I love you, but even this tree isn't tall enough. So that leaves me with one other way to show you how much I love you." Mason took a deep breath, slid his hand into his pocket and gracefully fell down on one knee. "Georgia Jones, I love you more than I could possibly show you. So now in one last attempt to make you understand the extent of my love I ask you one thing. Will you marry me?"

Georgia just stood there. She could hear the trees rustling in the light breeze and the light taps of small animals' feet against the ground. Yet while all her other senses were open and strangely aware of her surroundings her eyes saw only the delicate ring that lay in the blue velvet box Mason was holding. It had a thin gold band and on top it had a small emerald in a rounded diamond shape and on either side two smaller diamonds. She could only muster the power to slide out her hand.

Mason lightly grasped her hand before sliding the ring onto her finger. A huge smile broke out on Elizabeth's face as she began nodding madly. Mason let out a happy sigh of relief before standing and sweeping Elizabeth off her feet and into an overjoyed hug. When Mason and Elizabeth finally regained control of their emotions they broke apart, smiling broadly at one another.

"You know I thought this place deserved a bit of happiness", Mason said, still smiling, looking up at the Cypress Tree. Elizabeth gave him a confused look, showing how she did not understand his words. Mason's eyes returned to Elizabeth. He gave a loving smile, brushed back her hair and planted a soft kiss on her forehead. "They say that a long time ago this used to be a huge estate. The family who lived here were rich but their daughter was mad. They slowly dwindled their fortune, seeking cures for her. Then when she was 13 she supposedly hung herself from this tree."

"That's terrible", Georgia said. Suddenly the moonlight caught the ring on her finger, making it sparkle. "But this tree definitely has happy memories associated with it now." Georgia extended her fingers, reaching up to softly lay them on Mason's cheek before pulling his lips to hers. She felt Mason's finger slip in between hers, holding her hands tight. As a slight breeze playfully ruffled Georgia's hair she felt the feather light touch of fingers across the back of her neck. As Mason leaned back it occurred to Georgia that both of Mason's hands were in hers. Meaning that the fingers she felt on her neck didn't belong to Mason.

"What was that?!" Georgia exclaimed before spinning quickly around. The breeze was gone and the leaves had become still. There was quite a distance between Georgia and shelter yet there was no one in sight. Georgia slowly turned back around, still suspiciously watching her surroundings. Suddenly she realised Mason was gone.

"Mason?" Georgia called. Georgia shivered when suddenly her eyes were drawn to a wisp of white, almost like fog, disappearing behind the Cypress Tree. Her fingers curled around the new ring on her finger, pushing to the edge of her finger and spinning it round in a nervous manner. Georgia took a small, tentative step towards the space the white had just occupied.

Suddenly Georgia felt something grab her from behind. She screamed before jumping forward, sending the ring flying off her finger. She heard Mason laugh and turned to see him bent in laughter.

"Mason! That wasn't funny!" Georgia said, frustrated at Mason for taking such glee in her fear. She gave Mason a gentle shove but he was already off balance from laughing hysterically and wobbled over knocking into a lower branch, shaking the tree. There was the whistle of a falling object and then a faded satin slipper fell at Georgia's feet.

Once again, Georgia began to scream. Mason frowned at the slipper as fear began to dig its claws into him. As Georgia turned and ran into the night, Mason began to sprint after her, leaving the forgotten ring.

The Tree House Strangler

11:02 pm, 12th of July 1981

He walked stealthily through the night barely making a sound even with the huge weight of the unconscious girl on his shoulder. She had been a difficult one tonight. She had seemed so delicate and weak, yet when he grabbed her she put up more of a fight than he had been expecting. He paused for a moment to spit out some of the blood that had been gathering in his mouth.

He had grabbed her round the waist and tried to shove the cloth with chloroform on it into her mouth. Instead she had bitten his hand leaving a small mark that was still there now. As he yanked back his hand in pain, cursing, she had elbowed him in the mouth making him bite his tongue. In rage he had grabbed the back of her head slamming it into the concrete wall beside him. She gave a brief cry of pain before collapsing onto the pathway beneath them. It had the same effect even though it was messier, he thought, as he had to pause once again to remove some more of her blood covered hair from his face.

When he finally stopped walking, a light sweat stained with dirt and blood covered his forehead. He dropped the girl on the ground with just enough care that she wouldn't die. She had to die exactly as same as the others: hung by a rope from a tree. It was a crime he had committed many times before and he wasn't about to change his pattern now. He simply couldn't. Something in him refused to let

him change his pattern or even stop killing altogether.

Every day he lived with it resting inside him. Then at night it would wake and fill him with the need to find another blonde girl with those horrid green eyes he hated so much. It would take over his body as he crept up behind her and it kept control of his body until he had hung another girl from another tree. Then, and only then, would his body become his own again.

He looked up at the tree in front of him and some long-forgotten piece of knowledge came floating through his mind, telling him it was a cypress tree, and then disappearing before he could work out the origins of the knowledge.

He slid the rope off his shoulder and then began expertly tying it to the girl. When he completed the knots he stopped a moment to admire his handwork. Then, still following tradition, he removed a small wooden house from his pocket and slid it into the pocket of the girl's formal jacket.

With a heave he threw the girl back over his shoulder and went to the base of the tree before climbing a few branches. When he finally reached a suitable height he laid the girl along the branch before attaching the other end of the rope to the tree. With a heave he pushed the girl off the branch. As he heard the twang of the rope as it was pulled tight, ending the girl's life by cutting off her air supply, he felt the satisfaction of another job completed. She may have fought but he still won in the end. He always did.

He climbed down the tree and was about to jump off the lowest branch when something sparkled in the moonlight. He examined the trees around him hoping that the sparkle had not been caused by someone nearby. Someone who could send him to jail. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a pale girl move quickly behind a tree. He jumped and started running into the night before the girl and any possible companions could reach him.

Under the fluttering leaves of the cypress tree another girl hung, dead by the work of the Tree House Strangler. As a huge gust of wind came, the now dead girl's jacket blew up around her, tossing the small wooden

Continued on page 36

Continued from page 35

house out of her pocket and into the nest of a bird in the lower branches. She was the 23rd and last victim of the Tree House Strangler. He, like the girl, disappeared and was never heard of again. He, like the girl, died alone with his identity a mystery for years more.

Logan

11:03 pm 12th of July 2011

Logan pushed the wood shredder towards the fallen tree. It was a beautiful tree, at least 100 years old. Logan recognised it as a cypress tree. There had always been something almost majestic about the Cypress Tree for Logan. It held a sort of beauty that couldn't be replicated. No artists, photographer or sculptor could copy the natural beauty of the tree.

As Logan started up his chainsaw he felt a pang of guilt for what he was about to do. All his life Logan had been chopping trees. It was the family business. Without trees Logan would have nothing and because of this he had learnt to respect and love trees. Especially ones as old and beautiful as this one. With the feeling of guilt still chewing at his heart, Logan lifted the chainsaw and began to chop the tree.

The moment the tip of the chainsaw hit the tree, all Logan could hear was screaming. It seemed to be a young girl screaming in pain and grief. A girl who was about to lose the last thing she had.

Logan dropped the chainsaw and jumped away, looking round for the source of the cry even though deep down he knew he wouldn't see anything. He knew the moment that terrible, heart-rending scream had reached his ears that it had come from the Cypress Tree.

Logan bent down, picking up the chainsaw before using his shirt to wipe off some of the dirt. He restarted the chainsaw and whispered three words.

"I'm so sorry."

Logan brought the chainsaw down onto the tree, trying to ignore the screams but nothing could block them out. Each scream was another branch stabbed into his heart as the pain of them sank into his skin. The pain was like poison spreading through him, until he was completely absorbed

by the anguish of the heart-wrenching screams. He felt liquid gathering in the corner of his eye before a small warm, wet trail formed down his face.

It was odd to feel such pain for a tree but this was more than just a tree. This was the centrepoint of lives. Logan had heard rumours about what went on in Mareen's Reserve by the Cypress Tree and he knew that this one tree, this one point on earth had seen hundreds of lives played out. Everyone had a different story for this Cypress Tree but now it had come to an end. The stories would just disappear into the space of the human mind without a physical connection to earth. And it was all Logan's fault.

As Logan cut the last piece of tree, leaving only the roots, and threw it into the wood shredder, four words spun round his head: What have I done? Logan discarded his safety glasses. Unable to bear the sight of the pile of chips that were once the magnificent cypress tree, he turned away. Suddenly the slow, mournful tears became distraught sobs for the evil Logan had committed. As Logan collapsed on the ground, his entire body shaking with the sobs, he felt the presence of another beside him. He turned his head and through his tear-blurred eyes he saw a pale young girl beside him dressed in a thin, high collared night gown. She was so young, only 12 or 13, and her neck was covered in terrible bruises. She too, was on the ground sobbing for the loss of the Cypress Tree.

As Logan turned he saw others. A tall man with his arm round a smaller, brown eyed woman. A girl, only just out of her teens, with blood covered hair wearing a formal jacket. All with the same pale, translucent appearance. Logan put his head back down and together they mourned the loss of the Cypress Tree.

As they cried, Logan heard other cries of pain and loss join them. He knew that these tears belonged to those that had a part of their life play out by the Cypress Tree. There were so many cries of pain, sorrow, loss, devastation that Logan no longer knew how many people were there. There could have been hundreds, or even thousands but Logan kept his head down and cried for the loss of the Cypress Tree.

One by one the screams and cries of pain disappeared into the night. As Logan's tears began to dry he looked up to see only the

four pale people from earlier. The first to leave was the girl in the formal jacket. She stood, tears still streaming down her face, turned and disappeared into the shadow of the trees. Next left the man and the brown-eyed woman. Their tears had ceased yet their faces still sparkled from the wetness in the moonlight. Together, they too, disappeared into the trees, hand in hand. Lastly the young girl in the night gown rose gracefully from the ground. She wiped the tears from her face and looked straight into Logan's eyes. She leant forward and placed a feather light yet stone cold kiss on Logan's cheek that sent shivers down his spine. She gave a sorrowful smile and turned walking slowly, sadly in the same direction as the others.

As she disappeared, something sparkled in the moonlight, catching Logan's attention. He looked down to see three items lying in front of him. The source of the sparkle was a small, delicate ring with a small emerald on top with two diamonds on either side. It was slightly tarnished with the colours hidden by years of dirt. Next to it lay a small faded satin slipper. There were a few holes where a small animal had chewed it and some parts had simply disintegrated with time. Lastly lay a small wooden house. It had a small piece of fungus growing on a corner and all the ridges held dirt and dust from years in the tree.

Logan stood, the three items in his hand. He wiped at his eyes with his other hand but he knew it did little good. His eyes would be red and swollen from crying. Logan went to his truck and hopped into the seat before placing the three items on the dashboard where they became the company of a broken brass clip, a holey silk purse, a tear and dirt stained letter, a once-silver heart charm and a small doll that was faded and torn.

Logan started the truck and drove away from the site where a magnificent cypress once stood tall, watching over those that came and the stories they wrote, the memories they made and the lives they changed. Now there was only a great hole in the ground where, unbeknownst to anyone, the small seed of a cypress tree lay, ready to grow into a giant, glorious tree that would watch over its own generation of stories.

By Sarah Bryne

*Year 10, Mount Lilydale Mercy College
LILYDALE – VIC.*

Bloody Air-Conditioners

"Oats or cereal?" the food woman asks, because that is what she is programmed to say. Her eyes are muted, died long ago from serving the archaic lifelessness waiting to reach their expiry dates; she is far away. A moment passes before she slops some bumpy mush into my bowl, a pasty trail of grey sludge dribbles over the edge, oozing across the tray. She doesn't wipe it up. A strand of her grey greasy hair camouflages in the dull lumps, adding to the texture of the sordid slush. "Next", she hoarsely calls. I take my bowl, a spoon, a napkin and totter off compliantly.

The morning air was cool, crisp, good for an old set of lungs. Much better than the whirring of the bloody air-conditioners these days, blowing out calculated streams of artificial air.

A gust of wind draws a leaf from a tree, the green little nipper fluttering in the breeze; trembling with shock, quivering with excitement. Sailing from the lofty heights of the tree, gliding away to wherever Wind takes it.

Further and further and further away.

They say a father has a special bond with his son; a bond that can never be lost.

But I don't even know the kid any more.

The leaf rustles fervently as he gets carried away, avidly promising to come back, visit, text, call, e-mail, Skype, Facebook... keep in touch. The tree's branches sway in the breeze, waving goodbye; shaken by his leaf's sudden departure, a part of him – gone.

I look away remorsefully, knowing that the leaf will never come back. That Wind will carry his son so far into the world, that one day he will forget that he ever came from a tree. That his Armani'ed caviar'ed Gucci'ed life could possibly have anything to do with an old tree.

But I don't tell the tree this.

Let him carry some hope for a while; before he becomes an empty hollow carcass, a senile skeleton with creaking arthritic branches, shedding wrinkled bark

from its weathered trunk. A sedentary luddite grasping onto vacant promises from decades ago, straining to hear the faith of assurances even with a hearing aid on. Clutching at the memories until they begin to fade, along with every branch that withers, even before dementia kicks in; until everything is just a dreary colourless blur, like the oats you are fed every morning.

A pair of laughing birds soar blissfully into aspirations, their seemingly endless journey together stretching out far into the boundless horizons of eternity.

They dip down, almost skimming the surface of the clandestine waters.

What reason do they have to be afraid? They have each other.

But Time will catch up with them no matter how far they fly. Why does the chilling shriek signalling the end of Time's timer still come as a shock when your greying plumage and creaking wings promise the inevitable. No matter how clear the skies appear, Time will jump out from behind cloud nine and slay the more fortunate bird, whisking it away forever.

You beg Time to give her back, beg Time to take you too then suddenly you find yourself alone in the starless sky. The skies turn black, darker than a bloodcurdling nightmare on a moonless night. Shadowy gloom hangs thick in the air, clouds of anguish fill the desolate sky. Inconsolable suffering suck the dreams out of your wretched mind, the hope from your wretched body, plucked like feathers one at a time. Spears of sickening grief are

devastating lightning bolts tearing up the heavens, chasing your tormented soul.

So you stop flying.

What is there to keep flying for, you ask yourself.

What would happen if I took an extra two of these pills, you ask yourself.

So you stop flapping your wings: plummeting, plunging into the icy unfeeling waters below. Held captive like a drowning fish, waves of sorrow crashing over your head and then you realise that you will never escape these drowning chains of melancholy.

The birds disappear behind a cliff and I see them no more.

What a feeling it must be to ride on exhilaration, to caress euphoria, embrace rejuvenation. And I nearly launch myself off the side of the rock face to feel the feeling for myself. To pretend for a second that I know what it means to be alive.

The ring of a woman's mobile who has plonked herself onto my bench, poaches the birds from my mind.

It is lunch time now, the hands on my watch point to 12.

So I trudge back slowly up the hill, back to the whirring of the bloody air-conditioners.

By **Karen Gan**

Year 11, Baulkham Hills High School
BAULKHAM HILLS – NSW



Fireworks are Spiders in the Sky

Fireworks are spiders in the sky
A jumble of legs and arms
Flailing, moving, flashing
An uncoordinated dance

Vibrant colours blink
Staining the eye
Scampering across the sky
Unusual, untidy, unnatural

A clutter of arms
A muddle of legs
Aimlessly moving out of order
Keeping us on our toes

Jumbling, flailing, blinking
Bright colours flash and spark
Catching our eye, drawing us in
As the spiders dance through the sky

Arms and legs pirouetting
Beauty and grace
Thrown out the window
Ballet is not a spider's dance

Captivating the world
Lights intriguing children
Colours dance across their faces
Illuminating the night

By **Mia Harris**
Year 8, The Geelong College Preparatory School
GEELONG – VIC.

AUSTRALIA

When the wind blows through the old gum trees.
When the mud sloshes around up to your knees.
You know it's Australia

When the dingo's howl echoes through the plains
When the cane toads croak through the sugarcane
You know you're in Australia

When you're staring up at Uluru.
Aborigines our first Aussies through and through
You know that they're Australian

When you are diving around in the Great Barrier Reef.
The variety of sights and sounds putting you in disbelief
You can tell that it's Australia

Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane too,
I guarantee breathtaking sights for you,
You see you're in Australia

The koala gumtree gives you shade.
And stolen children shelter from them to be obeyed
Yes, you're in Australia

Though you may travel near and far
You will always know where you are
This magical place,
AUSTRALIA.

By **Molly Waters**
Year 4, Robertson State School
ROBERTSON – QLD.

Our World

Bounding through the woods,
Running through the trees.
Feel the adrenaline rush through your veins
Going down a hill that's 40 degrees.

You'd never feel as much pleasure
Winning a 5k race,
As you would when you're at peace with the world
You feel like you've found your place.

Climb a tall tree as fast as you can,
Run with the wild horse's herd.
Dive down a waterfall into the river,
Although all this may seem absurd.

Now shall I tell you the meaning of all this,
The thing I've been trying to say?
I'm saying that our world is a wonderful place,
So Go Green and help it all day.

By **Morgaine Delahoy**
Year 6, Casterton Primary School
CASTERTON – VIC.

China Doll

Imagine that china doll,
See it as clear as day,
Now move and that doll shall do the same,
Don't move too slow,
Nor too fast,

We don't want a crack on her fragile face,
Smack it would go,
Down,
To the show,
Don't let her break,

Have hands that would hold a snake,
With caution,
Granted with trust,
The other end of the leg,
The other end of the stick,

Her back is old,
Her hands withered,
Her heart as young,
As fresh,
As bright as gold,

She is a china doll,
She stands up tall,
And does not bow to the poor,



A good heart has she,
But pride before the fall,
That snake took the bait,
Then swallowed,
Her fate,

From then to now,
We don't judge from eye,
We don't judge from status,
We judge from might,

Of the heart,
Had she,
The snake he was,
The snake he be,
He spat,
And what do you know?
Out came a china plate!

Next a frog,
It hopped in triumph,
Then disappeared under the cat,
The cat yowled as only one like her could,
Before my face the china doll stood,

A chip on her ear,
A heart without pride,
And a hand to the poor
That china doll was not fragile any more.

By **Alicia Munn-Gardner**
Year 7
ARATULA – QLD.

The Forbidden Dream

THE moon turned full that night, for the second time in a row that month. It shone as brightly as the midsummer sun would, boldly declaring its defiance of its own principles.

Under it, in a wooden lodging cabin at Green Hills Camp, a teenage girl slept on a plain, clean bed wrapped in her favourite warm blanket. No dreams or nightmares dared to enter her conscience to disturb her beauty sleep.

Gwen Angels was her name. God had graced her with an angelic face and golden honey curls, and even when sleeping she looked absolutely beautiful. Her eyes twitched a little as the last finger of moonlight flickered and disappeared through the window.

Then suddenly, in the far, far distance, a wolf hollered and howled, crying to the moon. Gwen awoke bewilderedly, blinking her emerald eyes in confusion. As the wolf shrieked for the second time, louder by the minute, Gwen's eyes widened and her heart beat faster than any human heartbeat before. A last despairing wail rang out, hitting a shrilly high note before echoing out all together. After that, there was a dreadfully painful silence.

Gwen's heart ached as her mind replayed the final desperate call of the animal, over and over again until she felt sick in her stomach. And yet, that single heartbreaking memory would not let her forget, the beast's cries echoing in her head. She closed her eyes and felt the creature's agony and desperation, spreading through her like an infectious disease.

Before she could think about it, Gwen got out of bed and slipped into a pair of sneakers. Then she tiptoed her way to the door, her footsteps like a feather upon clouds. Step by step, she slowly made her way across the room, only receiving one creak from the floorboards once she reached the wooden paned door.

Slowly, she turned the door knob in her small gentle hands. It squeaked its suspicions, protesting her midnight escape. It was only when Gwen managed to unlock

the door, opening a small gap to fit a small girl, that it quietened its disapproval.

Gwen stole a glance behind her back, making sure all her cabin-mates were sleeping soundly, before she squeezed through the narrow gap soundlessly and shut the wooden door behind her, stepping into the night.

The night air chilled Gwen to the bone, but it was a refreshing breeze. The night time sky was a blanket of midnight blue with millions of sparkling stars, lighting up the night sky. And there was also the moon, glowing radiantly with its full presence.

Gwen shivered and it was not because of the cold. She distinctly remembered at the cheerful campfire last night, the mention of the full moon, and the hair-raising stories that followed on all night after that. And yet, here the moon was, announcing its second full arrival like an honour.

She walked through the moonlight, almost stumbling with every step and she hurried towards the old rickety back fence that separate the Forbidden Forest and Green Hills.

The run-down fence had been there ever since the inhabitants found a place for their farm stock to graze and for them to live. They named it Green Hills, a beautiful name for an even more beautiful place. Of

course, history recorded the many threats that had been thrown for the broken-down fence to go down in place for a new one, but the majority believed if the fence was removed, all sorts of unmentionable creatures would escape their prison and terrorize the earth. Wild wolves. Devils. Beasts. Monsters.

But what many did not know, was that a breach between the barrier was created, for those who wish to cross the boundaries if they dare and risk their lives. None would defy the laws of the earth, and of Green Hills, and cross the breach. The breach that Gwen was silently creeping through.

It was dark on the other side of the fence, in the Forbidden Forest. Darkness regained more control as she wandered through the woods, seeping with a hint of definite darkness. It felt like she was walking straight into a devil's trap.

Time seemed meaningless in the mystery prison. Gwen could have roamed helplessly for hours without knowing it. But she didn't. Instead, her path crossed with a trail of dark blood.

The blood smelt fresh and deadly, purely from the source of evil. It smeared the forest floor with a mark of true evil, an evil Gwen could only feel deep within her innocent heart.

She followed the blood prints towards her right, where the trail was darkest. It reached all the way up a steep cliff, the way cleared from whatever nightmare creature that shed blood only moments ago. A chill ran up Gwen's spine, and she felt she was being watched.

Gwen emerged to the cliff's edge, not realising it until she almost fell. It was then she heard an inhuman growl formed from the unknown jaws of her certain death.

She spun around, her feet in a jumble and she stumbled. A ferocious wild wolf hunched over her, barring its gleaming razor sharp teeth. The devil's eyes were blood red, dark with its horrible desire. Saliva dripped from the beast's savage jaws, filled with undeniable greed and



hunger. The creature was incredibly thin despite its menacing manner, as if it had been starved for weeks, even months. And it finally found its dinner.

Gwen gasped as it lunged, aiming perfectly at her slender shoulder. She staggered and tripped, tumbling backwards, back to where she came from. A grey blur whirled towards her, moving at impossibly fast speed for such a bony creature. It narrowly missed her, hitting the ground hard from its fall. It struggled desperately to get up, and that was all the time Gwen needed to see that it was badly injured.

Blood oozed from the wolf's middle, the wound stretching to its back leg. The blood deeply stained the beast's once beautiful ebony coat. It looked like spilled wine on the dark fur rug, bleeding continually. Sorrow seeped into her emotions, and she lifted a hand to pat the poor beast, for a minute, forgetting just how vicious it really was.

Seeing its last chance to taste flesh on its tongue, it growled fiercely and snapped at Gwen's delicate little hands. Shocked, she pulled away and backed up from the wolf and up the cliff. The devil got up on its back legs and crawled forward, hungry for the taste of appetising human blood and glorious victory. Gwen was backed up against the cliff's edge, nowhere to go except into the jaws of death. She closed her eyes and whispered her prayers, hoping that God might just spare her life with a blessed miracle. Her heart thumped loudly in her chest, exploding against her rib cage, waiting to be stopped. To be dead.

A shadow stretched over her, and she could feel its presence like the shining moon. She opened her eyes, wanting to look at the face of death for the final time before she died. What she saw was not the razor teeth of bloodthirsty jaws of death. It was a person, a simple man standing in front of her like God.

"Get up, innocent angel", he said, his tone kind. She got up with trembling feet and accepted the stranger's hand with much gratitude. The man held her hand firmly and gestured below the cliff with his other hand. In the darkness, Gwen could just make out the shape of a creature. The wolf.

Gwen shook as the stranger led her back to where she should be. "Why were you here?"

"This place is forbidden for any humans."

"But you're a-a human", she quivered, looking at him questioning. He was only a few years older than her, no older than twenty. "You don't belong here either."

"Yes, but I have to stay", he replied with ease. "I'm sorry, I know it's incredibly rude not introducing myself. My name's John." His hand moved to Gwen's shoulder when she nearly tripped over a fallen log.

"I'm Gwen?" Gwen said, surprised when they suddenly arrived at the fence.

"You might have lost some memory back there", John smirked, his left eye-brown going up. "We took a shortcut."

"Oh", Gwen stammered dumbly, not knowing what to say. John pushed the fence forward and pushed her through like his dog. He waved his hand in farewell, and when Gwen protested shutting the breach, he slammed it in her face.

She kicked the fence, hoping it would fall down and shatter. No such luck today, she thought. Gwen walked away, shaking her head in both terror and confusion. Yes, but I have to stay, he had said when she dared to say he didn't belong in the Forbidden Forest. Why did he have to stay? Humans are not needed in the woods. The fence was a warning that they stay away from the Forbidden Forest.

She shook her head and headed back to camp. As she strolled to her cabin, she saw multiple people fainting and paled at the sight of her. Like she was back from the dead to haunt them. She ignored the drama, too tired to deal with it, and wondered how long she was gone for. One hour of a little adventure and people thought she was dead? Kidnapped? Abducted?

Gwen was shaken, and only wanted her warm, comfy bed. She didn't care what people thought, she no longer cared if she was found guilty of breaking the Green Hills Camping Site Rules. But when she arrived at her cabin, it was deserted. Empty. Abandoned like a haunted house.

The door swung open once again from behind her, revealing half of the staff of Green Hills outside Gwen's cabin. Their eyes bore into Gwen, like she was an actual

living witch. She stared back at them, only to find their souls filled with shock. They were paralysed with fear, almost. Softly, she touched the manager's hand and whispered, "What happened?"

"A-a wolf came and devour-ed a-all your r-roommates. How d-did you survive?" she asked, her eyes shone with fear.

"I heard a-a wolf and w-went into the F-forbidden For-rest to f-find it. Then a-a--"

"The wolf spared her", the head chef said, terror shone clear in his eyes. The crowd gasped.

"What do you m-mean I-I'm s-spa-red?" Gwen wondered aloud, getting a round of wheezing gasps. Many fainted.

"Your friends are gone. How come you're here?", the head chef boldly announced again, blurting out the thought on everyone's mind.

"I-I t-told you, I went into the Forbidden F-forest", Gwen stammered, unable to get the words out. The head chef shook his head, then gently put his hand on Gwen's shoulder.

"It was a dream", he murmured kindly. "The wolf spared you. God has spared your life."

Gwen shook her head and walked out of the room. The fresh air hit her like a cold reminder of her night time visit to the Forbidden Forest. It was a dream, he had said. It wasn't a dream. She remembered the razor sharp teeth, the dark stained blood. The evil darkness that lurked in the woods.

Everyone was convinced that the crazy adventure Gwen had was in her head. But deep in her heart, she knew that it happened. And that the mysterious human in the Forbidden Forest, John, was still there. Watching over anyone who dared to enter the forest again. What he's doing there no one knows. No one understands. No one believes he even exists, except Gwen. It's like he's a ghost.

A dead yet living ghost in the devil's lair.

*By Hanna Pham
Year 7, Killester College
SPRINGVALE – VIC.*



Journey of a Gumtree Leaf

SO IT was that on a crispy cold morning in South Australia, a single leaf from a gumtree was picked up in the early breeze which whirled and curled along. “How exciting!” thought the leaf. “Out on my own, off to see the world!” Well, the leaf was not disappointed as it got taken to many a wonderful place.

It was taken over rolling green hills and deep rich gullies in Tasmania where it met many other leaves in the canopies of great forests. But it was not to last as the wind kept blowing and the leaf kept going.

The leaf saw sparkly rivers and vast lakes and talked to many birds in Victoria. And it watched the light dance off from the lake, twirling across its glassy surface. But the wind did not stop there.

It was blown past beautiful bushland and heard the cockatoos cry. But he saw something else as well in New South Wales in Wollongong which made him sad.

There was dry and parched, completely bare land. He could see the lifeless grey stumps of all the trees which once thrived there in the now pulveratricious span. But alas the wind was again on its way.

The leaf encountered the most beautiful beaches it had ever seen in Queensland and watched the dolphins fly. The water was so blue, clear and splashed perfectly on the soft white sand. But the wind still kept on.

It came by dry and red plains with the intricate dust in the Northern Territory. It enjoyed swirling among it as it observed different types of desert plants. Then the wind blew further as it carried it along.

It was dazzled by wild flowers, colourful, beautiful in Western Australia. They were probably one of the most graceful and elegant things the leaf had seen. The leaf also saw sleek and slippery dolphins as they

leapt from the flawless sea.
But the wind did not stop there.

The leaf arrived back to its gumtree. But it was not there. In fact none of the other trees were. The once happy, rich and welcoming forest was now just an empty, lifeless dust basin. The leaf was devastated. That is when the wind died down and the leaf settled on the soil.

Over time the leaf was buried and a new gumtree grew. Then, one day, completely by chance another wind came blowing by. The leaf’s grandson was picked up and blown away. “Yay!” thought the leaf, “An adventure!”

But it had been many years since its grandfather leaf had travelled Australia. Many things had changed and not entirely for the good.

And what its grandfather had seen is not at all what this leaf saw...

By **Eve Hill**

Year 5, Methodist Ladies College
KEW – VIC.

Silent and eerie,
It strikes at the unexpected all night,
With a lightning fast snap,
Day upon day he swallows

Pebbles give way to his might,
As he devours the subtle beach,
The violent beast that is dangerous to all,
Will always be untamed

As the unpredictable creature rises quietly up the sand,
Noise in the ocean cannot be heard,
Yet still energetic, the monster is still,
As it lies in wait for its next meal

Even as the snake’s temper forever changes,
It is quiet and tranquil, as it must rest,
Hour upon hour, away from sandy shores,
It will attack the beach no more today...

The Sea is a Snake

Extended Metaphor Poem

By **Evan Milroy**

Age 11,
Mandurah Baptist College,
LAKELANDS – WA

Innocent Mind

I see Sadness standing, in that cold dark room that is my mind.
I can hear her taunting herself endlessly.
Fat, ugly, useless.
Images of fear and hatred flood the room.
She looks towards me, eyes as red as blood stare into me,
as if piercing a hole straight through my heart.

A single tear leaves her eyes and softly falls down her face, leaving a trail behind it.
It is as if it's beckoning other tears to follow,
though the girl sheds no more.
She limps around appearing to be searching for something.
Perhaps an item once lost?
Or a person once dear?

I struggle to see what she will find in this pit of nothingness.
This big black hole that sucks away at all happiness and joy, yet creates it just as easily.
Something catches my eye, the girl is holding an item in her hand.
It's glimmering with light.
She sets the sparkling piece of mystery onto the floor, and steps back.
Watching it as it begins to grow in size and length.
It grows and grows until it has taken the silhouette of a girl.

Confidence.
Confidence is almost identical to the other girl.
She steps towards the Sadness.
As she does a glow spreads throughout the room, warming the darkness as it goes.
A shining beacon of light shoots from her, wiping away the pain.
The images of fear and hate are replaced with those of love and joy.
Sadness cowers in a small corner, awaiting for her escape, for her reclaim.
The battle is won... for now.

By **Abigail Pettigrew**
Year 8, Mount Lilydale Mercy College
LILYDALE – VIC.

Winter Winds



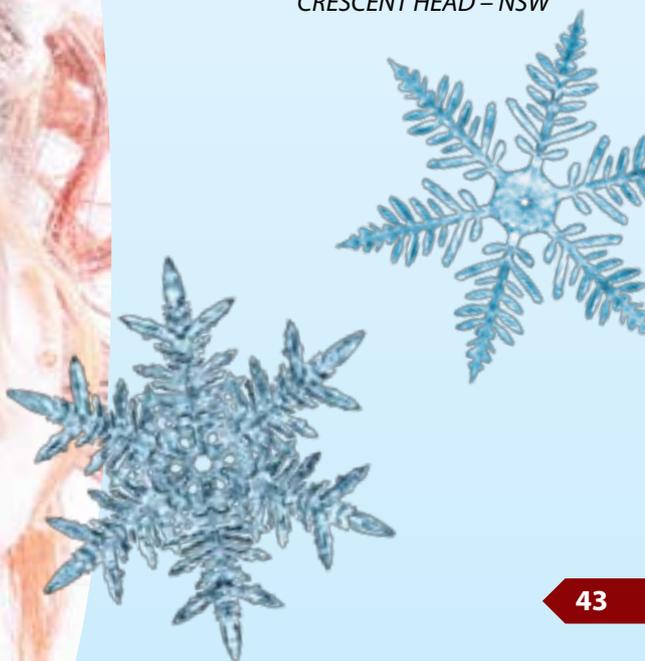
Warm hot chocolate in my mouth
Chilly, biting winds coming from the south
Snug in my bed I want to hide
Fearing the winter cold that lurks outside.

Watching the leaves where they lie
Counting the days as they crawl by.
Breakfasts I enjoy... eggs on toast
Winter foods are what I love most.

Snowflakes falling in my hair
Wishing my feet were not so bare
Watching the flames dance in the fire
Toasted marshmallows is what I desire.

As the sunlight melts the dew
I love to slurp Mum's warm, hot stew
Winter is the time of shorter days
We all hope Spring is on its way!

By **Olivia Blake**
Year 5, Crescent Head Public School
CRESCENT HEAD – NSW





THE figure was in plain view for only a moment.

It stepped behind a grand pillar, its faint footprints the only things it left behind. Silently, it moved its way through the grand house to find its prey. Its black leather coat trailed behind it, its checked beret still firm on its head, despite its pace. There was still no evidence where its victim lay. It slithered up the carpeted stairs, holding the banister in its firm hands. The floor of the twenty-two bedrooms was what it was destined for. At the last step, it unbuckled its belt and tied it to the banister. It hung like a dead snake. It tied the other end to the opposite banister, and nimbly stepped over it. It allowed itself a smile. Its victim wasn't expecting that. By chance, it found a clue in the first bedroom it looked into: crumbs. It sniffed the yellow crumb. Aha. It knew it was close.

It walked into the next room, and sniffed the air. No, not there. After sniffing the air of eighteen other bedrooms, it came to the one with the right aroma. Its eyes widened and the edges of its mouth twitched as it saw a bright red suitcase, just big enough to fit a person in. Still silent, it took a silver implement out of its pocket and twisted the lock free. It took the two zips and pulled them in opposite directions – to reveal what it had been looking for.

The girl, still badly hurt from the last time she had met it, gave it a look, a look that said “Not this time”. The figure that had hunted the girl down had a similar look on its face.

Then she jumped out of the suitcase and ran.

One could have expected it. The creature ran behind her, not as fast as it could have. Looking behind her, the girl wondered why it was stalling. She found out soon enough, when she tripped over the belt and fell down the stairs. The figure gave her a sly, smug look as it slid under the belt.

“Like your trip?” it said and gave her a raised eyebrow.

“That’s a rhetorical question. I see you need to improve your grammar.” She eyed it coldly.

“I see you need to improve your running.” it said.

“They’ll get you.”

Moisture running down its face, what some would call sweat, it shook his head.

“So naive...” it shook its head again. “Say your last words and all.”

“Carry out my will.”

And it pulled the trigger of the golden shotgun, making an end to the young girl’s life.

There were muffled voices near the house at sunrise, when the sky was the colour of shining water. Dry autumn leaves hung around the ground, making the footpath disappear. They stepped gingerly into the house, where there had been reports of a shooting. Their polished black shoes left no marks as they walked, their gelled hair shimmered as they stepped in line with the light of the sun and the strong smell of expensive cologne filled the

room. They set down their briefcases and walked around the room, looking for small clues – a sample of DNA or something similar. Finally, when the only things they had found were dry mud shapes, they wandered to the bottom of the staircase where they found the dead body of a girl. Her midnight black hair whipped around her face, her eyes somehow open but not shining with her usual glow. Her waistcoat had a hole in the middle, where she had been shot. It had been a clean one, one that could only have been done by an expert. Something unusual had happened; it wasn’t like the usual cases they solved. Something about it... something didn’t seem right.

“Not a fly”, one said. It was a phrase he and his associates used when nothing was found.

“Same over here”, another said.

The murderer was most definitely a skilled assassin and had left no evidence to reveal who had killed the girl. They went back into the house and saw a belt hanging from the banisters that they must have overlooked. The girl had almost certainly tripped over it. They checked it for fingerprints but couldn’t find any. Maybe the killer had worn gloves? They once again scanned the area, especially the oddly placed creek, but still the mystery remained: who had shot the girl?

Or, more like, what?

*By Alyssa Chen
Year 5, Gordon West Public School
GORDON WEST – NSW*



Butter Fingers

PRESSURE was building up inside me. Sweaty hands and nervous fingers. I knew I would have to do it. Play the piano. The host called out my name. I'm beginning to stress.

Slowly, I walked up to the Grand Piano. I sat down and put my music book on the stand. Bad thoughts kept rushing through my mind. I knew I couldn't turn back now.

I put my shaky hands in the correct position on the keys, took a deep breath and began to play. The staccato notes I played sounded all right. But as I made my first mistake the song turned its back on me. I began to struggle. I knew it. I was doomed!

I finished. At last! I took my hands off the keys and waited for the signal to play my next song. Terror! Pure terror had taken over my body, unable to breathe, shaking uncontrollably.

I gritted my teeth tight and waited for the judge to finish scribbling his notes. I looked at him with hope. He merely nodded. By now I was tired and petrified. How I wished it was over!

The second song I played was easier. I flew through it. One mistake I made,

which I think no one noticed. A huge sigh of relief swept over me.

Again the judge started to scribble down his thoughts. Thousands of beady eyes were staring up at me. My new fear was now stage fright. I didn't like it, not one bit! I eagerly waited for the signal to exit the stage.

He gave the signal. I had had enough! I grabbed my book and walked careless and quickly off the stage. I realised I even forgot to bow! Off the stage and back in my seat in the speed of light. My heart was pounding and my mind was still racing. I couldn't believe how I played with butter fingers at this competition!

The host came back with my results. A chill ran down my spine, I felt like I was back in the shadows again.

She calls out my name "Susan..." My heart skipped a beat. "Excellent!"; she exclaimed.

I couldn't believe it! I smiled with pride! My sun of success rose high in the sky! "Butter fingers!" I had proven that thought wrong!

By Jessica Davies

*Year 6, Kambalda Primary School
KAMBALDA – WA*



When the Music Comes

When the music comes, the ones who lie
Shall rise as one in a dance of souls;
All those pure, impure and sick at heart
Will stand and be fulfilled; none shall be lost.
Receive they their due, their reward and their sentence;
Come they with joy, with fear and repentance
To take their place in the heavenly register
Of all and of one, for only one knows.
And though the earth they know shall be forsaken
And the forms of all smitten with killing frost,
No more shall evil triumph, or lost emptily roam –
All and all to one, at last to come home.

By Ophelia Kong

*Year 7, SCEGGS
DARLINGHURST – NSW*

Legends

ON THE outskirts of a big, flash city is a small country town that is known as Boligotta, a young child whose name is pronounced Felix, yet is spelt so terribly long I wouldn't be able to fit it on this page, was sitting in his crowded, smelly bedroom thinking about nothing and tapping his bare foot on his sanded, oak wood floor. Again and again one sentence kept repeating itself in his head; *I am so bored.*

After another minute of nothingness Felix became bored of being bored. Now, being bored of being bored is a pretty hard task to accomplish but once succeeded you are rewarded with annoyance. Felix lazily got to his feet and grudgingly slumped down his dusty hallway and into the brightly lit fluorescent kitchen where he found his Father. Felix's Father was the exact replica of Felix himself; they both had the same honey blonde hair that flopped over their face and the same murky blue eyes that every now and then would turn grey in the colder months.

As Felix stepped into the kitchen his father put down his newspaper and smiled at his son.

"Hungry?" his father asked. Normally when Felix came out of his bedroom he would ask for food, then once he got it he would retreat back into the depths of his den, never to be seen again.

"No Dad", Felix replied and took a seat next to his only parent. "I'm bored, what did you do for fun when you were little?"

Felix's Dad raised a questioning eyebrow at his child. Slowly his face cracked into a huge, big grin and he cleared his throat.

"When I was your age, my friends and I would go to the park and pick the dandelions."

"That's boring, how is that fun?" Felix asked resting his head on his hand and nudged his father onwards.

"First" his father continued, "we would ask them a question like, where did my colouring books go or what should I do today. After we asked our question we would blow on them, releasing their seeds into the air then once the seeds had landed they would grow into stunning beasts, kings of the jungle, beautiful, white lions. We would follow the lion that had grown magically from the ground and once it disappeared we would be given our answer."

Felix nodded at his father's imagination; he knew this wasn't true but he would listen so he wouldn't hurt his father's sensitive feelings.

"Once, I remember asking the lions where my friend was hiding in our game of hide-and-go seek. We used to play it every day when we were ten, and they guided me to his hiding spot, up the old oak tree next to the duck pond."

Felix stood up and sighed. He remembered when he used to play hide and seek with his old friends back in Sorvetteia.

"Thanks Dad", he smiled. "I think I'll go for a walk to clear my thoughts."

As he was just about to close the door Felix heard his father's shout.

"Remember what I told you about the lions!"

Felix smiled, shook his head and stepped out into the empty street where the old dirt road curved around the small town square. He followed the neatly lined pebbles for a while until his feet began to hurt. He closed his eyes and took another turn, he felt the hard, rocky road warp into soft, bouncy grass and he smiled. He had arrived at the park.

Felix sat down in the grassy rectangle and rested his legs out in front of him. He put his small palm out next to him and felt something soft brush against his skin. He looked to his right and saw a single dandelion slowly moving in the gentle breeze that had rolled into the grounds where he sat. He smiled, remembering his father's silly legend and plucked the weed from the ground. He asked himself mentally a question that had been seated nicely in his thoughts ever since he moved here a week ago. *When will I find a friend?*

He huffed a gust of warm breath onto the small flower and watched the seeds land just in front of him. He waited for his father's insane story to prove real but nothing happened. He shook his head thinking to himself how silly he was to even try when he felt the ground under him start shaking slightly. He looked up and his eyes widened in surprise for what he saw could never be unseen. The legend from his father's words had come alive; a huge white lion was bounding away from him, towards the playground where a small, red haired female that looked about his age was playing a skipping game by herself.

Felix stared as the lion strode towards the unsuspecting girl before vanishing into thin air with a flutter of white, fluffy seeds. He blinked in awe and stood up, making his way towards the girl nervously, trusting the lion of his answer. As he approached the girl, she turned around and smiled at him. Her hair was pinned to the back of her head and braces covered her pearly whites as she grinned. Her oversized glasses bounced just above her freckled nose as she hopped from one foot to the next.

"Hey there, I'm Deri, it's extraordinarily nice and somehow strangely unexpected to meet you", she grinned.

Felix could hear the slight lisp the girl had and couldn't help but smile back.

"Felix", he nodded, "Erm, I was just wondering, since I'm new here", he rubbed the back of his neck shyly, "you might like to consider being friends?"

The response the stranger gave him was something he would never expect, the weird little girl wrapped her arms around him, embracing him in a big bear hug and replied with two words and two words only.

"Thank you."

Till this very day, Felix and Deri are still friends, till this very day Felix still goes to the park and plays with the dandelions, letting them answer his questions and worries. Till this day he still believes his father's crazy legend of the lions in the park.

By **Rioko Learmont**

Year 7

Lilydale – TAS.



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