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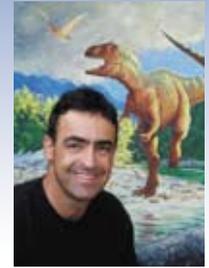
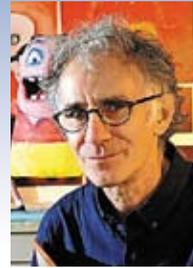
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

So many great entries have been received, so keep them coming. Remember don't wait until the last week to enter. We thank the many schools who subscribe to our Magazine and continually send their students' work in for consideration.

De La Salle College's Year 6 Class has worked on poems and stories dedicated to the ANZACs. We thought it unfair that some would miss out on being published, so we have included all of those entries in this edition. We thought it appropriate to showcase them with a great true story written by Andrew Plant. *The Poppy* is the true story of one of Australia's greatest victories, and of a promise kept for nearly a century.

Keep on writing, but turn the page and enjoy all this edition has to offer!

ENTER ON-LINE at
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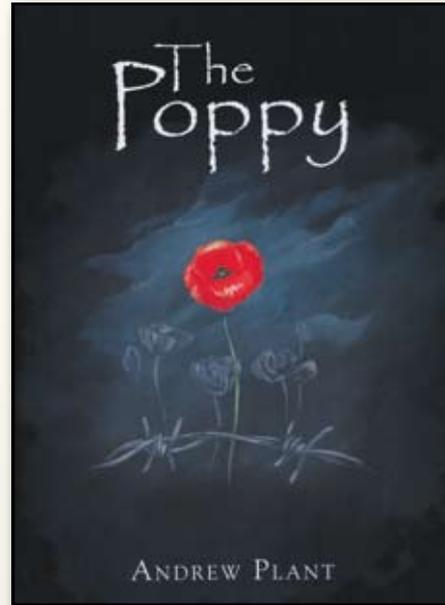
**KEEP ON WRITING
(TYPING)!**

Carol Dick
Managing Editor

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The Poppy by Andrew Plant



2014 marked the beginning of the centenary commemorations of World War I, which will last till the end of 2018.

The Poppy is a timely introduction to the Australian National Memorial in France, a site of pilgrimage for Australians as significant as Gallipoli.

This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the story of one of Australia's greatest victories in World War I, and of the enduring link that was forged with a small French village, a promise kept for nearly a century.

Over 70 full colour paintings relate the story in a gentle yet moving manner suitable for younger children.

For further information or to arrange interviews please contact: Terrie Saunders, Publicist.

Phone: (03) 9481 1120

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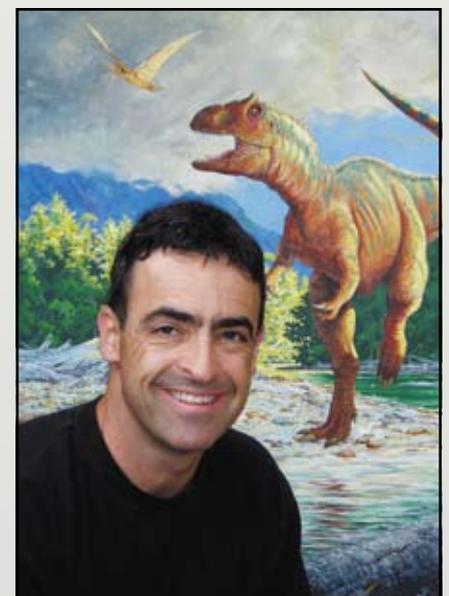
Age guide 9+

About the author

Andrew is an author and illustrator of picture and education books. He has been published in Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, USA and South Korea. He has presented sessions in schools and libraries from Alice Springs to Beijing and France. He also paints murals for schools, libraries and museums, and designs and builds theatre sets.

Also by Andrew Plant:

- The Little Dinosaur
- Puggle
- Could a Tyrannosaurus play Table Tennis?
- A Platypus, Probably
- Reign of the Sea Dragons





Ace Miyamoto

blood oozed out of the abrasion. I freed my foot out of the boots I was wearing. I stood up, winding back my hand in preparation for a punch. It was the first time I had opposed the bully. I wiped the goo onto my new ABI Bros. branded watch and then it happened.

THUMP! A slimy substance dripped down my head. I tried to ignore it. I didn't want to cause any trouble.

"Hey Bilbo! Get you and yo magic ring ova' here right now!" demanded Jay Ruffkins, the school bully. My actual name is Ace Miyamoto. I was walking back from literature class and we had been studying 'The Hobbit' by J.R.R. Tolkien, which I was a big fan of. I brushed my hair, the goo stuck to my fingers. I ignored Jay and kept on walking.

I reached my bottom locker, put in my combination and opened the locker when... Slam! My foot got caught in the locker. It ripped my shoe's weak fabric and

A grey metal oozed over my hand just as I uppercut the bully. I wrapped my leg around his, bringing him to the ground as the metal fully covered me. I formed my hand into a tazer like shape and watched as I electrocuted the bully. What had I done? I assembled my hand into a fist shape and smashed a nearby window. I hurriedly ran to a bush. The metal was not heavy, so it did not slow me down. I was exhausted. I collapsed.

The next thing I knew, I was in a truck surrounded by men wearing similar suits to mine. A hidden door slid open revealing a man with a blue monocle.

"Where did you get that watch, son?" asked the man with a Texan accent. I didn't respond. I was too confused.

"Tell me!" he demanded. A middle-aged man entered.

"Calm down, Donald. He's a valuable asset", advised the middle-aged man.

"Who are you?" I questioned.

"I'm from the IHO. The International Hero Organisation, formerly known as Star Corps. Ignore Donald. He's a little bit surprised. By the way, I'm Austin Jones", informed Austin. Suddenly, we reached a mansion, which I assumed was the IHO base.

"This is your new home, Ace. We'll teach you all about how to use your suit", explained Austin. "Welcome to the team, my friend", continued Austin. That, my friend, was how I was recruited to the IHO.

*By Adriel Appathurai
Year 6, St. Luke's Primary School
LALOR – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs. Lisa Curtis*

Remembrance Day

We celebrate Remembrance Day
to commemorate the people who lay,
We wear poppies on our shirt,
after picking them from the dirt.

We really wish they could come back
But the chance of that will lack,
We feel sorry for every father and son
Oh! Look at what the war has done.

Every land, we should share
Since the blood made poppies stand there.
For one minute we commemorate,
at 11am, not too early not too late.

Dear soldiers, you are not alone
Oh dear sun please shine on their gravestone.

*By Jiya Patel
Year 7, Blacktown Girls High School
BLACKTOWN – NSW
Teacher: Jaya Fialok*

Battery Hens

THEY clutched nervously at the velour of their fake Louis Vuitton bags. Poised and perfect with hundreds of hours of modelling and deportment lessons, they glistened with golden tans and silvery hair. Dawn intensely observed their contoured edges that cut lines across their bronzed cheeks. Their pearly eyes flitted back and forth as they eyed off the competition beneath heavy lashes. Each girl hostilely stared at her competition like a vulture approaching their long dead prey. Dawn scanned the room anxiously trying to keep her feet meandering along the icy, white tiles beneath her. She held her head high, copying the girls around her with their hair flicking and pouting. Glossy red lips were pressed together tightly to stop them from shaking. Like a new-born chick who had not yet unfurled its feathers, she was still “all elbows and knees”, like her grandmother used to say.

Below the low hum of the air conditioner, girls whispered to each other over the occasional squeak of the cheap leather cushions. “Sage, you’re next!” Dawn looked up at Cashmere, the casting assistant, who peered down her immaculate features at the quivering girls beneath her. Sage took a jaunty step, propelling her broad shoulders like a swan about to take flight as she glided in to the casting room. Dawn began to feel the cacophony of butterflies in her stomach which were quickly turning her excitement into bile filled terror. She couldn’t help but feel like they were beautiful ducklings on display. They swam innocently in formation oblivious to the hunter waiting to take his shot. She shook her head to clear the image and nervously fixated her focus on the clock’s hands as she suppressed her increasing turmoil.

Fleeting flashbacks fluttered over her. She recalled the memory of her mother’s discarded lipstick slashed across her childish cheeks. The hours of catwalk posing down the hallway... the looks of disapproval at another purchase from Sephora. Her mother’s warnings echoed over her.

Click. Clack. The staccato march of stilettos against tiles brought her back to the cold sterile room. “Dawn? Is there a Da-wn here?” drawled the casting director, with her face obscured by the clipboard. Dawn

exhaled deeply, steeling herself for what was behind opaque glass doors. She rose as gracefully as she could as she perched on her borrowed heels before tottering over to the director who glared at her. Dawn’s weak smile was crushed as she heard, “You’re going to have to learn to walk in those heels if you think you deserve a chance around here”. A flush of embarrassment washed over her as her heart thumped in her chest. Jagged edges of hope sliced through her stomach, silencing the butterflies with a wave of dread. Dawn almost turned and fled at that moment but she was sucked

into the dragon’s den, pulled by an invisible force. Thoughts raced through her head, crashing doubts colliding with anxiety, “Why am I here? Why did I think I would fit in?”

Blundering along the dimly lit hallway, she couldn’t help but feel the raise of goose bumps along her neck. At the end of the corridor she could see a bright glow emanating from stage lights. A low murmur of voices echoed from the darkness and the click of pens against surrounding clipboards resonated in the cavernous space. Voices projected out at her as she took her place on the runway stage like a lamb to slaughter.

“She’ll never get booked!”

“Might just make the cut for a street casting!”

“Catwalk pose!”

“Hurry up, we don’t have all day!”

Under the heat of the lamps, Dawn became aware of a thin veneer of sweat forming on her upper lip. Her temples were pounding as she stood stiffly trying to follow the myriad of instructions that were barked out at her. The judgemental voices echoed around the room. She felt their words bounce off the walls, flattening her delicate frame. She was a product for assessment and evidently not one that they liked.

“6’1... and 45kgs. Really? Not with an arse like that.”

“She could lose some of it!”

“Can’t do much about the face though!”

“Might be useful for a body shot!”

Dawn shrivelled inside with each sickening, pointed comment, a bullet of critique piercing her self-esteem. She peered out into the darkness, the shock registering on her face that was twisted in shame. With flushing cheeks, Dawn could feel each word burn into her skull, flaming against any sense of self-worth. Her body was frozen, weighed down by their scrutiny. Like a deer in the headlights she was rooted to the spot.



“She’s like a baby bald eagle.”

“Bloody ugly and completely useless”, claimed the silhouettes.

Dawn finally snapped. The comments no longer washed over her, drowning her spirit. She awoke to her anger and stood upright, spinning awkwardly on her heels towards the door. “Hey, where are you going? We aren’t finished yet”, insisted the director. Dawn summoned up all her courage to turn and she shot back with pointed rage, each word a razor against

her critics. “Yes we are. I’m not here to be ridiculed because of your shallow and materialistic world. I will not put up with this.”

Like a phoenix, she rose, standing tall and proud, all 45 kilos and 6’1” of her. She strode out the doors to a waiting room of shocked faces. Her realisation that this world was perverse, buoyed her out of the dragon’s den. She smiled at the girls around her, “You are all better than this. Don’t forget it”. She exhaled deeply, reassuring herself that she was right to break free.

She refused to be like them, awaiting their slaughter, used and abused in the factory of fashion modelling. As she stepped out onto the street, she caught her reflection in the glistening glass door. She may be all elbows and knees, but she was proud of them and who she was. Her beauty was flying free from the cage.

By **Madelyn Totsikas**

Year 12, St Dominic’s Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

Forgotten

“**B**RING! Bring!” screamed the school’s bell.

“Yes!” I thought. “Home time.”

I began the two block journey home. My house wasn’t far but sometimes it felt like it was kilometres away. This was one such day. I walked, and walked. Then I saw him. He was standing about eleven metres away from my house.

“Hey look, it’s the weirdo!” he teased.

“Stop it Jacob!” I commanded.

I turned and crossed the road. Then I walked the eleven metres further and recrossed the road. I walked up my driveway. I knew they wouldn’t come any closer because my mum would see them.

The next morning I awoke as usual. I went to the kitchen and I ate breakfast. It was an average, boring, morning. The only thing making today any different to any other day was our excursion to the Responder Woods.

On the bus I sat in the third row next to the window, as usual. When we arrived I was astonished by the size of the woods. I began to wander off towards the woods. I walked through the trees feeling the rough bark. I was drawn in by this beautiful place filled with nature. I breathed in deeply and tasted sweet, moist, air. It was paradise.

Then I remembered... I was on an excursion. Where was the teacher? Where were the other students? Suddenly I felt very lonely. How do I get out of the woods?

I began to realise that I was lost. I felt lonely. I felt forgotten. Wave after wave of fear washed over me. The whole woods looked glum. I was lost and forgotten. Just like so many other people.

I heard a sound. A rustle. I saw leaves shift. Then a wolf leaped out towards me. I ran through the woods. Over rocks and hills. Under low branches. I ran. On and on.

Suddenly I heard a gunshot. It was ear piercing and echoed through the woods. I heard shouting. More gunshots, and then a low throaty groan. Someone yelled at me, “It’s all right, you’re safe now”.

I stopped, panting, and turned to see my rescuer. I began to feel faint. I told him my address. Then I blacked out.

By **Matthew James**

Grade 6, St. Luke’s Primary School

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs. Curtis

When I Write

THERE is a special sickness that seeps through me and onto the page when I pick up my pen. When I write I can feel it flow through me from my head, through my veins and out my fingertips. It digs its way around my body constantly, always looking for a way out – thriving when it's on display. It pools up on my page and melts into it when I finish like the remnants of a rainstorm. My work is a diagram of the crevices of my mind, filled with whirring thoughts. I write until it is silent.

My teacher slipped the competition form into my hands during English, while I rolled back in my chair, attempting to feel more in tune with the conversation that went on around me. I gazed at the pamphlet briefly, scanning the paper for the date – March 5th. My mind rushed through calculations, realising it was less than a week away and the knot in my stomach tightened, as if I already knew what was to come.

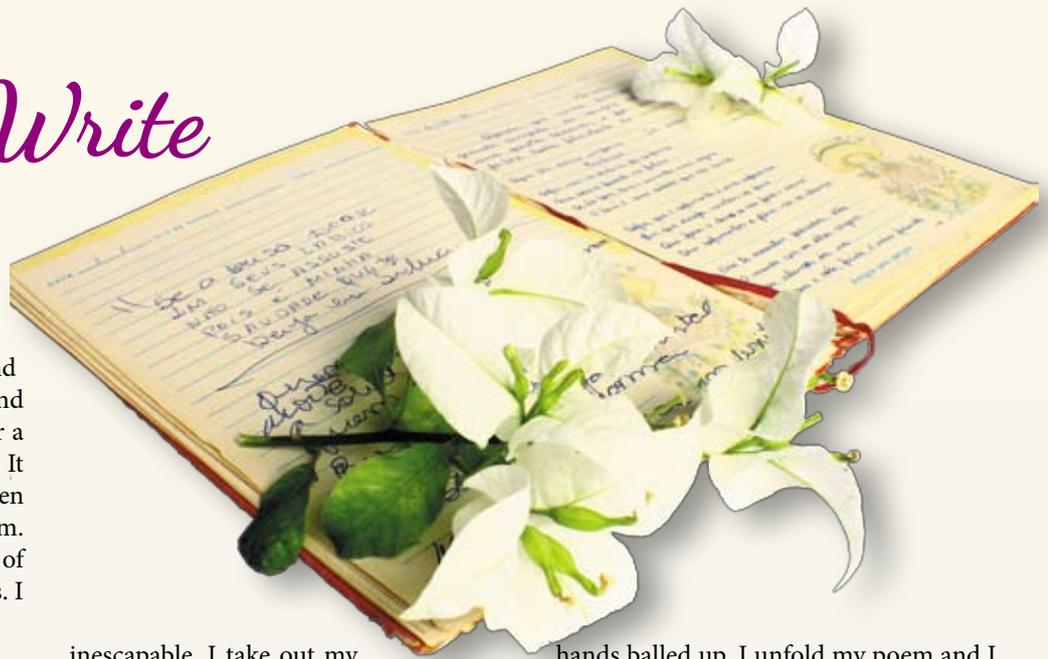
After school, Tom and I sit on the rooftop of his mum's studio, where we crash to hang out on evenings. Mostly we kiss and talk, but occasionally we just sit. I've known him for a while now, though he's not a close friend of mine – I think I just give him something to do, and he gives me someone to impress. Whether he's bored or simply wants someone to act as a piece of furniture for his body, I'm not sure. I should ask his girlfriend sometime. He passes me a cigarette as I lean over the barrier and peer down at the passing cars below. We stand smoking in silence for a while and I try to quiet the background noise in the back of my skull. Tom has decided we are to mean nothing to each other, and I play along although he has not asked for my opinion. The sickness makes it hard for me to be otherwise. "You think you'll enter that competition?" he mumbles.

"Yeah, I think so", I replied, turning my head towards him.

"Good luck. You have the talent."

"Thanks."

Our conversations were always short, as if the action of speaking is uncomfortable but



inescapable. I take out my notebook and start scribbling things and words flow from the pen. Writing is like releasing an animal into the wild from captivity, a hurried escape from a cage into the wilderness.

On Sunday I start trying to structure something for the competition, but nothing comes out right. I feel myself growing more frustrated by the second, and I know where that leads so I head outside. The air is cool on my face and I walk down the road towards the park at the end of the street, spotting an empty park bench. I sit for a while and let the tsunami in my head wash over. There is a lie I was told once that depression makes you a better creative type. I uncrumple the blank page in my pocket and I fiddle with it for another hour until it becomes wrinkled and torn at the edges. I want to write about feminism, or political injustice, or the struggle of the poverty stricken, but all I can think about is the void inside me. The void that cannot be filled with "I love you's" or cigarettes or texts, or competitions, or half-hearted affairs, or godforsaken slam poetry. I have nothing to write about except myself. So I pick up the pen and I let the sickness out onto the page.

Friday afternoon comes sooner than I expected and suddenly I am in the audience, waiting for my turn on the mic. There is a quiet rumble from the crowd as they move to their seats. My hands twitch nervously, so I keep fiddling with the paper as the MC greets the masses from his podium. The poets who come before me are mesmerising, speaking with such elegance I want to sink back into my seat. The first round is almost over when they call out my name and I slowly make my way to the stage, lump in my throat and

hands balled up. I unfold my poem and I breathe in before I speak.

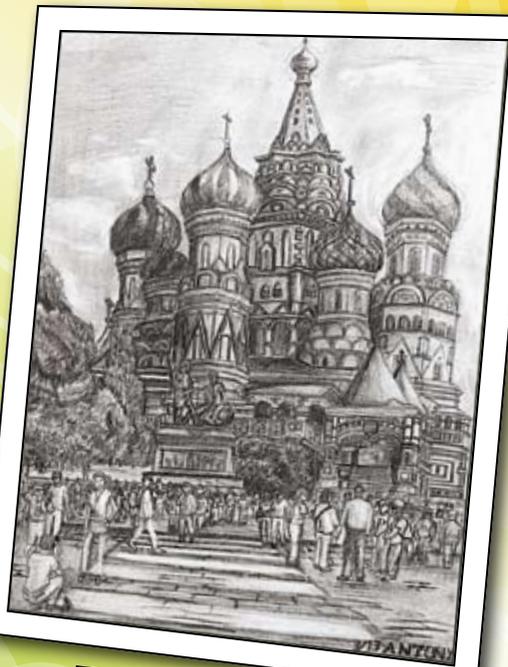
When I speak, the tension eases and I feel myself becoming wrapped in my own words, images forming around me. A tale of evenings on the rooftop and crying on a park bench and letting the world spin around me. I am filled with confidence as the sickness leaves me and for once I am not looking for an exit. I look up into the audience and feed off their energy, glancing at Tom in the corner of the room with his eyes fixed on me and I feel no need to impress him any more. Each word flows out of my mouth... the leaves swirl around me, I am flying... and my heart tumbles out of my chest into the audience. I can feel the eyes of every person in the room glued to me, riding out each syllable like a wave... there is a fire in my mind and my fingers... seemingly as focused as I am. The frustration that sits inside me seems to flow out from every direction, and for once there is some semblance of normality. My voice heightens as the climax builds, ...the noises surround me like a swarm of wasps... and pure power hums around me. Finally, I spit the finite words out of my mouth... the thunder leaves me, and I float back to the ground... with a sense of peace.

The poem begins to draw to a close and I wonder if I am still breathing when it finishes. When I hear the applause I remember what I've been waiting all day for. The moment passes and I notice my head doesn't feel heavy any more, and for that brief moment, I am cured.

By **Emelia Haskey**
Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

2018

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



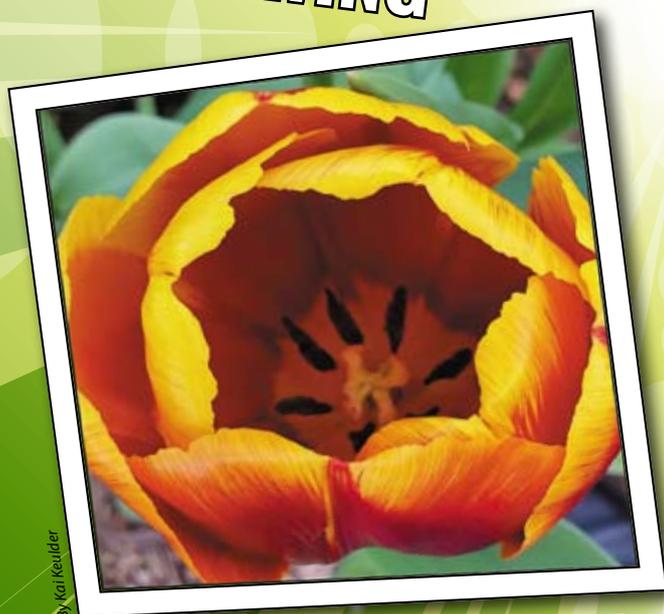
By Anthony Qin

DRAWING



By Manna Tsuchiya

COMPUTER ART



By Kai Keulder

PHOTOGRAPHY



By Matthew Ropeyam

PAINTING

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

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

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.

Antlers for Amber



AMBER lay down beside the tall green trees she called her home. The light-hearted creature watched as the autumn leaves danced upon the wind. Everything seemed peaceful as Amber looked around the calm, happy atmosphere. She was a well-nourished, safe deer with nothing to worry about, but she remained unhappy. The deer began to recognise the “Gallop, gallop” of her mother and sister approaching and it reminded the young animal of her reason for her face to claim such a sorrowful look. As her small family bounded up to her, Amber dared herself to look at the feature perched atop their heads. And her heart sank.

Antlers. Bold, beautiful antlers. They made any lonesome, afraid deer appear fearless and heroic. There was nothing about them upsetting Amber, she just wished she had a striking set of her own. The two that stood before her, her mother Willow and elder sister Everlust, immediately knew what bothered the desolate deer. “Cheer up, all of us started off without antlers, and we all eventually grew a pair”, spoke Everlust. “It’s natural.”

“But mine should have already grown!” replied the anxious Amber. “We are only a year apart, and your set currently reach the sky!”

Willow looked down at her daughter with caring eyes. “Amber, sweet, you must admit

to yourself that you are a late grower. Who knows when your antlers may sprout. They might appear today...” Amber knew what her mother would say. They had had the same conversation many times before, each time more dreading than the last.

“Or?”

“They might appear a little later in your life.” That’s when Amber’s welled eyes broke their walls and tears flooded down her face.

The young deer was miserable. Shattered. Washed away of her hopes and dreams. An arrow had struck through her smaller than ever heart and no one had the strength to put it back together. Willow and Everlust stared at her daughter in dreadful sorrow. This was not the sweet Amber with her head in the clouds that they knew. “Amber, dearest, what is it about antlers that you long for? There must be an alternative that could lift your spirits.”

Willow was at the last resort with her longing child. Amber looked up at her generous mother, her eyes as wet as a river. “I need something to show that I’m a worthy deer, that I have purpose.” A leaf blew past Amber’s face. She began to notice the puddle forming beneath her feet. That’s when Everlust had an idea.

“Amber, I may excel in gathering fresh grass each day, but you are the very best at

finding water that is safe to put to our lips. Have you not noticed how we would lack of thirst without you?” Everlust’s declaration was a key that opened the lock on Amber’s slight smile. Willow was sensationally proud of her eldest and could see how she carefully coaxed such an unhappy deer, and her own smile shone down upon Everlust like the sun in the early morning. How smart Everlust was indeed!

Willow was influenced and followed her daughter’s example. “Amber, who found us that hollowed-out shelter during that cold winter storm some months ago?”

“Me?”

“Exactly! Honey, you don’t need antlers to be special, because you are still a bold, beautiful, brave deer just the way you are! You are my talented, purposeful little girl. Remember that.”

“I promise”, replied a cheerful Amber who felt everything was better. Antlers were just a feature. She didn’t need them.

But she was still secretly very pleased when the next day, a small pair of horns appeared atop her mantle.

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

BOOK REVIEWS

The Perfect Leaf

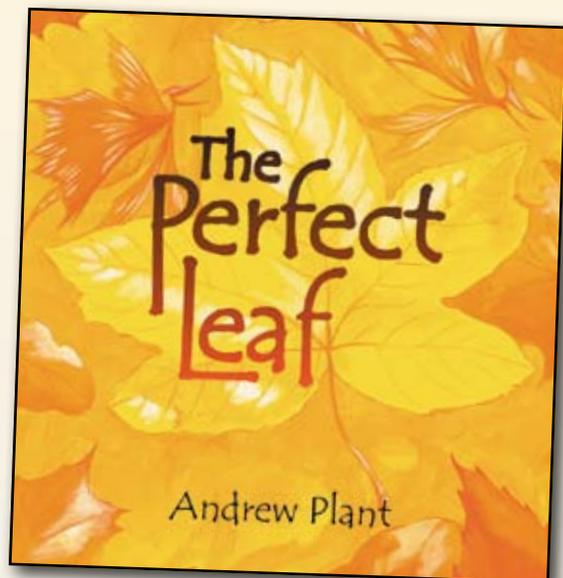
Author: Andrew Plant

Publisher: Ford Street Publishing

RRP: \$24.05 HC

ISBN: 9781925736014

Available May 2018



The Perfect Leaf by Andrew Plant is an imaginative celebration of children, their inventive powers and the joys of being a child.

The tale is centred around two young girls, playing in the Autumn leaves. Elly and Mai explore the beautiful leaves in Autumn in search of the perfect leaf – and they both find glorious leaves, with captivating colours, fairy holes and butterflies. The focus on making friends, playing together and the fun that can be had outside in Autumn draws readers into the story.

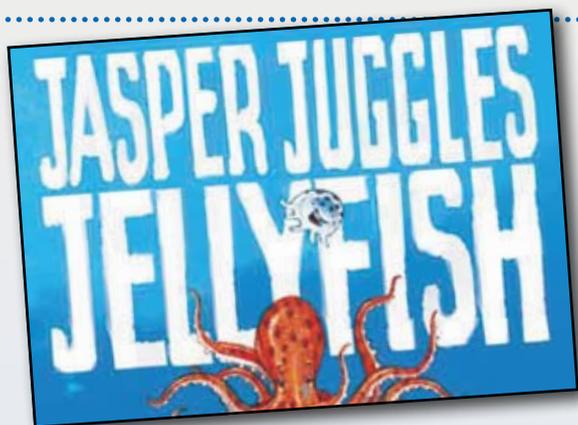
Mai and Elly are fun to engage with as you enjoy their adventure outside. The focus on the “rustling, crunching” leaves that are “yellow as butter” and “red as a summer apple” successfully draws readers in. The colours are warm, beautiful and aesthetically pleasing, particularly for young readers.

The imagination and harmonious outside play at the heart of the story is beautiful, and very relevant for young readers. The discussion and extension of the story that is facilitated by the hidden creatures,

and silent pages that promote inferential reading for young readers, is also a very engaging aspect of the book.

Overall, both the story and illustrations are successful in capturing the reader’s attention and imagination. The colours in particular stand out as a bright, beautiful feature of the book. *The Perfect Leaf* is a book that perfectly illuminates the imagination and joy that are fundamental parts of childhood, through its charming story and enchanting illustrations.

Reviewed by Izzy Smith



Jasper Juggles Jellyfish

Author: Ben Long

Illustrator: David Cornish

Publisher: Ford Street Publishing

New Release – June 2018

Jasper Juggles Jellyfish by Ben Long and David Cornish is a fun, colourful story for young readers.

Jasper the octopus is attending school – but feels like juggling would be easier than counting! He experiments with juggling (and counting) with the help of his jellyfish friends. The story draws readers in through its use of humour, colourful illustrations and the quirky story line.

Long’s tale, centred around a juggling octopus and smiley, silly jellyfish is both entertaining and educational, as it’s an amusing way for younger readers to learn about math. Cornish’s illustrations are colourful and very engaging, which adds to the excitement of the story.

The rhyming is entertaining for young readers, and the silly aspects of the story, like juggling with jellyfish are very comical.

The primary school context is relatable for young readers, and the ‘under the sea’ aspect makes it quirky, funny and enjoyable.

Jasper Juggles Jellyfish is an enjoyable, educative book for young readers. It successfully captures the fun ways in which children can learn through its underwater parallels.

Reviewed by Izzy Smith

BOOK REVIEWS

Meet our book reviewers
Anastasia, Noa, Tal, Gabriel,
Imogen and Christina from
Tucker Road, Bentleigh
Primary School, in Victoria.

Reviews Coordinators: Robyn
Donoghue and Meredith Costain



The Wizards of Once

By Cressida Cowell (Hodder)



Xar is a Wizard boy who can't do magic. His father, King Encanzo is very disappointed. Xar will do anything to be able to do magic, and make his father proud. Wish is a Warrior girl who owns a banned, magical object, and will do anything to conceal it. Her mother, Queen Sychorax is very disappointed that Wish isn't like her sisters.

When stars collide, enemies must learn to set aside their differences and work together if they are going to defeat one of the most dangerous creatures that has roamed the planet.

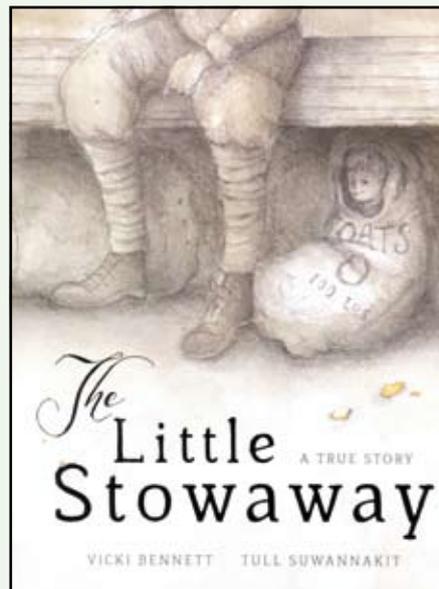
This book is a wonder! It can make you cry, laugh and smile at the same time. It has amazing, rich vocabulary, a beautiful moral, and you just can't put it down! It is a must-read for everyone; especially for fantasy lovers. Recommended for ages 10+.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [9/10]

— Anastasia Zaytseva

The Little Stowaway

Written by Vicki Bennett and illustrated by
Tull Suwannakit (Scholastic Australia)



Based on a true event, *The Little Stowaway* is a heart-warming story about a young French orphan named Honore, who is cared for by a selfless Australian airman, Tim Tovell, during and after World War 1.

The story has realistic pictures and detailed photos. The artwork in *The Little Stowaway* is presented in a way that makes you feel like you are reading a very old book.

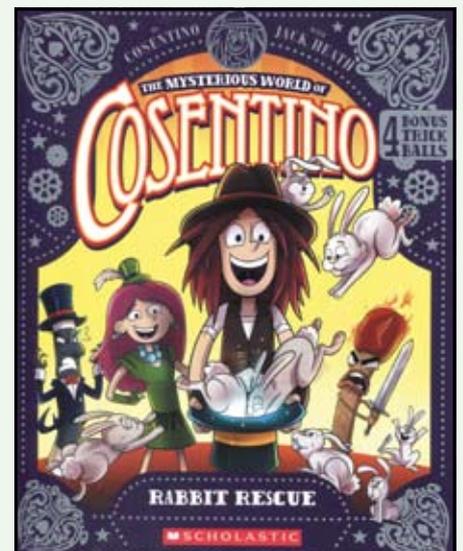
I loved reading the story and I think this book would be great for readers that enjoy reading about kindness, love and friendship. Recommended for readers aged 9+.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [8/10]

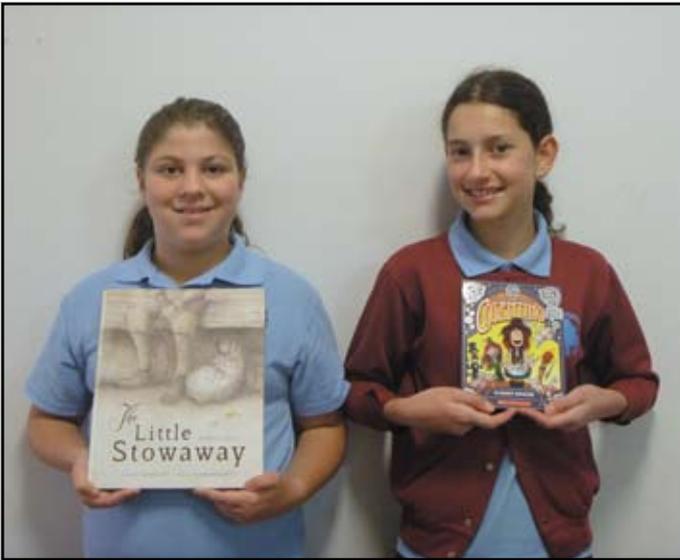
— Tal, Year 6

The Mysterious World of Cosentino: Rabbit Rescue

By Cosentino with Jack Heath (Scholastic Australia)



Cosentino was performing a show and he asked for a volunteer called Matchman.



Matchman is actually the king's henchman and was there under orders of the king to kill Cosentino.

Without anyone looking, Matchman lit a fire, so everyone had to evacuate the place but Cosentino stayed behind to make sure everyone was gone. When he came home there was a letter waiting for him, requesting he meet at a certain location. Will he go or stay?

I enjoyed this book so much I could not put it down and read it in one day. It was really interesting and very funny, with a crazy plot! This book would probably suit people who are interested in magic and mystery. Recommended for readers 10+.

The book also comes with 4 bonus balls so you can practise your own magic tricks!

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [7/10]

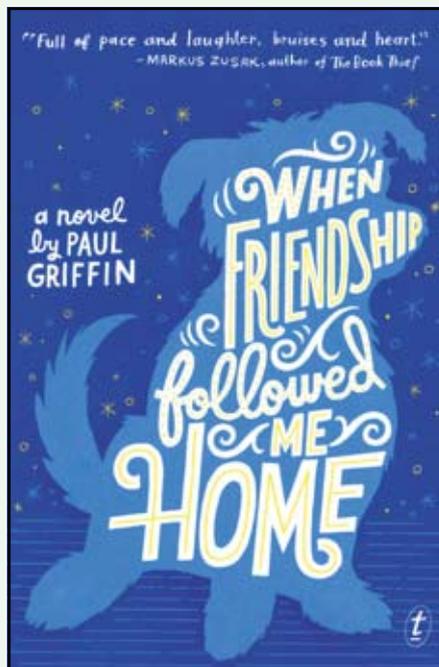
— Christina, Year 6

When Friendship Followed Me Home

By Paul Griffin (Text Publishing)

This is an amazing book! The main characters are Ben, Halley and Flip, the dog. Ben is an ex-foster kid who found a loving friend following him around. Everything changes when Ben comes home from school one day to find Flip shaking.

This awesome book has its crises that make your heart beat and those special moments



that just make you want to cry happy tears. I love this book because it is so emotional. Recommended for mature readers over the age of 13 who love moving, adventure stories.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Noa, Year 6

Australia's Great War: 1918

By Libby Gleeson (Scholastic Australia)

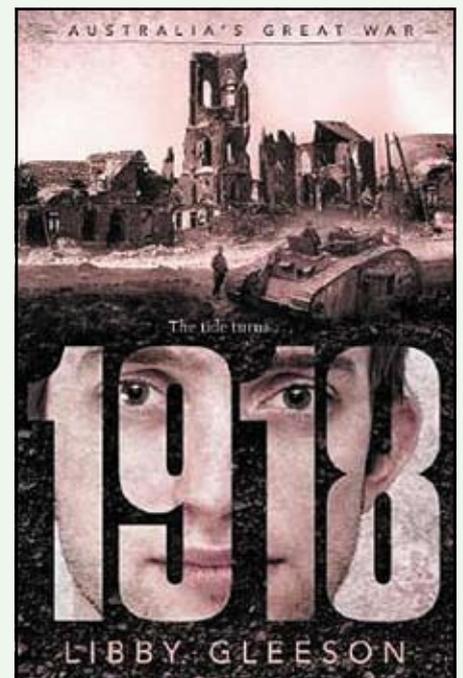
1918 is the fifth book in the *Australia's Great War* series. It is a story about a teenager called Ned who has gone to war. He and his friends Archie, Les, Dicko and Thommo are in the 13th battalion and

must protect a French town called Villers-Bretonneux from the Germans. Although Ned longs to be back in Australia with his family and away from the horrible war, he must finish what he started. Can he survive?

I thought the characters were great and even though I really liked the story, I thought the writing was a bit slow at times and needed more action. Recommended for readers 12 and over who are interested in war stories.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [7/10]

— Gabriel, Year 5



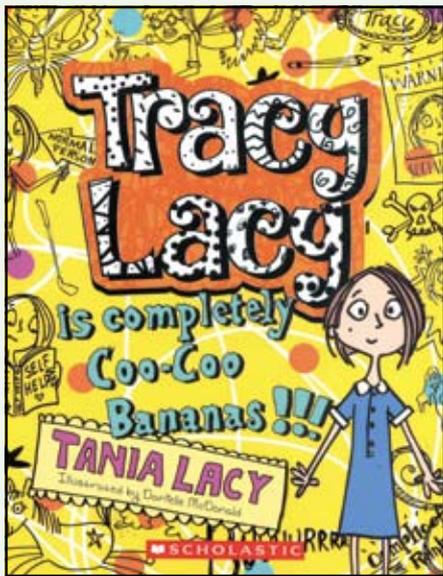
Continued on page 14

BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 13

Tracy Lacy is Completely Coo-Coo Bananas!

Written by Tania Lacy and illustrated by
Danielle McDonald (Scholastic Australia)



Tracy Lacy is one coo-coo bananas mess — or at least she thinks so. Tracy has HATED primary school and cannot wait to go to high school, as long as she can make it through without completely going nuts. As she thinks she is crazy, Tracy gets her best friends Ag and Ponky to help each other through the holidays. When everything is just about going her way, a disaster strikes. It looks like it could be all over for Tracy.

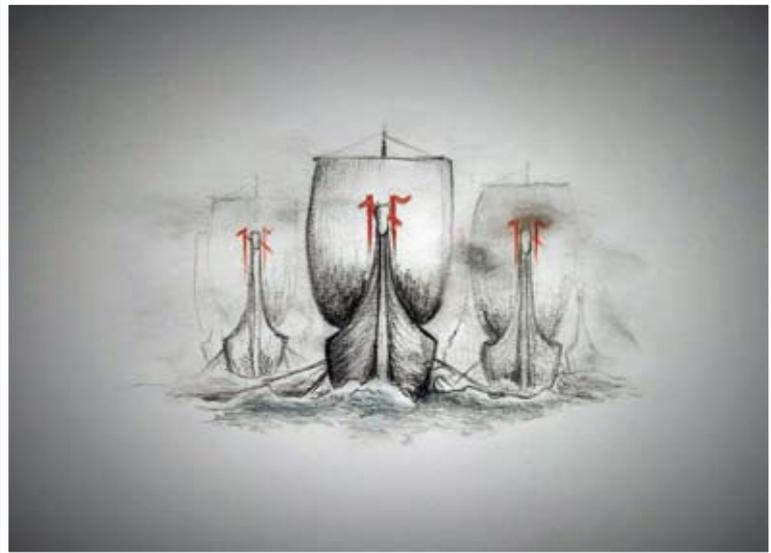
Tracy Lacy is Completely Coo-Coo Bananas is in a diary format, so anyone who likes reading silly diaries will love this.

I recommend this book for ages 8–12, and I think readers in Year 6 will love to find out about a Year 6 student's disasters as they prepare for high school.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [7/10]

— Imogen, Year 5

They Came on Black Steeds



The Kelpie's breath at tree tops tare,
And the silvery tears they blew away.
Deep down into Hellmouth the drops they bare.
And woke the Leviathan with hoary sprays.
The beast of yore with fiery eyes, stirred the swells with ancient thoughts,
And ancient swells the tides brought up,
Fleeting and Foaming upon mortal shores.

Black winged vessels from the depths of Hel
Spat out from the maelstrom's rage,
Surged and swayed upon restless plumes
Their keels forced bitter swells to break.
Wood kissed water, the brine filled waves
And gore they smeared upon its sheen,
Grey mist creeped and hissed and snaked,
Silent as deadly dream.

Oars were set to taunt the swells,
As in devil's cauldron stirring.
The black beasts drew nigh to shallow depths,
Their keels were with the ground colliding.
Fell foes saw their hellish lot
That spewed out of the icebound floods,
That spawned upon the snowbound lands,
That throve upon the raven's blood.

Swords there sang of Ulfberht's forging,
With cunning welded, patterns stung,
Man to man the serpents danced,
And tangled with the death gods' song.
Hell rides clave the mage's laughter that wallowed in the dire ways
Ravens wheeled down from the vaults of heaven,
And a feast they saw before them laid.

By **Chelsea Wong**
Year 10, Mercy Catholic College Chatswood
MARSFIELD – NSW

THI CLUTCHES her book bag close to her chest as she anxiously paces her way home from school, eyes darting from side to side. Under her straw hat, the scorching red sun still manages to create a sheen of sweat on her back and beads of perspiration as salty as tears invade her eyes.

The year is 1975, and the Viet Cong have just invaded Saigon. Only a few months ago, her family was seated around the radio, listening to the live updates on the war and its progress. She remembers her mother holding onto her younger sisters, her older siblings scattered closely around the room, and she recalls looking up at her father's serious eyes for directions on how she should react. And then the words came – "The Viet Cong have reached Saigon...". People broke out into loud sobs, mothers held onto their children desperately and the men rushed to lock up their houses. Thi distinctly heard screams and wails of despair and absolute horror from down the street, and the echoes still haunt her as she darts around the neighbourhood in the early hours of dawn to get to school.

She reaches the corner, hesitates to turn for a second and hastily makes the final sprint to her house. The door is left slightly open for whenever the children come home, and she slides between the frame like a mouse, then shuts it tightly, along with the sunlight that unwelcomingly wedges itself in. The house has become eerily quiet in the past months, except for the occasional clink of the two youngest playing tea cups, followed by hushed giggles and her mother's weary looks. The aging woman does not say anything, but Thi can tell by her complex expression that she fears for their future, and how she will have to potentially send them away to a safer country. However, their survival is finite. She looks over at Nga, the youngest of eight siblings, with a sweaty patch of hair and skinny arms wearing a worn out dress too big for her scrawny body. "Hello Nga. Hello Yen. Mother, I'm home". The children wave and whisper to one another, and the mother simply nods and points to the meal of rice and dried fish on the table. This has become a routine, and she knows exactly where the others are – some have retreated into their rooms, and some are at work with their father. She always hopes



HOME

she could see the day when she will wait for her own family to come home, but now, that dream wavers.

Thi makes her way upstairs to the room she shares with her sisters. As the only sibling to occupy the room that afternoon, she creaks the window slightly open for some air, enough for a soft breeze to enter, but not so that the neighbours can peer into the room. Now that the Viet Cong have arrived, she is taught not to trust anybody any more, not even the neighbours, for it is too dangerous. The streets are unsafe, her mother tells her, and it is far worse if you are Catholic. Mad men persecute and murder in broad daylight, and nobody is outwardly Catholic. If you swear to your religion, then you swear to secrecy. Thi notices that her mother wears the rosary beads around her neck, but even on the streets they are tucked underneath her collar with her head tilted down, eyes never meeting anybody else's unless absolutely necessary to not look suspicious.

"Why don't you just take it off? If you never wear it then you will never be caught", Thi says to her mother, but she is met with a saddened look.

"We are Catholic", her mother replies, "We will never lose our faith".

Suddenly, a shout from outside breaks her trail of thought. Thi peers over the window

and squints at the silhouetted figures below. The glare of the sun makes it difficult for her to see, but shifting angles allows her to make out the face of an old man, surrounded by a group of other men. She is unable to distinguish the words, but a shiny glint catches and guides her eyes towards his neck – a metallic cross openly exposed on his chest. The tense movement outside urges Thi to rush downstairs to warn her mother. Beneath, she spots the woman and her children huddled away from the door. The sisters are with their mother, tea cups abandoned and long forgotten.

"Thi! Stay close to me!" she whispers, and ushers the children to quieten their whimpers.

The shouting comes to an abrupt halt, an eerie silence filling the emptiness. Thi stares motionlessly at the wooden frame, then suddenly

the sound of heavy feet pound across the concrete. A loud yell pierces her ears before a gunshot cracks into the air as loud as thunder, and the footsteps halt – the thud of a body coming after. Thi clasps her hands over her mouth in absolute shock, the endless ringing still vibrating into her ear. Except for the beat of her heart, no muscle moving, her eyes never shift from the door frame. It is then that she can envision it – the bloodied bodies of thousands of innocent civilians, both children and adults, mauled by the heartlessness and violence of the Viet Cong that have come before this day. She remains unshaken until the cry of her mother breaks her out of the trance.

"This place is too dangerous for you", her mother weeps. "Thi, I have been thinking about this, and you must leave!" Thi looks up to face her mother, warm tears staining her cheeks.

"Tomorrow when it is safer, I will send you away, and you will leave immediately. You must survive for this family, and take your sisters with you!" And Thi understands, that the very next day, she will have to risk a dangerous journey to a new home that will change her life, for better or for worse.

By Anna Nguyen

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

Stars... and Nothing Else

IT WAS only a fly. Jon had seen dozens, one way or another. This one emitted a weak 'bzzt' as it halfheartedly tried to escape a web on the windowsill. Beyond the glass, the city groaned on despite the oppressive weather. Like a stifling blanket, the thick, dirty-white clouds had heaped upon the skyscrapers and trapped the metropolis in its own hot air.

Why hadn't it escaped yet? The spider was already long dead. It would be so simple to just break free of the cobwebs. For certain, the fly had no future where it remained. Would it truly bring about its own demise through sheer passivity? No – he was overthinking. Jon turned, ran a hand through his hair, and attempted to focus on the spreadsheet.

Around him, co-workers diligently clacked away at clunky, circa pre-2000 computers. The dusty, drab decor was similarly archaic. Fluorescent lights, quietly humming, made everything seem washed out. A faint scent of instant coffee permeated the stale air of the office. Several cubicles down, Jon could make out someone complaining about staying up late to complete a project. As conversation flowed, he himself was nudged into a memory from so long ago that he scarcely recalled...

★★★

Jonnie was rarely allowed to stay up, but this was a special case. An occasional shrill cricket echoed through the winter night's air. Low mist clutched at his knees; it caught like gauze in his fingers and pooled at his feet.

Dad peered at his wristwatch again and whispered, "...any time now".

Like clockwork, they arrived. Fiery jewels from some celestial beyond. Streaming from nearly every corner of the sky, the darkness was torn apart at the very seams by meteors. Night became day in the blink of an eye. Jonnie gasped through his wide

beam as the pinpricks of light scraped across the sky and then faded into black, leaving the heavens brimming with stars. Stars... and nothing else.

★★★

A sharp exhale through Jon's teeth. That had been what – more than a decade ago? No stars here in Sydney, that was for sure. When the drought hit, they had sold the family farm and hastily moved on to greener pastures – in the capital. A reliable job, better education... what could be better?

From his cubicle, he could catch the last few dregs of afternoon; thin blinds cast feeble yellow beams across the desk. At five Jon would clock out then commute home in the cool twilight, to a cold apartment and ready-made meal.

Four years at this job, with nothing to show for it. Before that he had worked passionlessly at a nondescript degree which would supposedly 'open up pathways'.

Inexplicably, his eyes were drawn to the white sheet, face-down next to his keyboard. Jon had typed it up last week and printed it yesterday with bated breath, hardly believing he was doing this. Was he really doing this? Jon thought momentarily of Glendale, of vivid sunsets spilling like egg yolk over the horizon.

He picked up the sheet. He got up.

★★★

Boris O'Reilly had worked at the company for 35 years. At 57, he sported a sizeable patch of baldness amidst his prematurely greying hair. Liver spots peppered his hands; deep creases wrinkled his face. With a thin pair of spectacles perched on his aquiline nose, O'Reilly was exactly how one would picture a senior manager. Jon was gestured in after knocking, and fidgeted as he stood waiting. Boris finally

set down his fountain pen, looking up expectantly.

"Mr O'Reilly sir, I'm here to... to hand in my two weeks' notice", he finally stammered out. Wordlessly he beckoned for the white letter. Jon quickly surrendered it. For an eternity there was nothing save for quiet rustles in the office, as the letter of resignation was inspected. Then: "Have there been difficulties in the workplace which have influenced this decision?"

"No, sir. This is purely a personal matter."

"Very well then. If that was all you wanted. Your desk is expected to be clear by Friday, a fortnight from now. And er", he peered down at the letter, "...Jonathan".

"Sir?"

"Enjoy your last two weeks here. Dismissed."

★★★

Jon completed his work for the afternoon in a daze. He'd finally done it. But now what?

Occupied with thoughts, Jon almost didn't notice the change in the windowsill. A quick glance revealed the bare web, to his pleasant surprise. It seemed the fly had achieved escape after all...

Tapping out a lively rhythm, Jon stepped giddily in the elevator. There were some savings stocked away – perhaps he would go backpacking for a month or so. Longer, even. He'd heard Uluru was nice this time of year.

They say that on a clear winter's night, you could see the entire galaxy.

By **Helen Wang**

Year 12,

James Ruse Agricultural High School
CARLINGFORD – NSW

Black Swan

THERE is an expectant silence. The time has come.

My feet guide me to position. I turn to face the front, muscles trembling from overwork or nerves, it's unclear. The audience is staring at me with their hawk-eyes, piercing through the darkness of the theatre. The air is crisp, but my blood is hot. The lights turn on and I am bathed in anticipation.

The low plucking of the harp fills the stage, and the music cuts through the anxiety. My heart is pounding as I take my first step. I am breathless and I know the crowd is the same. The swan rears its neck, elegant and proudly arched. A playful look flashes across my face, and I hear the catch of a breath in the audience. It pleases me to know that even the toughest of critics will surrender themselves to the beauty of perfection. Now it is my duty to maintain their interest. Even one stray eye is a failure on the stage.

One, two, three, four, fouetté, pirouette... I am the beauty of the ball, the mistress of the night. The prince is bewitched, my powers taking over his conscience. I am seducing him as he stands there, oblivious, and the Mesdames and Messieurs watch on, captivated. There is something so wickedly exciting about playing the villain.

The metallic timbre of the oboe rings clearly as beads of sweat begin to form. My feet sweep across the floor as I chasée across the stage. My head whips to the side, a sharp turn of the neck. The movement catches the eyes of a young ballerina at the side of the stage. She watches me with a crude mix of envy and awe. I used to be that girl, I think in my head. Look at me now.

Big, bold, beautiful black wings sprout from my shoulder blades and the court flinches in admiration. A mischievous smile tugs at the corners of my lips. I am confidence and I am majesty. Out of the corner of my eye, a single black feather detaches itself and falls gently to the ground, but I remain focused. A true performer perseveres and I will prevail.

I begin a slow journey across the stage, poised on a single leg as I beat my wings,

both a beauty and a beast, as controlled as I am wild. The movement seems effortless, but under the flurry of feathers, I can feel the strain on my legs. A quick recount of the accumulated bruises hidden under the costume is enough to inflict a simmering numbness below the surface of my skin. I can still feel a dull throbbing in my knee that has persisted from the rehearsal two hours ago... But I think nothing of it. I'm almost there... I am slowly inching closer and closer to the edge of the stage. Almost there... almost there! I can picture the bliss of my faultless performance. I will be hailed like a queen backstage, photographed, mounted on the theatre walls, signing books and inspiring the young ones and —

SNAP!

I hear it before I feel it. The loss of balance, the waver of the horizon, the loosed arrow of a hunter's bow. I clench my teeth, refusing to allow the groan to escape. A flutter of the eyelids, a muting of sound. Time stops, air stills, breathing pauses. All I can feel is the agony of a torn ligament, and sheer devastation. I am ruined.

In this limbo state, I hear the harrowing echo of my coach counting the beats during hours of endless practice – one, two, three, four! Lift your legs higher, higher! I can feel the hot tears of frustration at the end of the day, and the throbbing, bloody mess of hammered toes after months of practice, practice and practice. Prima Ballerina, they call me. That's right. I'm Number 1. And Number 1 does not fall, Number 1 is perfect. Perfect Prima Ballerina. That's me. The audience is there

for me. And if this is my final act, so be it! Let me fly across the stage once more, let me extend my wings, let me blind them with my flawlessness. Let them see nothing but me!

In a flash, the music resounds and the air revives. The pain in my leg is reduced to nothing, shadowed by the beating of my heart, a burst of passion and rigour coursing through my veins and a dazzling glow seems to take hold of my very essence. Electrified, I surrender myself to the music, feeling the crescendo lift me across the stage.

The momentum swings me into action as the music climaxes, a furious fortissimo of violins and cellos. I desperately seize every muscle of my being and hold, dear God I hold, for everything I have worked for. There isn't even time to breathe as my foot makes contact with the floor, weight shifting entirely onto the unsteady joint, gravity pulling me down as I defy every law. Then the scenery becomes a blur as I spin spin spin, like a tornado I rip through the stage, and my vivacity is all I have left as I throw myself into the eye of the storm.

And just when I feel my leg about to give out, just as the porcelain is about to crack, the final chord plays and the music stops. I stand tip toe in a final pose, panting. It is done. I step down, the trembling of my leg hidden behind me.

And suddenly, the theatre erupts in thunderous applause.

Tears threaten to spill as I take it in. The lights, the standing ovation, the good things to come. The audience remains oblivious to the injury tucked behind my feathers as I stand there, smiling. This is the pride of a true artiste. With a final triumphant beat of my wings I exit the stage, the formidable and ever-perfect Black Swan.





Angel Wings

I'D NEVER held a hand with so much delicacy, allowing for her fragile grip to intertwine with mine. I found myself flicking my eyes between her and the floor, not knowing what to say or how to make anything better. How is it that someone who once taught me strength could now be so vulnerable? The thought of how our roles had been reversed so rapidly sent shivers straight through me. I had always believed she was an angel placed on earth just for me, to keep me from the depths of hell. But now my angel's wings were failing, and she was falling faster than the tears that ran down my cheeks.

It was a sweltering Sunday afternoon when I first got the news of Mum being sick. She had called me at work complaining of stomach pain, which I merely brushed off with "take some Panadol and have a rest". The next phone call I received was from a paramedic explaining that Mum had collapsed in our local pharmacy. My mind was cluttered with a million thoughts. It felt as though my heart was attached to an anchor, plummeting down to the deepest parts of me. I could barely breathe, let alone think.

My body was paralysed in the waiting room chair as vacant whispers travelled down the hallway. The hospital corridor was suffocating and the air had an overwhelming undertone of bleach. How bizarre is it that all we tell ourselves is that 'everything will be all right' even in the most sorrowful moments? Mum was like a breath of fresh air, infusing the life into everyone, yet now she laid inert in a stark white bed, attached to numerous wires and machines. I could barely bring myself to stand in that room for more than five minutes.

Dad and I left the hospital like tiny ants playing follow the leader, not really knowing what to say or how to feel. People messaged and called as time passed, all following a similar generic theme. It angered me that everyone tried to relate to what I was going through. Did they know I had to hold myself up every time I stepped into her hospital room? Did they know I cried a river every night, with ragged currents flowing down my cheeks to the point of my skin burning? Did they know I held her head in my lap watching her gasp in pain and staring at me with her brown-mahogany eyes begging for help? Her eyes were a deep, chestnut brown. They reminded me of hot chocolate on a cold, winter night that wraps around you like a blanket; you feel at home, and that's exactly where I was with Mum. Those deep pools of dark chocolate swirls held the heaviness of unimaginable pain, broken hearts and scars; she was so strong, a soldier in my eyes.

I entered Mum's hospital room like any other day, flowers in one hand, newspaper in the other, trying to awkwardly make it to her bed-side table before my hands collapsed like jelly. With my commotion of an entrance I had failed to observe the ill-fated look that graced Mum's face. It was as though disappointment lined every wrinkle that laid upon her forehead. I sat down hesitantly. Suddenly my heart had risen to my throat and I was unable to speak a word. She flicked her cinnamon eyes in my direction, and extended her gentle, pale hand my way. She was cold to touch, like the life was being slowly extracted from her, but I didn't mind. I knew what she was going to say. The impending news of Mum's time left had been edging closer and closer, I just didn't want to hear it. She told me so calmly, she

seemed so accepting of her fate, whilst inside of me fireworks erupted as my body felt like it was undertaking a war. This couldn't possibly be real. Two weeks? She had two weeks to live? That evening I stayed with Mum overnight as thoughts raced through my head, ignoring the continuous mechanical beeps and icy breeze from the unceasing air-conditioner.

Mum, Dad and I spent every day together after we received the news. We talked about everything, about death, about

the future, about our dreams, about our favourite memories; nothing but happiness filled that hospital room. Mum continued to radiate her love upon Dad and I, and just like the sun, we couldn't avoid her rays, and it helped. I almost became a resident over those next weeks, until the inevitable night was upon us. I sat curled up in her bed, resting my head upon hers with Dad at the end stroking her arm. We all had tears gushing down our faces with no signs of stopping. I even felt the muscles of my chin tremble like I was a small child again. Even with the storm of emotions that thundered throughout the room, a sense of tranquility was among us. She took her final breath, a sweet, soft gasp that just passed her waxen lips, and then she was gone.

I had never known real loss, and it had never occurred to me that losing someone would tear me like a piece of paper. Because when you lose something you love more than you love yourself, it's as if grief holds you like a corset, making it harder and harder to breathe. Death is not kind; I had learnt that much. It snatched where it could, taking those who warranted it the least, and it certainly didn't pretend to care or distinguish between its victims. But the one thing I learnt through losing Mum, the thing she drilled into me, was love knows no boundaries. She would sit me down and ever so softly say, "little girl, never doubt that you are valuable, powerful and deserving of every chance in the world", and even though I feel like a jigsaw puzzle with one missing piece, time continues to tick past knowing I have an angel watching over me.

By **Bridie Doyle**

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

Tangled Memories

Green foliage tumbles
Between the unknown pathways –
I don't know what is on the other side,
But I know
It's something beautiful.
I feel like I'm in
A dream;
I don't know where
I am;
I don't know
What it is I am here for,
But I know that I have
A purpose.

Tangled memories cling
To my mind,
I feel drawn to them
Like I'm a magnet.
I reach out and
Suddenly emotions untangle.
I know exactly why
I am here.

By **Amy Saw**

Year 5, Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School
BOWRAL – NSW
Teacher: Jeddah Teasdale

Ballerina

Hours in the studio,
balances,
leaps,
turns,
perfecting it to perform.

I push, challenge myself
to jump further,
stand taller,
kick higher
to turn like a top.

Waiting in the wings,
a river of anxiety
and adrenalin
rush through me,
and then,
it's time.



The spotlight is blinding
as I scan the crowd
with hundreds of eyes
staring back at me like beacons.
I hear soft, wafting notes
of the violin
and I begin.

I'm the artist
and the stage
my canvas,
as I pour my soul
into the dance
and paint my masterpiece.

But, soon
I spin to a stop
holding my pose,
a mask of grace and poise,
my smile brighter
than the stars above.

By **Sophie Ngo**

Year 9, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

Seeing ⁱⁿ the Dark

WE RUN, Dean speeding ahead despite his heavy backpack, sure of his footing and his knowledge of the narrow trail. I fall behind, thorns leaving stinging scratches on my ankles.

“I thought we were going to a cave!” I yell over the sounds of insects buzzing, “Aren’t all the caves in the cliffs?”

“Yeah, but I found another one!” he shouts back over his shoulder, “so keep up and stop nagging me”.

I puff ahead, concentrating on my breathing. I almost slam into him when he finally stops.

A wide rocky mouth gapes in front of us. A car could fall comfortably down through those jaws without getting a scratch.

I hear a high growl by my side and turn to see Dean unzipping his bag. “I’ve got rope, torches, spare batteries, everything. It’ll be just like an adventure.” Dean’s face is flushed with his success. I give him a grin and we loop one end of the rope around a tree.

Dean slithers down first and I clamber after him.

My feet crunch dully onto the dead leaves and I notice there is something stifling about the lack of sound. Dean has already wandered a little deeper into the cave and is rummaging around in his bag. He pulls out two torches and hands the small green one to me, keeping the large silver one for himself.

“Come on, let’s go deeper”, he whispers, a lonely hiss in a vast hall, and we move as if through water further into the dusty blackness.

We arrive at the back wall of the cave and note with disappointment that although we are some distance in, we can still see the cave mouth. Dean humphs with annoyance then turns suddenly. He walks over to a spot where his torch is shining and whoops in excitement.

“Look!” he cheers and points to a gap in the wall just big enough for a child to scramble through. I shine my torch through the gap, illuminating another chamber beyond.

“Let’s go through!” Dean takes off his backpack and starts to get his head and shoulders into the gap when I pull him back.

“We shouldn’t go through there. Neither one of us will fit with the backpack on.”

“Don’t be boring. We can still get through with the torches and that’s all we really need, right?”

“I don’t wanna go.” I hope he hears my insistence.

“Well, I don’t care if you come or not. I’m going.” He turns around and slithers through the gap, no sound following his movement.

“Damn it!” My words seem smaller than they are. I can’t let him go through alone. What if he gets hurt? I bend down and start to pull myself through.

It’s worse than I thought. The tunnel is short but it feels a hundred metres long. My arms are pinned to my sides. I can only move by shuffling my elbows along the jagged ground. More than once I think I am going to get wedged into that gap, unable to breathe. Finally, I get my torso out the other side and pull my legs out after it. Dean says something but I am too busy lying spread on the ground with my eyes jammed shut to hear him.



When I do finally open my eyes I see a white circle of light somewhere above me. For a second I think I am dead but then Dean's head gets in the way. I realise that what I am looking at is a solution tube, a vertical tunnel that forms in caves, leading to the outside.

I sigh and get up and we look around us. Stalactites like melted wax seem to drip from the ceiling and stalagmites grow up to meet them. Dean swipes his hand along one and it is wet. He laughs at this but I simply frown. The cave seems to have lost some of its magic.

"Whoa! Check that out!" Dean yells, and gallops away.

"Dean! Wait!" I yell and start to run after him but in the dark my toe catches on something and I fall. My chin hits the rock floor. Stinging tears come to my eyes. I pull my hand out from under me. I try to get up. My wrist crunches under the pressure. I stifle a scream. I look for my torch in the solution tube's milky light. The fall must have broken it. I can't see where it is.

"You okay?" Dean calls back to me.

I open my mouth. There is a slice bitten out of my cheek, but I can talk.

"Dean! I fell and hurt my wrist!"

"Well... ok, stay there for a sec while I –"

"DEAN!"

I hear scabbling as Dean comes over to me.

"Damn. Well, you go back through and I'll meet –"

"No. You have to come with me."

"Well, fine."

I'm beginning to see Dean clearer now.

I crawl over to the gap. It looks even smaller from this side. I can feel tears starting to form and there is a sort of empty coldness in my chest. I take in a shuddery breath and

push my shoulders in. As I make my slow journey through the gap I try not to let my hand brush against the floor. It does.

When we are both out, Dean unzips his bag and dumps the contents on the cave floor. He finds the first-aid kit and brings it over to me. He manages to bandage my wrist so that it can't move.

Dean looks at me from under his brows. "You know... we could have done more exploring if you'd been more careful."

For a second I stare at him. Then I stand up and walk over to the rope. It is only my cold anger that allows me to pull myself up with one hand. You know it's kind of funny. It was only in the dark that I could really see him.

By **Claire Hennessy**

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

THE PLACE OF WONDER

I WALKED carefully into the cave waiting for something to come out of the shadows. I heard their voices disturbing my ears. Finally, the cave finished but my fear started. Banging of drums had stopped. They stared at me with their disturbing faces. This had been my most alarming day ever because they weren't human.

Fire was the last thing I saw as I lost consciousness. I was frozen in fear. These creatures had scared me with their dreadful faces and bodies that brought terror to me.

Suddenly I could hear the sound of their long nails scratching against the stone cave. This wasn't earth, it was something else. They just stood there staring at me with their piercing eyes that were bloodshot red, while I was wishing they weren't there. The way they did things alarmed me, the way they existed petrified me.

I fell asleep. When I woke up I heard whispers in my head. I cried for help

but then one of the creatures moved towards me and said I could go. I looked down to the ground because their faces were blinding.

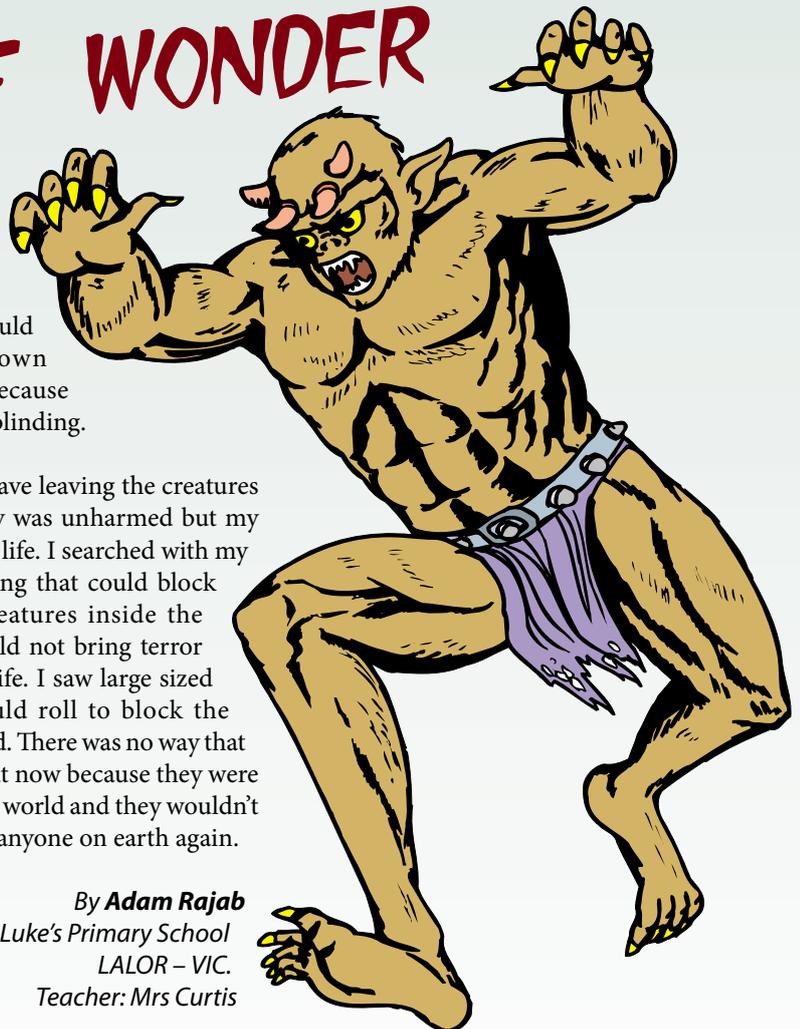
I ran out of the cave leaving the creatures behind. My body was unharmed but my mind scarred for life. I searched with my eyes for something that could block and trap the creatures inside the cave so they could not bring terror to anyone else's life. I saw large sized rocks that I could roll to block the entrance and I did. There was no way that they could get out now because they were trapped from the world and they wouldn't haunt and harm anyone on earth again.

By **Adam Rajab**

Year 6, St. Luke's Primary School

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs Curtis



ANZAC Day

ANZAC Day, a day to remember.
Even though it may be 100 years on,
We still remember the soldiers' willing sacrifice.
They cared about our country and its future.
I wonder what it would be like to be in their position and pain.
All the men and women who wanted to fight against the Turks.
Even the Turkish lost as many men as we did.
That means that the ANZACs did super well
Even when things didn't go to plan, they improvised!
All things don't go to plan.
Bullets flying through the air,
Bloody corpse flying to the ground.
Friends dying on the beach, not even making it to cover.
Rifles in the sand.
Only eating meat from a tin.
The enemies get nice food from family.
Poppies with bullet holes.
ANZAC Australia New Zealand Army Corps is the name to remember.
In the smelly trenches with hundreds of men,
Corpses on the ground.
As our commander instructs us on what to do,
we lay our family pictures.
BEEP!
The whistle blows, everyone climbs out of the smelly trench.
I'm the last one out,
I think to myself and say 'I can't do this!'
I sprinted out as fast as I can but it wasn't as smooth as I thought.
A bullet streaking through my soul.
It's all over now.
As my soul is flying to heaven,
My body stays down on the ground.
At least I did well on this planet!

By *Jayden Yan*

ANZAC Day

By Year 6, De La Salle
Teachers: Mrs Se



Soldier

As look at my family photo,
A tear leaks down my face.
I hold it tight and stand proud.
Beep! The whistle blows.
I can see some of my fellow soldiers go down,
Some only make one step.
I run and run as fast as I can. BANG!
I'm down and at that moment,
I knew my work here was done.
I saw people wounded and dead,
And in the blink of an eye,
I saw the light.

By *Tom McAuliffe*

ANZAC Day

I was forced by mother and father
to join this terrible gluttony of a fight.
My two brothers beside me, give me some hope.
The first week on this tin can of a boat
We lost sixty nine men to sickness.
We woke to the thunder of artillery,
we were in foreign land now.
We saw the garnet red colouring of the water.
My little brother was knocked over board
He was done for. We were told to get ready to
storm the clifty beach. I saw the thick
mystifying smoke roll out from the end of the cannon.
My ears were ringing from the screams of the deceased.
Then I felt the cold metal of rifle touch my skin.
I could smell the rotten fuming smell of burning lead.
I was the first Australian in Gallipoli... I was the first ANZAC.

By *Phoenix Hussey-Caprioli*

Collection

College, Malvern, Vic.
Mr Atkinson & Mr Atkins



I Touch the Hot and Dusty Sand

I touch the hot and dusty sand,
I hear the whistle echoing through the land.
I run as fast as I can go,
I feel like I am running very slow.
I see my brother on the ground,
Who had been pounded by bullets.
Not moving, dead and soulless.
I keep running through the dusty plains.
As I feel something hit me.
Piercing through my flesh, soul, blood and veins.
It's all over!
I never stood a chance.
As I slowly fade away to the heavens,
I have another glance at the war I fought in.

Lest We Forget

By *Joshua Summers*

On ANZAC Day We Remember

On ANZAC we remember those that have passed,
That fought in a war,
And died for us.
They fought for their country,
And put it all on the line.
I can't imagine arriving at that beach,
Thinking about loved ones.
I can't imagine seeing friends dying,
Then the man beside you does.
I can't imagine having to kill another man,
To save your life!
To pull the trigger,
And watch another man die.
I can't imagine seeing all the smoke from the guns,
And the blood from the men.
I can't imagine the shock,
When you hear the first gun shot,
These men weren't just soldiers,
They were heroes,
And that is why,
We will remember them!

By *Benjamin Scheloske*

ANZAC Day

As we marched into battle,
I could hear the food tins rattle
On cold, cold days,
It was like a maze.
Gun shots fired!
As we felt tired.
Fighting for our country,
For the land of Australia.
The mine fields,
With no shields.
We went through the wars,
Bodies turned to corpse.
One by one,
We died as one.
Australia wanted us to defend our country.
It was like cross-country.
As we ran into battle for ANZAC Day.

By *Hugo Likar*

I Let Go

I left to go to war and fight for what I thought was right.
I was scared and I knew my family cared.
I left my home to go and roam the unknown.
When we arrived for war
I heard the roar of the ANZACs.
We ran out of the boat with our biscuits made out of oat.
The Turks shot and one by one we fell.
I saw my dead friend and his life was at an end.
Before I knew it, so was mine.

By *Samuel Hillemacher*

ANZAC Day

By Year 6, De La Salle
Teachers: Mrs Se

ANZAC! ANZAC! ANZAC! We cry.

News is just in to serve our Country at War,
It might just be the greatest thing I ever saw.
A line stretched over Town Square with eager Soldiers standing.
Later we take a course of how to shoot a gun.
We said our final Goodbyes to our grieving families.
Marched on the packed War ship,
To arrive at Gallipoli in a few weeks.
The whistle blew to get in our smaller boats.
As gun shots wound my ears,
With shots aimed at me.
It then it sinks in,
I'm going to die.
As men die by my side,
I really feel sad as I see my friends die.
There is no quitting now till it's over.
As I quickly sprint up the beach.
As I realise the treacherous climb over the cliffs.
I start to climb.
Day light fading away,
I'm stuck.
A bullet shoots past me as light fades
BANG! As I hit the ground.
Life is gone and now I'm a soul.
The story that is like many of incessant lives lost.
I did this for my country, Australia.

By *Samuel Pearson*

Boom! Crash! Smash!

I was on the sandy beaches of Gallipoli.
Ready to charge.
That was when it hit me.
I was fighting for my life.
I got a huge big fright.
The whistle had gone,
I had gone before I should have.
Before a blink of an eye.
My life has gone!
There I was,
Another soldier dead.
Dead in the battle fields!

Lest We Forget

By *Hugh Florance*



Collection

College, Malvern, Vic.
Mr Atkinson & Mr Atkins



Lest We Forget!

I don't know what to do in the one minute I have to think about you!
How it would have felt to be shot with bullets piercing through.
But still you marched on,
seeing your friends dying,
I would have come undone!
You fought for this country I stand within,
but merely knowing the cost of every kill you would have led to win.
The crackles of the gravel in your way,
You couldn't tell how long it would have taken to this day.
Some of you died before taking a step,
For if I was there I would have wanted to have left.
103 years and we still remember,
The pain you bought until the 11th of November.
We will not forget the men who died,
For they are the ones who had loyalty and pride.
Lest We Forget!

By **Lucas Earle**

ANZAC Day

3 2 1 the whistle blows BANG! Man down.
I have a special family photo in my hand.
My two brothers are running for their lives.
BANG! My two brothers are dead.
I start to run back to check on my brothers. They're dead now.
I start crying!
I look at the family photo.
There is blood on it.
I'm hit and wounded and I start to die.
I'm dead and I can't do anything.
I look back on life, why so young.

By **Angus Gill**

ANZAC Day

Bang crash the bombs go off.
The ringing in my ears is like the ring on my finger,
I remember the whining of my dog when I left is like the whining of the machine guns mowing people down.
The trenches are like a pool but a pool of blood.
The rifles are heavier, heavier than ever.
Water is scarce, scarcer than a live body.
The trenches are now full so it's my turn to fall.
SMACK my head hits the floor.
People come running, running like a hound.
They are here but not quick enough I'm down and down so I'm no use now.
Now I'm part of the pool of blood that dried up.
But it's now all over.

By **Robbie Graham**

ANZAC

I was forced to make a poem just like the ANZACs were forced to kill others.
They didn't want to go out to war
But they did it to save us.
If they had not gone out to the war,
We wouldn't be who we are today.
Loved ones were lost in the brutal battle field.
They didn't want to do it,
But they did it for us.
For our freedom!
They aren't just soldiers,
They are heroes.
When the war was over,
Sons came back to their parents injured.
Some didn't come back and were never heard of again.
All soldiers should be remembered for what they did for us.
They can not be thanked enough!
They are all true heroes.

By **Patrick Gamba**

ANZAC Day

By **Year 6, De La Salle**
Teachers: Mrs Se



ANZAC Day

Unforgiving fields filling up with bodies
Of men who risked their lives for us.
I clutch my photo of my friends and family.
I just hope this is not my last day in this world.
If I make it home I will not be happy
I will be terrified for the rest of my life.
I am shaking but my friend pats me on the back
He tells me I can make it home if I can believe
So each ANZAC day I stand proud remembering
My friend who got me through.
He is the man who risked his life for another.
All I can say is that is the true meaning of ANZAC Day.
To remember or to forget the bad feelings,
We had in the war.

By **Riley Suffolk**

ANZAC Day

I was in my trench thinking
This may be my last day on earth.
There are dead men lying just outside my trench.
I hear the whistle and I run.
I don't look beside me.
I just keep running.
Gun smoke is floating in the air,
Right above the dirty enemy trenches.
I look to my left.
No one!
I look to my right.
No one.
I am the last man running,
Then I hear a loud bang.
My ears are ringing like never before.
A bullet hits me in the shoulder.
Blood is streaking down my arm,
I hear BANG! BANG!
Two bullets smash into my legs.
I fall to the ground.
I fall into the enemy trench.
I kill two and then someone shoots me in the head.
My life is flashing in before my eyes.
I hear fearful screams in my head.
I hear gun shots all around me.
I feel cursed with no friends.
I feel blood rushing down my face and hands.
I touch the hard ground.
I touch tears and sweat fusing
As one rolls down my face.
I see dirty men.
I see dirty enemy trenches.

By **Oliver Maher**

Collection

College, Malvern, Vic.
Mr Atkinson & Mr Atkins



ANZAC Day

Rose are red, blood is red.
We all respect all people who have died.
We salute people on this day.
To everyone in the country,
We play the ANZAC song on the trumpet
At every game we watch footy, rugby or cricket,
We can buy a poppy, hats, fake guns and badges.
You can choose which item you want!

By *Archie Reid-Drought*

ANZAC Day

I am no soldier, no warrior, no fighter.
Yet I am here, here to fight and die.
For this world I will live through all,
This madness, this bloody mess.
Of bloody puddles, of our friends
And family we will fight this war.
We are one and we will charge.
And I will run, for this is my last day,
My last day on earth.
As the whistle blows, I run,
With my rifle in hand, I run.
I hear the deathly howls,
Friends, family and my fellow soldiers.
And something else!
The laughter of death himself.
As the burning bullet burns through my heart,
And soul killing me in vain.
And as I die, in a puddle.
A puddle of my blood.
That cursed bullet, as I die I hear him.
Death, he was not laughing a friendly laugh,
But an evil, deranged laugh.
And as I died I cried the tears of gullibly.
Tears of blood, sweat and sadness.
Now one hundred years on
I am still remembered.
And so are all my friends, family and enemies.
And as I sit with death himself.
I am happy because I did not die for nothing.
I died for my country.
I was no fighter, no soldier,
But I was an ANZAC and always will be!

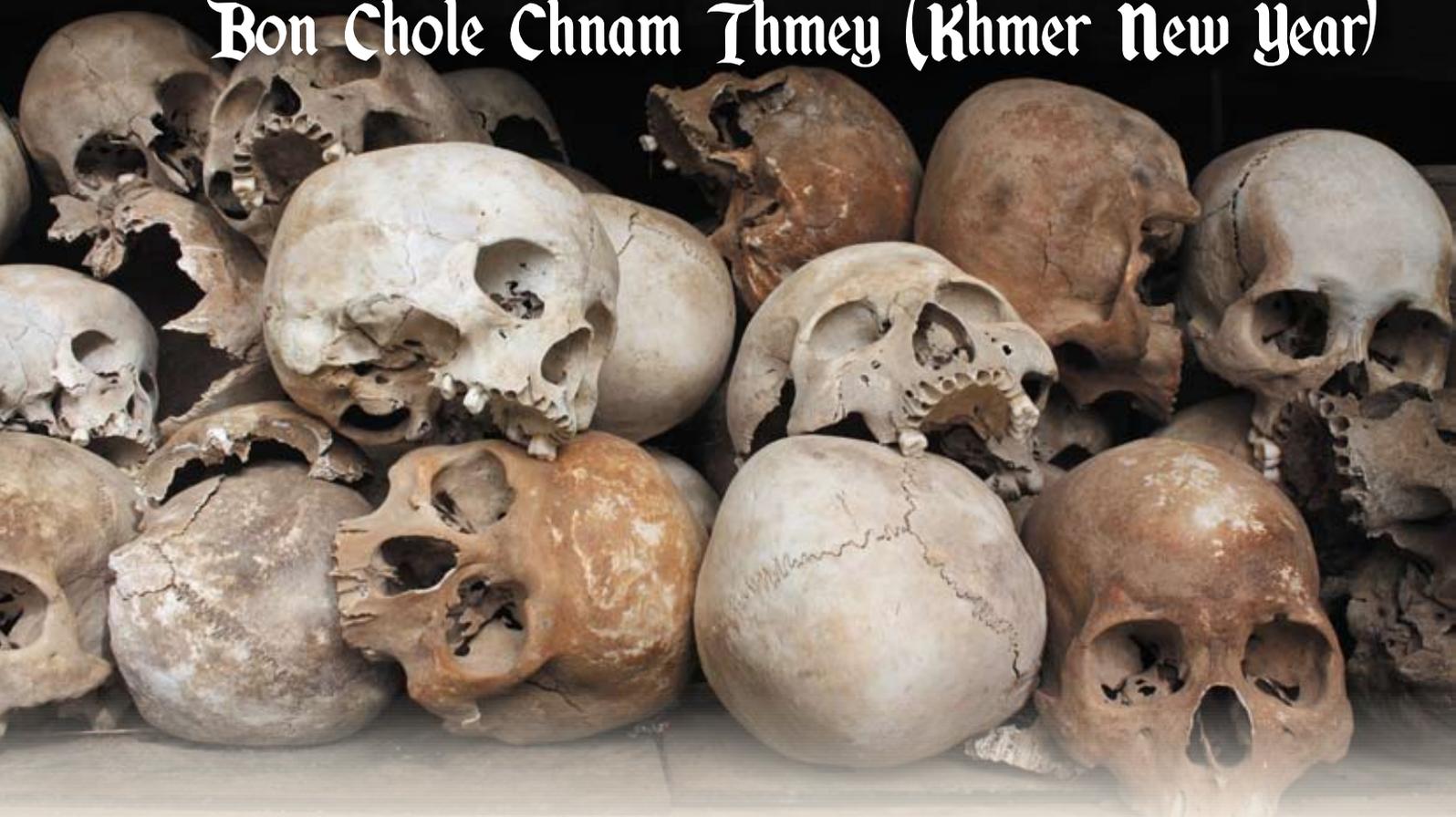
By *Xavier Corrie*

ANZAC Day

All I could hear were deafening gun shots all around me.
I started running as fast as I could.
But I fell and I touched the hard and cold ground.
I got back up and all I could see were dirty wounded corpses.
Then I felt a bullet piercing and smashing through my flesh into my soul.
I fell to the ground with a smash and I laid there.
That is what I thought about the war.
I couldn't imagine me going to war and seeing my brother fall to the ground.
But try to imagine the only thing you could see were dead bodies and explosions.
Imagine the only thing you could feel was cold, wet blood and a cold metal gun.
Imagine the only thing that you could smell was smoke and rotten flesh.
Just try and imagine your brother going into war but when the war ends you don't see him come back.
We will always remember you!!!!

By *Lucas Oh*

Bon Chole Chnam Thmey (Khmer New Year)



THE BUSTLING and vibrant city of Phnom Penh warmly welcomed the radiant rays of the morning sun, which signified the beginning of the Khmer New Year. Chamrouen was roused from his deep slumber by the sweet aroma of the glutinous sticky rice cake. A blanket of exhaustion draped around his body, as he grudgingly climbed out of his bed. From years of strict training, Chamrouen had mastered the art of wrapping the sweet rice cakes, and as usual, this prestigious duty fell upon him that year. His family marvelled at how his nimble pianist fingers laboured away, wrapping the sweet rice cakes in a blink of an eye.

Chamrouen's eyes scanned his surroundings – the kitchen was a hive of activity with his father, mother and twin brothers busy with their own specific tasks. In that moment, he was struck with the thought of how he loved that time of the year, as he could escape from the arduous requirements of studying and the rigours of music practice. “Come on sleepyhead, get to work!” ordered his mother. As the preparations for the celebration were almost complete, Chamrouen was oblivious to the fact that this day would remain as a joyous memory, before his life changed forever.

“Riebcham samreab kar rompong touk nih” (prepare for the unexpected) was a saying that Chamrouen's mother, Chanlina, had ingrained into him. But no one or anything could prepare him for what was to come.

One month later, the communist party, the Khmer Rouge, rose to power and in their attempts to create an agrarian utopia, they sealed off Cambodia from the outside world and started a reign of terror. Strident announcements reverberated out of the loud speakers, terrorising the locals including Chamrouen's family, ordering them to “Leave Phnom Penh within 24 hours or face execution!”. The tyrannical declaration within the streets intermingled with the ear-splitting sounds of gunfire.

With panic and shock rampant in their bodies, Chamrouen and his family briskly packed their belongings into bundles and headed for his father's hometown, in Takeo Province. Unwillingly, they left their home, abundant in blissful memories, and joined a seemingly endless line of people, plagued by terror and anxiety of the unknown. They trudged forward slowly with the Khmer Rouge soldiers staring them down the barrel. Just as Chamrouen considered running away, a young boy broke rank and collapsed into a pool of crimson. Chamrouen froze.

After a day's long journey by foot, Chamrouen and his family reached their new home. They stood before a traditional Cambodian hut, astonished by its simplicity. It was primitive beyond compare, as the walls were made out of sticks and grass. Inside, his father's childhood possessions were frozen in time like a relic from the past. Being “affluent and educated people”, Chamrouen's family encountered difficulties whilst adjusting to rural life, where the murky mud and putrid odours of the rice fields were habitual.

Just as Chamrouen began exploring his surroundings, a black glove violently grabbed him and ordered him roughly, “Quit fooling around, and get to work!”. Chamrouen feared for his life as the firm grip belonged to a Khmer Rouge soldier. Chamrouen's eyes nervously searched for his parents within the endless fields of green. They were almost unrecognisable to him, as their ivory skin was splattered with mud and their bodies were half submerged in the sludge. Suddenly, Chamrouen felt a heavy shove from a rifle butt and heard the solid bark at him, “Get to work!”.

As the months rapidly flew by, it marked the start of the Khmer New Year. However, Chamrouen's spirits were low as his family was despondent and the aroma of the

sweet sticky rice cake was but a distant memory. Instead he grimly noticed that his soft pianist hands had transformed into calloused farmer hands and he smelt the suffocating foul stench of the fields, similar to that of raw sewage. The soldiers forced Chamrouen and his family to work long hours and that day was no exception.

But worse was to come, when he heard a commotion in the direction where his father was working. Chamrouen turned pale as his eyes took in the sight of his father's lifeless body sprawled on the ground, having been trampled by an ox. Soon after, his brothers joined him along with his mother, who was so distressed that she crumpled like a puppet suddenly released from her strings. A feeling of despair and hopelessness crept up Chamrouen's spine, as he realised that the great responsibility of being the head of the family would inevitably fall onto his small shoulders.

In the days that followed, his mother's physical and mental state deteriorated. She was overcome by grief, her heart was broken and she slowly withdrew from the world. The strong woman he once admired had disappeared. Chamrouen sensed that his mother had lost the will to live and often at night, he would hear her pleas begging Buddha to reunite her with her husband. A few days later, her appeal was fulfilled and Chamrouen found himself isolated. Never had he felt so alone. It was then he decided that he and his brothers needed to escape that cruel purgatory saturated with sad memories, but how?

An opportunity arose for Chamrouen and his siblings with the discovery of a rice hauling boat bound for Australia. He was full of excitement and trepidation, as the possibility of a new beginning was within his grasp. His brother laid his hand lightly on his shoulder and with a reassuring soft

voice said, "Don't worry big brother, we will make it to Australia". Outside night had fallen, and in the gathering gloom, the stars and moon shone luminously in the sky, like a beacon of hope in the midst of darkness.

Abandoning their meagre possessions, the brothers crawled through the fields, consumed by fear and disquietude, attempting to avoid the piercing gaze of the soldiers. Grimy and exhausted they reached the boat with nothing but one another. In spite of this, they knew that Buddha and their parents were watching over them and for that, they were eternally grateful.

By Rachel Nguon

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

IT WAS ONLY A DREAM

IT WAS the day that all my dreams as a child could come true. Coaches from all over Europe had come to scout a young soccer player they thought had the potential to be a star known all over the world. As I walked out of the changing rooms with my heart pounding like a gorilla hitting its chest, knowing that my life could change, I put every other thing aside. I prayed to God so he could help me to achieve my goal.

This was it. The game had started. The team we were up against had lots of speed, good passing and they wanted to win as much as we did. I knew if I wanted to win I had to persevere and keep my head up. The ball was finally passed to me. I shot down the right wing like a bolt of lightning, I crossed the ball in, two of my teammates jumped simultaneously but just missed it.

At this time in the game it was still nil, nil. With both teams pushing their hardest so their wildest dreams could become a reality. The whistle was blown. It was now half time, with teams huffing and puffing. After every player had thrived harder than ever before. The second half was now in play, with both teams still pushing themselves past their limits.

The ball was now passed to me, I took on one defender, dribbled another and bang. I had scored. The spectators jumped up and down with joy from the sideline. My teammates rushed over to me and jumped up and down with joy.

Knowing that our team was in front put a bit of confidence into to us but that didn't mean we should slack off. The ball was passed to me. This was my time to shine. I bolted down the right wing then suddenly a shot of pain flew up my leg. This dreadful pain was like no other pain I had felt before. I fell to the ground, I started crying because of this agonising pain, but also because I wouldn't be able to play. So it was most likely I wouldn't get scouted.

As I was carried off the field with pain that had made me doubt my career, I took a minute and prayed to God and asked him to take control. I now had faith that everything would be all right. As I sat down and watched the game, a man came to my

Dad and spoke to him. The man gave my Dad some papers. My Dad walked over to me with the biggest smile on his face and said, "You've been scouted!". I said nothing but hugged my Dad as tears of joy ran down my face.

Suddenly I felt myself lying in a warm and comfy place with some kind of soft head supporter. Then I noticed I was in bed. I said to myself, "It was only a dream!".

By John Nyagua

Year 6, St Luke's Primary School

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs Lisa Curtis





The Koala

Far from the ground, near the sky
Where the trees' luscious green leaves rustle and hustle in the old eucalyptus tree
Look at the cute, grey-coated koala munching and crunching those delicious leaves
Like an overgrown grey snail

He climbs and sleeps up the trees
In a style that is so unique
clinging on to magnificent tree
Almost like an infant to its parent

The young koala climbs higher into the tree
Finding his own way up to the juicy leaves
Ignoring lazily all the other koalas on the trees

Who are dreaming miraculously about getting more leaves

Sleep tight day and night
Everything's all right

After a sunlight passes
begins his night shift

Sleeping like cuddly, cute teddy bears embracing the branch of a tree
With its slightly bent neck,
has leaves stuck in its teeth
With buttoned, belled eyes
stares at trespassers day and night
When he knows it's a risk he climbs further high

By **Kartikeya Dashora**
Year 8, Willetton Senior High School
WILLETTON – WA
Teacher: Mrs Rowe

My Place

The quiet moments used to frustrate me
speed through the world so fast,
afraid to hit the brakes,
afraid of being alone in a room,
too much to say and no one to say it to.

Long hours would pass
while my thoughts whirred,
I used to wonder who could enjoy
the solitude,
the pauses in conversation,
the potent lack of noise.

These days I embrace the silence
stretched out on a soft bed,
count the pictures on my wall
and the growing lines down my face,
sighing deeply into my book.

There is a breeze though my window
caressing my skin,
moving through the empty spaces,
four walls have never felt so freeing.
There is always a place for me here
to put my body and my mind to bed.

By **Emelia Haskey**
Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



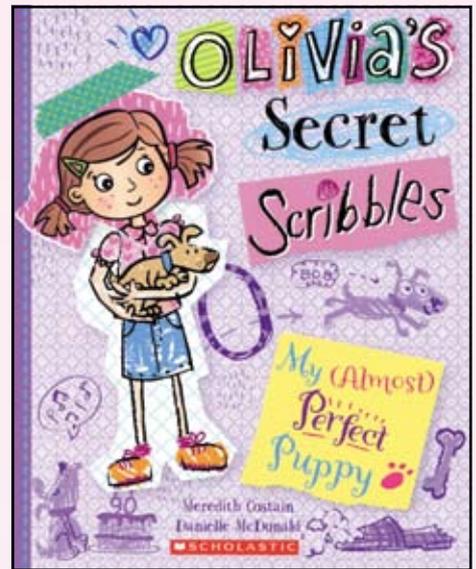
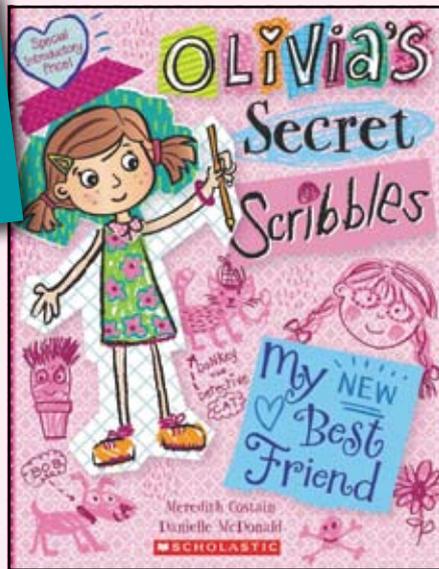
BOOK REVIEWS

Hello everyone!

I hope you're all having fun, doing the two best things in the world: reading lots of books and writing stories or poems. Playing with dogs and teaching them new tricks has to be right up there too. Our dog Benji sings along to 'How much is that doggie in the window?' every night (just before his dinner time).

Olivia, who is Ella's cheeky little sister from my series the *Ella Diaries*, loves dogs too. She now has her own series, called *Olivia's Secret Scribbles*. In the latest book, *My (Almost) Perfect Puppy*, she teaches her bouncy puppy Bob lots of tricks to keep him out of trouble. She even builds him a Ninja Dog-Night course!

Here's a picture of Benji with the first book in the series, *My New Best Friend*.

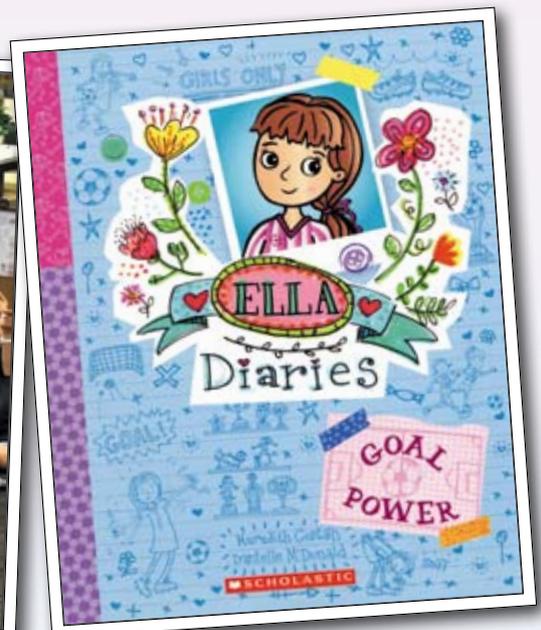


Meet Ella's naughty little sister, Olivia!

Olivia also loves designing and inventing things. She's half-way through building a time machine in her bedroom. Last week I visited St Martin of Tours Primary School in Rosanna. The students there are excellent at inventing things as well! Maybe you could try some too.

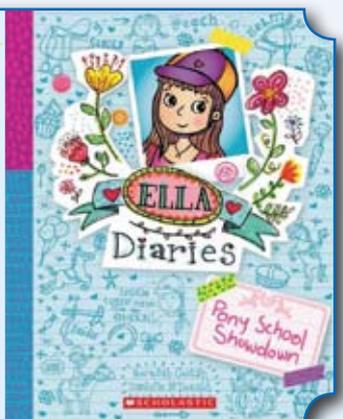
And if you like playing soccer, you might enjoy *Goal Power*, the latest book in the *Ella Diaries* series!

Cheers
Meredith Costain



Special Announcement

Ella Diaries: Pony School Showdown, written by our reading ambassador Meredith Costain and illustrated by Danielle McDonald, has been shortlisted in this year's national children's choice REAL Awards. To be shortlisted is an amazing honour in itself. Congratulations Meredith and Danielle!



Cold Coffee

THE ORANGE Apollo-patterned wallpaper is a contrast to the cool colours that the Melbourne winter brings into the house. Bren walks past his sister's bedroom; she plays Carol King from her turn-table. Bren's sister, Debbie, pins her David Cassidy poster above her bed. She thinks David Cassidy's the 'grooviest human ever to grace the earth'. But Bren... not so much.

"Muuuuuum! Muuuuum!" Bren yells from the kitchen.

"What is it?" replies Carmel, who is reading Women's Weekly in the lounge.

"You forgot to tape the semi-final, mum."

"Why would I do that?"

"Richmond. We're gonna win, 74's our year!"

Carmel walks into the kitchen.

"Brendan Paul, what on God's good earth are you talking about?"

"Bloody hell" Bren whispers. He quickly flinches, scared his mum hears him curse. But, thankfully Carmel is too, crazy about Carol King and has joined Debbie in the other room.

The fly wire door swings open and Bren's father walks in. "Blimey! It's cold." He scratches his son's head like he has a bad case of lice. "How are ya lil' fella?" Bren looks up at his dad and smiles. Before Bren can reply he hears the radio commentator exclaim "thirty seconds till the bounce", and he needs to make it outside to the radio just in time for the match. He bolts through the fly wire door, picks up the footy and waits for the siren. For the next two hours Bren is Royce Hart, Captain of the Richmond Football Club. He rests four sticks up against the brick wall. He hears the rattle of the tram and the chaos of peak hour traffic from over the fence. He kicks the ball, but misses and falls right on his back. Covered in wet mud he exclaims, "What a ripper!", imitating the commentator reporting the game. It's almost half time and he knows Richmond needs another goal. So, Bren runs towards

the clothes line, jumps onto the clean white laundry in the hamper and to his disbelief, he takes the crucial mark. Bren hears the magpies squawking – they're cheering for him. With a grin, he runs, swings his mud covered leg and kicks the ball with so much power it is though electricity is streaming down his leg and through the ball.

He doesn't miss. The ball thunders onto the brick wall.

"Yes, yes, we've done it, we're going to the MCG!" Bren shouts. Richmond has made it to the grand final and at that moment Bren is so ecstatic, he strips his shirt off and runs around the yard, laughing like the kookaburras that surround him. This is a ten-year-old's dream.

His parents are talking in the kitchen when he runs in, his curly brown hair sweeps back.

"Cuppa's on the table Bren", says Carmel.

Bren loves his cuppas. He sniffs the tea before sipping it; the tea warms his little nose. The heat spreads to his chest. He always asks his mum to pour the boiling water to the rim, so the tea will overflow, and he can slurp it from the saucer. It's much more fun that way. His mum always disapproves, but it makes Bren laugh

every time so, she partakes. Mid slurp, his dad stops him.

"So, Bren, you like footy don't you?"

Bren feels the need to prove his love for the game by saying, "I would run around the world and back if it meant I could see a game. Any game, with any team – even Fitzroy! I wouldn't even stop for a toilet break!"

His dad chuckles. "Well, what would you think about seeing Richmond play in the final, next Sunday?"

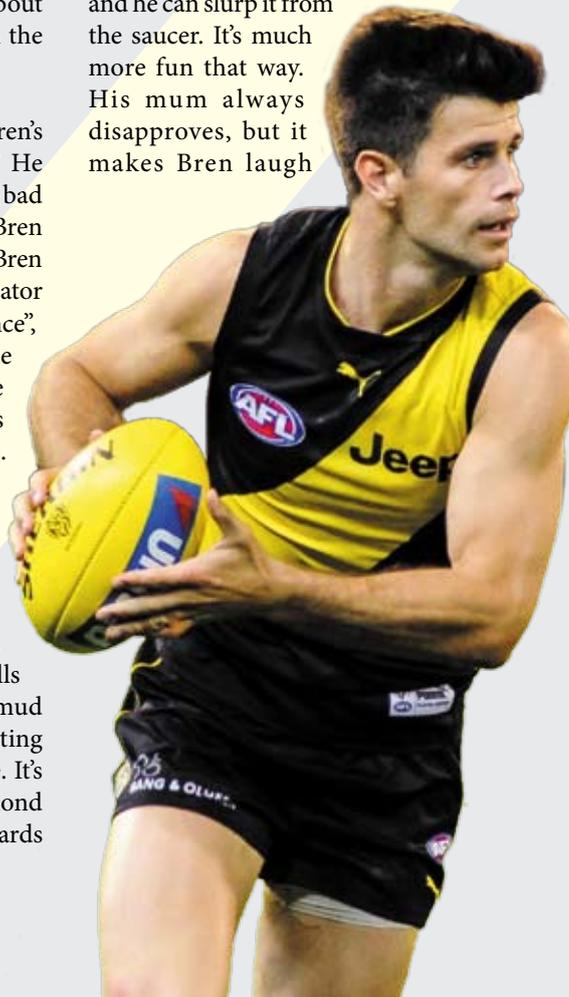
Bren stops. He stops moving, thinking, blinking and breathing.

"Oh. My. Giddy. Aunt."

Bren's dream has come true. In this moment, his father resembles the sun, radiating warmth. Bren is filled with sunshine.

The following Sunday, Brendan Paul is feeling euphoric. He dresses himself in his yellow and black attire. The scarf and beanie that his mum knitted him for Christmas are laid out on his bed. He looks down at the beanie and notices the stitching has come undone and the pom-pom is detached. He grasps the beanie in one hand and the pom-pom in the other. He fiercely pushes them together closing his eyes, trying to use his telekinetic power to mend them. He realises there's nothing he can do, except let it fray. He rushes to the kitchen, making his dad a hot coffee and two pieces of Vegemite toast to go. It's now seven, and his dad says he will be around by half past. So, after rushing to tie his shoe laces, he makes his mum a cup of tea, and races to the curb outside his house. He begins singing the Richmond theme song in his head. Oh we're from Tiger land... bom bom bom.

He waits for what feels like an eternity. He sees a boy from his school and the boy's father walk towards him as they head to the oval. He asks the time. "It's nine, mate, better get going, the game's about to start", the man replies. Bren knows his dad's not far away. He thinks about the possible alibis... maybe he's on a secret mission... saving an innocent man's life... Wait, of



course... he's probably at church praying for a Richmond win and the Fr. James is keeping him hostage because Fr. James is a North Melbourne supporter!

But, hours pass. Bren fiddles with his scarf and the wool begins to unravel. Bren is still holding the pieces of Vegemite toast and coffee in his cold little hands. People

begin to walk down his street, heading home from the game. They are laughing and singing, all Richmond supporters are overjoyed. All but one.

The coffee is cold, and he waits. The sun has run away but his hope stays. He waits.

It is cold and the icy wind is like his dad.

The wind slaps him across his delicate cheeks and Bren has no control over the pain it inflicts on him.

By **Lily Bentley**

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

The Hunter's Deer

THE FLEETING moment of silence is consumed by a booming choir of cheers that fill the arena with a thunderous, dynamic energy. In the midst of this madness, my line of vision silently travels upwards to meet the gaze of a tall girl after she returns to her proud stance from her bow. Her bow is clean and sharp – its hastiness makes it seem as if she refuses to lower herself to the audience who is helplessly entranced and mesmerised by her performance. A mocking smirk smears across her face before it is soon engulfed by a dignified smile, deceiving the audience. I feel the ends of my teeth grit together with a force so excessive that its clamouring impact could be effortlessly heard from the other side of the arena. Two-faced bitch.

As she waltzes across the platform and out of view in uninterrupted strides, the audience's cheers begin to quieten – a daunting realisation that I may be next. My hands gradually begin to quiver. Hoarse, uneven breaths escape my chapped lips. My teeth begin to clamour again, but in a more visibly uncontrollable way. Anxiety swerves through my body and forcefully latches onto my throat, draining my ability to breathe like a starved leech.

“Next contestant, Amelie Hudson.”

My anxious state abruptly seizes and I freeze upon hearing my name. Time excruciatingly slows down, trapping me



in my moment of shock and disbelief. No matter how much effort or energy or strength or willpower I use, my attempts to detach myself from my seat are frustratingly feeble. Eventually, it is though the Gods have answered my pleas for help that I haul myself up and pace towards my designated spot on the platform. My struggle to maintain a calm posture is cripplingly unbearable – the devastating weight of being the centre of attention creates a hurling sensation in

my stomach and an overwhelming feeling of light-headedness.

The prolonged wait for my music cue drowns me in agony. My head turns slowly in an unsteady 180-degree motion to witness countless, anonymous faces returning my gaze with their hawk eyes and stern faces. Their undying stares are menacing and sap my last bit of courage. After witnessing a spectacle so awe-inspiring, there is no doubt that their standards have skyrocketed to the point where any attempt to surpass the previous performance is beyond futile.

Gluggy sweat trickles down from my hands towards the grip I have on my gymnastics wand. It feels as if the wand is on the verge of slipping from my grasp and hitting the ground with a strong thud that is loud enough to unfreeze me from my helpless and motionless trace. Only the Gods would know whether the occurrence of that is a good or bad thing.

Ting! The first chimes of my music triggers my automatic response to begin performing. I haul myself onto the tips of my feet and begin lightly, yet swiftly, pottering towards the centre of the stage, slowly twirling my rhythmic ribbon in repeating snakes. With every step I take, I feel a burning sensation that scorches the soles of my feet as if Hades has overthrown the Gods and placed hell's

Continued on page 34

curse on me to jeopardise the success of my performance. His relentless wrath engulfs me in fear. The gaze of the audience sears at the contact with my skin; the pressure of their undivided attention lays heavily on my shoulders and weighs down my movements as if dense, leaden balls are chained to every one of my joints.

In spite of my stiffness, I forcefully raise my wand to form repeated motions of figure 8s, seemingly trapping my hand in a series of tangled motions. My concentration is beyond mandatory, as one imprecise move will lead to the trail of my pin-like wand colliding into the surface of my skin with an impact that is more disgraceful than it is painful. My arms gracefully swing out of the figure 8 motion and ease into a polished pendulum-like movement that desperately hopes to capture the audience's sense of satisfaction and enjoyment. The audience, who possesses an anonymity

with no name, face or identity, is my sovereign and I am their feeble subject.

I gulp a shallow breath of air and begin pivoting towards the edge of the stage while vertically spiralling my ribbon upwards. One... two... three... My inner metronome reminds me of my impending leap of faith awaiting its inevitable execution. The quivering shakiness of my legs overwhelms me in disquietude, forcing me to tightly grip onto my wand to prevent it from falling out of place. Four... five... six... seconds feel as if they have been stretched into agonising hours. Seven... eight... nine... The pace of my steps slowly decline as the climax of my performance swiftly approaches. I sharply inhale and the air skids roughly down the walls of my throat like gravel. Ten. With utmost concentration, I load all of my strength onto my left foot before detaching myself from the ground and prancing into the air with my right leg extending behind me, like an oblivious, vulnerable deer who,

unknowingly, throws itself in front of its hunter's rifle.

However, even with his perfect aim, the hunter's shot misses. As the soles of my feet resettle on the ground with a steady thump, a sensation of relief surges from the tips of my toes and extends to the ends of my fingers, pushing the sharp, pointed wand out of my clasp as I raise my arms to conclude my performance. It is brief before the lethal object hits the ground with a distinctive ping that silences the audience. The silence is strangely peaceful and frees me of my anxiety. A dignified smile lifts from the corners of my mouth and is presented to the audience, who soon bursts in an uproar of clamouring cheers despite my final mistake. Wistful thoughts begin to fill in my mind. Maybe, next time.

By **Cindy Cao**

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



Forgotten

AS I lay on the rocky ground, the scent on the forest air shooting through the sky, and the memories of my soon forgotten life disappearing, shooting out of my unconscious head, in seconds I would remember nothing but my name.

I woke up only to hear someone shouting in front of me. I stepped off the dusty ground and brushed off the dirt that was clinging to my dress.

“Hello, are you all right?” a boy asked me. “You were unconscious on the ground, who are you anyway?” He stood there waiting for me to respond.

“Ah, my name is, what was it?” I questioned myself.

The boy looked at me impatiently, arms crossed, leaning on a tree. “Oh that’s right, it’s Sandra.”

With a confused look on his face about how I took so long to answer, he replied, “Okay, my name is Clark, nice to meet you”. He shot his hand out to shake mine, confused, I shook my head. Ten minutes

later I was walking through the forest with Clark when a vicious wolf dashed towards me!

Clark calmly grabbed a stick and tossed it far away, the wolf followed it.

“That was Wolfie, my dog”, he informed me. Oh it was a dog, no wonder it had a happy look on its face. It was wagging its tail and it was sticking its tongue out. When I was at his house I was welcomed by a lovely lady named Aunt Sally and her daughter Jessie.

I realised something, I know this isn't my life but I can probably create a new one. Suddenly. The next thing I knew all my memories were rushing back to my head. I remembered my whole life. I guess I just need to learn to be grateful of everything that I get, and I think it worked! I feel good as new.

The End

By **Kara Galgano**

Year 6, St Luke's Primary School
LALOR – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Curtis

Ambassadors



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

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

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

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

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

Paul's websites are: www.paulcollins.com.au; www.fordstreetpublishing.com and www.creativenetspeakers.com.

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

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



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

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

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 ☺



CHEETAHS, CHEETAHS



HI, I'M Kaden "Cheetah" Henderson. I'm currently a zoologist and I want to tell you the story about how I got my nickname.

It all started when I went on a safari tour in Africa on a holiday. When we got there, I found a sheet at the front showing the groups for everybody who had already booked a spot on the tour. I quickly spotted my name towards the bottom of Group 3. I wandered towards the counter and asked where the pre-booked tours were. She smiled sweetly and pointed towards a sign next to a considerably colossal café. No wonder it was called The Quadruple Elephant Café. I would be surprised if it was smaller than four elephants. I thanked the lady and strode towards the sign and saw a man wearing a badge saying, 'Chang Biming, Group 1 – Chinese'. I strolled along to the next group with another man wearing the same badge with, 'Nicolas Fernandez, Group 2 – Spanish'. Finally, I arrived at a man wearing a lanyard with a card saying, 'Simon Turner, Group 3 – English'.

"And you must be Kaden Henderson", he said slowly as he ticked off the last person on his list. He handed me a name tag. The group was only four people and they all looked very friendly. The name tags read out Jake, Amanda and Dean.

"Hello everybody, I am aware you have seen my name tag and my name is Simon. I will be your tour guide for this evening

and I will be your driver in this Land Rover Defender. She's a beauty". He looked at the rover admiringly, then quickly turned and focused on us. "Anyway, hop in everyone and hold tight, it's going to be one hell of a ride", he exclaimed with such passion that you just had to be in the mood for a safari trip. With a jump, we were on our way.

First, Simon talked about the habitats of animals and we arrived at a large lake. They didn't have a name for it, so a competition went out to see who could get the best name. We got out of the rover and had a nice fine look around the lake, careful not to tread on any of the plants surrounding the lake. He explained the importance of the animals living in the lake and how some of them were endangered species and how the centre feeds them. The same happened with the giraffes, elephants and primates which was really fascinating because they swung around from tree to tree, pole to pole with ease and to think we evolved from them is amazing. Next came the rhinos. I heard somewhere that people kill rhinos for their horns because it is believed that it could produce as powerful medicine. The sad part is that it isn't even true! Tears start welling up in my eyes at that thought, but my heart softens knowing that they are safe here in Africa at this safari centre. "You all right mate?", asked Dean, patting my leg.

"Yeah, I – uh just had a bad thought, that's all", I sniffed. Wiping my tears, I looked out and saw a mother cheetah playing with

her cubs, or should I say handling. Those cubs looked cute, but they looked like a pain in the posterior from the mother's perspective. We all got out of the Defender with Simon whispering,

"OK everybody, stay at least 30 metres away, that's the closest you can go", he pointed to a graffitied line on the ground, "they can reach speeds up to 120 kilometres per hour and the fastest speed for a human ever recorded is around 45 kilometres an hour, so unless you think you're a superhuman and can run 120 kilome– actually don't worry, that's never going to happen", he chuckled slightly to himself at the thought of someone trying.

I agreed without a single doubt. Usually people don't plan on ending their lives to a cheetah. Plus, I don't think I'm superhuman. 'Cheetahs are really amusing, to learn and to watch' I wondered to myself. Suddenly I had the urge to learn more. I wanted to learn more.

"Simon, would you mind telling us more about these cheetahs?", I said softly, trying not to attract the attention of the mother. Simon had a confused look. "Usually people want to move on to the Lion, seeing that the cheetahs don't really do much to see how fast it goes, but a request is a request", he smiled so his dimple showed. "Sadly, cheetahs are classified Vulnerable on the ICUN Red list. People think cheetahs find humans and then kill them, honestly people do your research!

Cheetahs will only attack if it is to defend themselves and family or to catch prey. It will never purposely attack a human, if it does then... then that's a different story", he said with a look of displeasure at those facts.

"We're running a bit behind schedule so—" I cut him off, "Please, please can you tell us a few more facts, just a few more... please?", I added a just in case "please" because you know, just in case. The looks on his face told me that he would pretend he didn't hear but surprisingly he agreed on 'just a few more'.

After 'just a few more' later, I realised I wasn't even listening. My eyes had already locked onto the eyes of the mother, she was staring at me. Her eyes were piercing my pupils. No, no, not children! I don't even teach a class! I meant the pupils in my eyes. She stood up and I backed up, even though I was 30 metres away. She took a step forward. I took a step back. She was about to leap. I was about to die. Painfully as well.

The she-cheetah started pacing towards us at a slower pace than I had expected, it was still fast though and we had Simon shouting at us, "Everybody back into the Rover, back into the Rover, don't panic! Come on, quickly Amanda!".

I stood still like I had been struck by death. Not because I wanted to but because I couldn't. I was paralysed. Transfixed with fear. "Come on Kaden, hurry up, we don't have until heaven comes and carries you up!" screamed Jake like a madman. Feet still glued to the ground, I waited for the worst. Oh, why do I make these decisions? Nothing is going normal!

I probably knew what everybody else was thinking: Simon – R.I.P. Bro, Amanda – Doesn't think of anything but the fact that she's going to witness someone's throat being ripped out, Dean – 'I'm going to see someone's throat getting ripped out right in front of my eyes! Cool! Too bad it's Kaden', Dean – 'What-an-idiot!'

(Pause II – Hey guys just saying, this all happened in less than 15 seconds so yeah, back to the story. Play I>)

The moment we've all been dreading came. Quite differently actually. It hit me hard. The mother skidded to a stop too late, so she hit me hard. Yeah, that's what I meant. I toppled over to see the faces of my fellow groupmates' faces. Amanda was just bawling her eyes out, daring not to look, Simon's face wore a Phew! Face, something I'll never forget.

Out of nowhere, I felt something wet on my face, I turned away from my friends and saw no blood anywhere, apart from where the she-cheetah failed her skid-stop. Just a little scratch. Instead I saw the mother and her five cubs licking me. 'Cheetah slobber, ha, any day is better than being killed' I thought to himself, heaving a sigh of relief.

I got up and hugged my astonished friends. "You're still an idiot", laughed Jake as he patted me on the back. Amanda was playing with the cubs, "Aww, you're so cute and you and you!", she squealed with delight. Even Simon said, "You were brave out there mate, even I as a zoologist couldn't have done that!" Dean looked most relieved and told me, "You scared the bejeebers outta me!" he punched me in the arm. That was the moment that I

fell in love with cheetahs and dedicated my life to them.

What one minute can do to you! Phew! Right now, I'm working in many zoos across Australia, on very special occasions I'll have a chance to go to Africa and see the cheetahs that changed my life. Sadly, the mother has passed away, but her cubs have grown up and some are having babies of their own! After that Jake went on to be an educator, going around to different schools and teaching them the importance of our wildlife. Amanda became a veterinarian at RSPCA, helping all creatures great and small. Finally, we have Dean, he works with me, travels with me, eats with me and laughs with me.

So, there you go, that is the story of how I got my nickname. "Dean, can you grab me a bucket of chicken from KFC, after writing this story I'm starving, I think there's a machine instead of my stomach that gurgles every time it needs to eat something—"

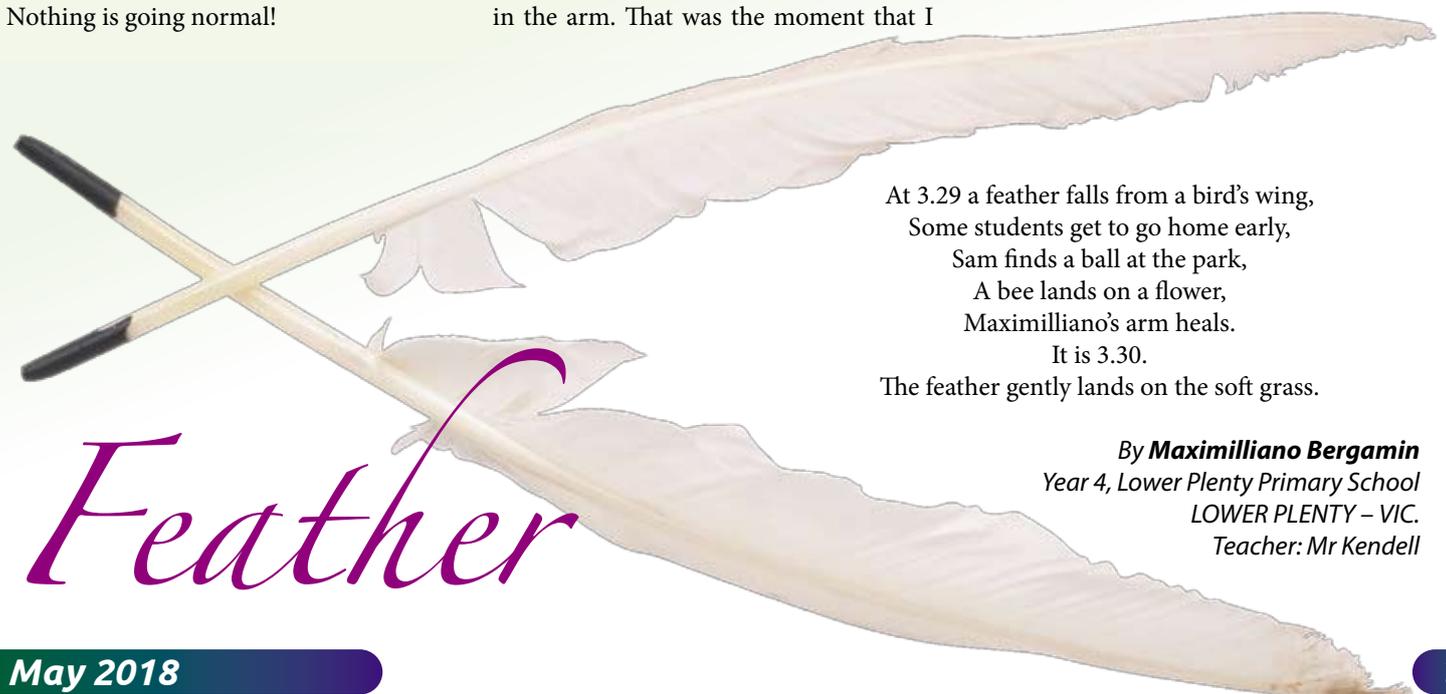
"Okay, if I get you KFC then will you shut your vocal chords for a few damn minutes?" blasts Dean back at me.

Yeah, we fight together too.

In the end, all is well, and all is normal.

The End

By **Manesh Kusalakumar**
Year 7, Parade College
BUNDOORA – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Southgate



At 3.29 a feather falls from a bird's wing,
Some students get to go home early,
Sam finds a ball at the park,
A bee lands on a flower,
Maximilliano's arm heals.
It is 3.30.
The feather gently lands on the soft grass.

By **Maximilliano Bergamin**
Year 4, Lower Plenty Primary School
LOWER PLENTY – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Kendell



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we serve



Home on High

The tree is a spire,
a ladder to a peaceful realm
where all is movement and stillness,
a perch for birds and children
to rest,
to wash away worries and cares,
safe in the leaves.

My hands stretch out
to grasp the well-worn bark,
a muscle memory
like riding a bike
tells my body how to move,
scrapes to knees and elbows
as I ascend.



The branches at the top are thin arms
holding me up,
closing me in,
a leafy cloud in dappled light,
a castle tower where I can spy
seeing but unseen,
a cosmos full of wonders.

By **Claire Hennessy**
Year 12,
St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

What's That?

What's that?
It creeps below the bed at night
Tries to give children a fright
It has furry skin and glowing eyes
It lurks, slinks and spies

What's that?
Its body is long and brown
Face in a permanent frown
Comes from all around
Or locked in a pound

What's that?
It is known as deadly
And now its coming to get me
Its head is black
Arches its back

What's that?
As quick as light
Ready to put up a fight
It has sharp claws
and padded paws

What's that?
It's just my cat
Having a nap
Under the bed
With a cute furry head

By **Charlie Sheehan**
Year 5, Nambour Christian College
WOOMBYE – QLD.
Teacher: B. Eracleous



Library Day at School



HIRAETH. A Welsh word that here, is defined as a homesickness for a home you can't return to, or that never was. A Welsh word that I, ever since first starting to sit in the cafeteria of Oakton High, could relate to. I still had my comrade Oscar who had a pacifying way. Defending myself during our banter and being myself, I always had a line of responses ready.

I could have said, "You know, Oscar, I googled 'who cares?' and my name wasn't in the search results". Or even "I would love to insult you, but I am afraid I won't do as well as nature did".

But then again, this is me. I simply shrug every time he comments about my quirkiness and lightly punch his shoulder laughing.

At the library the huge, wooden room focused entirely on books and up above a wide ceiling made of glass. Displaying ancient lighting the towering bookshelves stacked with books reached stained glass coloured windows along the walls. I nodded a greeting to Mrs. West, sitting at the checkout desk, tapping her pencil rapidly against the mahogany wood table, her head bobbing slightly to the music quietly playing from her earphones. She was one of the younger teachers working in the library. I had overheard the headmaster talking to her about her position, explaining that a 'friendlier' face would invite the students in more.

She looked up involuntarily at the sharp ring of the chimes upon the inner doors opening rewarding me with a crooked smile, then refocused on the laptop in front of her. Fantasy. Sci-fi. Adventure. Romance. Drama. Mystery. Horror. Teen fiction. Young Adult Fiction. Science. Maths. Cooking. Sports. Dictionaries. I paused, shaking my head, before trailing back and coming to a stop at the front of Young Adult Fiction. I pulled out *The Fault in Our Stars* and read the back on reflex, even though I had read it many times.

A random song popped into my head. I bobbed to the beat of the chorus. Moving along the vast rows of books touching the dark pieces of wooden furniture shaking and moving my shoulders to the beat with my eyes closed I licked my lips, shaking my head back and forth.

"I love when you call unexpected, I hate when the moment's expected", I sung quietly, pulling out a chair.

"You have nice voice." Blushing crimson red, I apologised profusely as I bumped her book. I grabbed the book, jerking my head up only to knock into their head coming up. They recoiled slightly, I apologised further. "I'm so sorry!" I squeaked with surprise the way a schoolboy would do, one who had just ran into their crush.

Her straight hair and pale skin made her eyes stick out beautifully, with freckles on her nose. "Perfect", I mumbled. I inwardly

facepalmed, a teenage gesture, groaning silently. Idiotic, artless me just had to sit right next to, then proceed to head-butt, Nix. Rumer Nix.

"Rumer, right?" I asked, mustering up the last of my dignity for a welcome smile, and holding out my hand. I was a silent observer when it came to Rumer. Rumer would come to the library every Friday on the second lunch, the long lunch period, to sit and read or stare at the fancy decorative ceiling.

"I'm Caspar. You wouldn't know my name. I know my name... dammit", I ranted, noticing she clutched *The Hunger Games* in her hands.

The bell, a shrill, uncomfortable sound, rang, breaking the silence. I nodded once at her, while she just stared.

"See you, Nix, or... uh... Rumer. Yup, Rumer, it's nice to be introduced", I laughed nervously, waving slightly and turning.

"Goodbye, Caspar," she called.

"I'm telling you, man, she spoke to me!" I exclaimed loudly, throwing my hands in the air dramatically as Oscar and I entered our last class for the day.

My best friend sent me a doubtful look, "Comrade, I don't know which world you're talking in or where your rocket ship landed but Rumer Nix doesn't talk."

Now was Social and Emotional Participation with the gentle and witty Mr. James who had his fair share of stories to tell of misdemeanours. With dark blue eyes and an unmistakable Welsh accent, he was that one teacher that was kind of extremely good looking. Well, that's what I've heard from the giggling girls who sit behind us, anyway.

"But she did!" I chirped, "Matter of fact she had a kind of, British accent. It was.... perfect!"

I huffed slightly, and Oscar chuckled quietly, punching me in the arm and whispering, "She is out of reach for now, you can talk to your new crush after class".

Mr. James glanced at his class, counting heads quickly. He drew a small circle in the centre of the whiteboard, then a few straight lines leading out from them. Before he wrote what went into the circle, he turned to us.

"Now it is apparent I'm the one to teach students about this experience you'll all have at some time", he turned back to the whiteboard.

"Is it Really Love?" Mr James wrote.

The guys in the class groaned, while the girls behind us squealed loudly. I grinned slightly at the board and set my eyes downwards.

"In three years of teaching the most tears I have seen spilt are over break-ups. What is it that makes you, attached to a person?" he motioned towards the class. The classroom was silent. "A show of hands anyone?"

Oscar elbowed me sharply in the side. I jumped slightly. I looked back at Mr. James to see his eyes meet mine. "Perfect! Mr. Clementine, thanks for volunteering", his voice rose.

I slowly stood up. I took a deep breath, feeling everyone's eyes on me.

"No guy is going to sit down and gush out their feelings, right? But... when you meet them, you know. You just know."

Silence. I sat down, blushing at all the eyes on me, hearing loud clapping go through the classroom. Oscar mocked me quietly.

I rolled my eyes, kicking him under the table. "Has anyone got anything to add on that?" Mr. James grinned, pointing to a raised hand, "Poppy?"

Poppy smiled happily, with a love-struck emotion, "True love is a marvellous thing! Gushy feelings of emotions, your heart beating crazily, wildly!"

The smiling girl's features suddenly became clouded, "But... by giving someone your heart, you give them the opportunity to break it. You can lose someone, who wasn't even yours from the start..."

"No regrets. If it's good, great! If it's bad it's experience", Mr. James reasoned, "Simply move on a chapter, don't close the book keeping turning the pages".

Looking down, shaking his head, he realised he hadn't written a single point on the whiteboard.

Mr. James took a seat, before waving his hands, "Talk for the rest of the lesson on relationships being important for personal growth, and expressing love and happiness is a kindness we should all try. Possibly the saddest lines can't really be written, and the saddest thoughts not uttered".

I shot a glance at the modern plastic clock as it struck 2:30pm. It was the end of class.

By **Kelsea Thomson**
Year 8,

Mackay Northern Beaches State HS
MACKAY – QLD.
Teacher: Ms Sian Burrows



The War of the Dragons

THE THREE magnificent red dragons were moving gracefully along the lush mountainside, ducking and weaving around overhanging trees when they saw the target. A heavily guarded castle with ballista and catapults.

It was on a hill overlooking the town below. It was supposedly a castle that could not be taken over. There were crossbow men on top of the 10-metre-high walls scuttling around like a million ants. Cavalry was positioned at the castle gates with armour of beautiful dragon scales. A captain was

shouting orders to his soldiers. Everything seemed normal.

The dragons immediately alerted because the huge banner on each side of the castle was marked with a fiery red dragon. The mark of the Death Knights. They had brutally hunted down dragons for centuries. Whenever they saw a dragon flying on the horizon they had a ruthless urge to just kill it.

But this time it would be different. Countless dragons gathered around the

castle, invisible in the thick undergrowth. Then there was a distant but unmistakable roar.

The assault had begun but more, the war of the dragons had begun and the hunted had just become the hunters.

By **Emerson Campling**
Year 5, Nambour Christian College
NAMBOUR – QLD.
Teacher: Mrs B. Eracleous

THE WIND beating down the waves were like mountains threatening to tear the ship apart. The wind was like teeth shredding into my skin. The spray soaked me from head to toe.

After hours on end with bloody knuckles and aching muscles, the storm ended. The storm had ripped a gaping hole in the sail and there were multiple holes in the hull that needed fixing soon. However, there was no land for a mile around. Therefore, we set about fixing what we could using up precious supplies.

After hours fixing the hull, we desperately needed supplies. With a leaking hull and ripped sail we were off to find the nearest port. It took us three days to find the nearest port. It was called the port of Alexandria. We stayed in Alexandria for two weeks fixing and buying supplies for the rest of our journey. The journey that we are on is one that would make my captain rich and the most powerful person in all the land.

There a myth that if you sail to the end of the world there will be a sword sticking up from the island and whoever sails there, picks up the sword from the sand and sail back, will be named king over all the land and all the people will bow to your name.

The Sword



My captain plans to be that person and he has promised us that when he has all the riches he will pay us lots and lots of money, land and slaves and will make us very important people.

We stayed two more weeks and know we are hundreds of leagues away from the port of Alexandria. We spent three months on the sea. When we finally got to the end of the world, we could walk to the end of the island and peer off the end of the world in to utter blackness. Moreover, just as the myth said there was a sword in the sand.

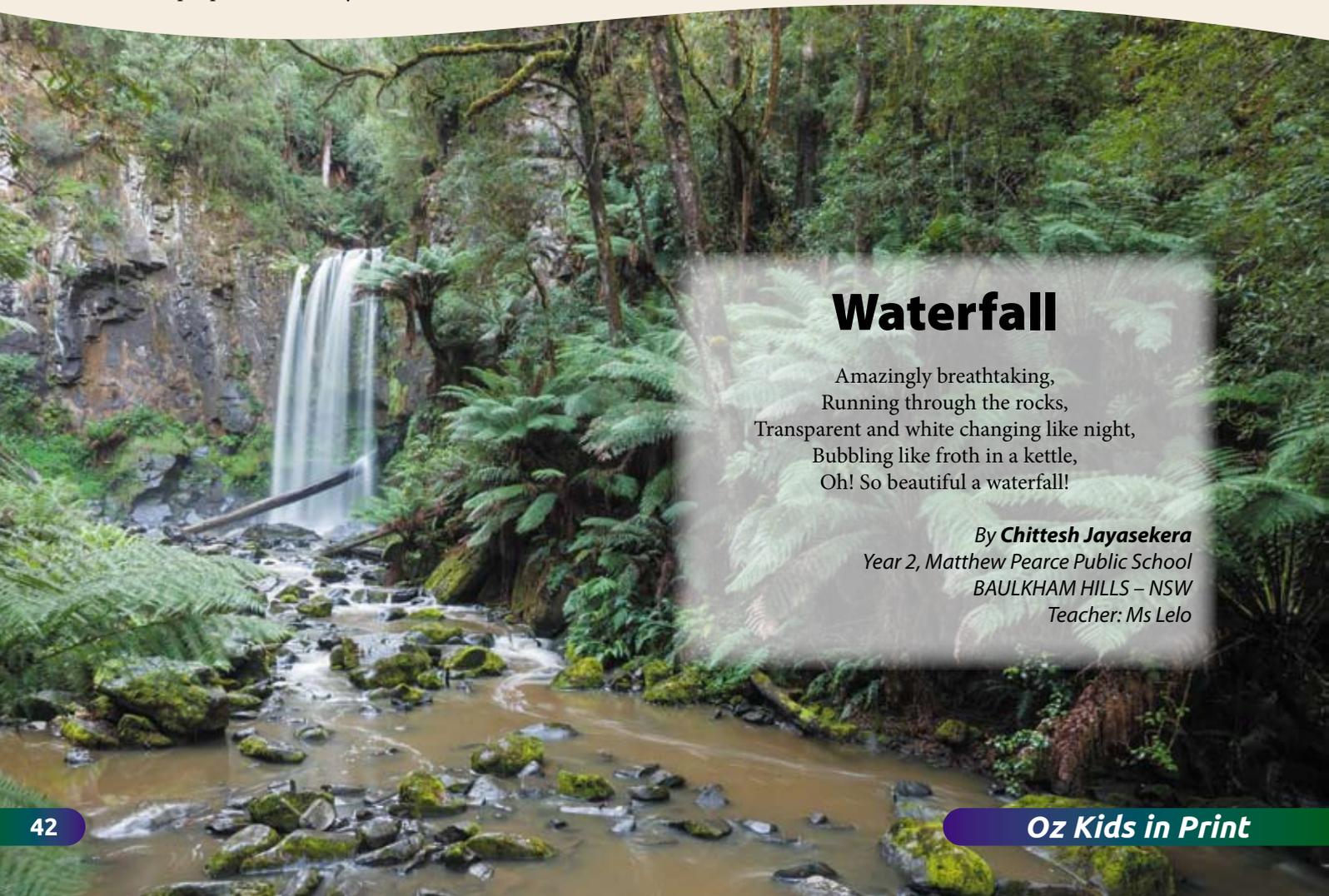
The captain picked up the sword from the sand. All went black. There was lots of lightning around the captain coming from the sword then it all went still. As the myth said we sailed back. The captain was named king and we all got lots of money, land and slaves. We are all living a happy life in our own castles and we casually meet to talk about the old days.

By **Saatchan Smith**

Year 6, Nambour Christian College

WOOMBYE – QLD.

Teacher: B. Eracleous



Waterfall

Amazingly breathtaking,
Running through the rocks,
Transparent and white changing like night,
Bubbling like froth in a kettle,
Oh! So beautiful a waterfall!

By **Chittesh Jayasekera**

Year 2, Matthew Pearce Public School

BAULKHAM HILLS – NSW

Teacher: Ms Lelo



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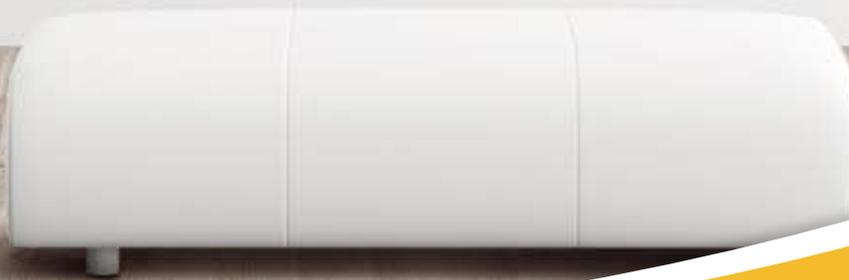
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