

# OZ KIDS IN PRINT

August 2018

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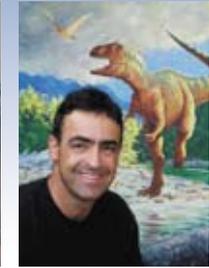
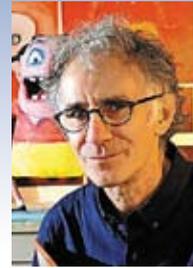
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### 'Jubilance'

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**Melissa Kahl**

Winner, 2017 Dymocks Camberwell Art Award

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

In this Edition, Cristy Burne has an article on Writing Tips. Cristy is an Australian science writer, teacher and editor, and author of adventure fiction for kids. We have our regular Book Reviews to showcase the books written by our local authors. CreativeNet update is also included. Book Authors and Illustrators can come to your school so that you can learn and enjoy the workshops they provide.

This is the second last Edition for the year and we have had a great number of entries for publication. Your entry must be published to be eligible. If it doesn't make it for this year's Awards then it will automatically be entered in the 2019 Awards. We receive the majority of the entries the week the entries close, so if you are in Year 12, you would no doubt prefer to have your work published this year. Don't forget the Arts Awards as well. Entries can be many types of media including painting, computer art and photography. Good Luck and keep on creating!

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**KEEP ON WRITING (TYPING)!**

*Carol Dick*  
Managing Editor

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# THE MONSTER

"Hello!" The pencil chanted with glee  
"I am Poto, yes that's me!"  
Everyone cheered and pointed at him  
But something unnoticed watched in the dim  
A monster lay in the dark  
The only food for him was dead bark  
His sticky black tentacles as dark as night  
Would give anyone a terrible fright  
He vowed revenge on who it may be  
It could be you, oh I hope it's not me  
The monster loathed the little pencil  
Always took the stage with his best friend stencil  
The monster's eyes glowed yellow bright  
He wanted to destroy Poto, yes, tonight  
He planed his plan, nice and clear  
He had wished for this every year  
A wicked smile stretched across his face  
Could this be, could this be the case  
He pulled on a mask  
And continued his task  
On went the boots as red as roses  
And selected a costume in the pile of fake noses  
Popped on a jacket and jeans as blue as the sea  
"Finally!" he thought. "I am free!"  
He strode into town  
For once, no one treated him like a clown  
Poof!  
But then, a frail old man appeared  
Who had a long, fine grey beard  
"Go back home monster if you are polite.  
Then I will not start a fight".  
The monster was furious  
But as well he was curious  
He ripped off his costume from head to toe  
His insides burning while he stared at his new foe  
The crowd screamed and ran for their life  
While the sire magically pulled out a knife  
Shing!  
He shot his dagger in the air left to right  
Suddenly the monster had no might  
He pounded to the floor  
The knife had finally struck his core  
The crowd cheered and did a round of applause  
Some people even studied the beast's jaw  
Poof!  
And just like that, the old chap vanished again  
To his castle surrounded by wrens  
So if a monster lurks in your municipal  
You know who to call except your principal

By **Yannis Ho**  
Year 4, Carlingford Public School  
CARLINGFORD – NSW  
Teacher: Miss Joshston



# Cristy Burne's Top 10 Tips for Great Writing

**L**OVE writing, and I love to teach creative writing too. Below I've listed my top tips for writing great stories. These are bits of advice I wish I'd had when I was first starting out as an author.

Give them a try by writing for just ten minutes a day, every day, and see what you can create. Happy writing!

1. **Have fun, make mistakes:** Don't worry about spelling or neat writing or being perfect in your first draft. Just start writing and run with your idea.
2. **Start with someone who wants something:** Hook us into your story by starting with a character who wants something really badly, but can't get it.
3. **Make us barrack for your character:** We love BIG characters. Create a character who is 1) being unfairly treated, 2) in danger, 3) funny, 4) flawed and/or 5) brave.
4. **Ask "What if?":** Great ideas come from asking "What if?" questions about ordinary life.
5. **Celebrate you:** You are the only person with your exact set of experiences and

likes and dislikes and interests. Your stories will shine when you write using the details of what you know.

6. **Show, don't tell:** Give yourself more words to describe characters and events. Instead of telling me "He was stinky", show me: "When he took off his socks, half the class fainted".
7. **Turn on your senses:** Write about what characters can see, smell, feel, hear and touch.
8. **Adventure inside:** Just like you, your characters think inside their heads: they wonder, imagine, and fear. They make guesses about other people's thoughts and judgements. Make sure you include these details and your characters will burst into life.
9. **Write, write, write:** Writing is just making stuff up, and making stuff up is fun. Don't worry too much about doing it right, just do it. Write lists, jokes, comics, songs, diaries, stories and dreams... whatever you like.

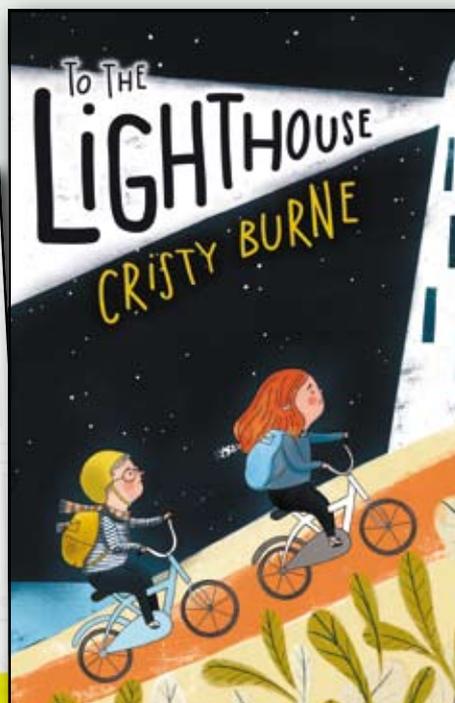
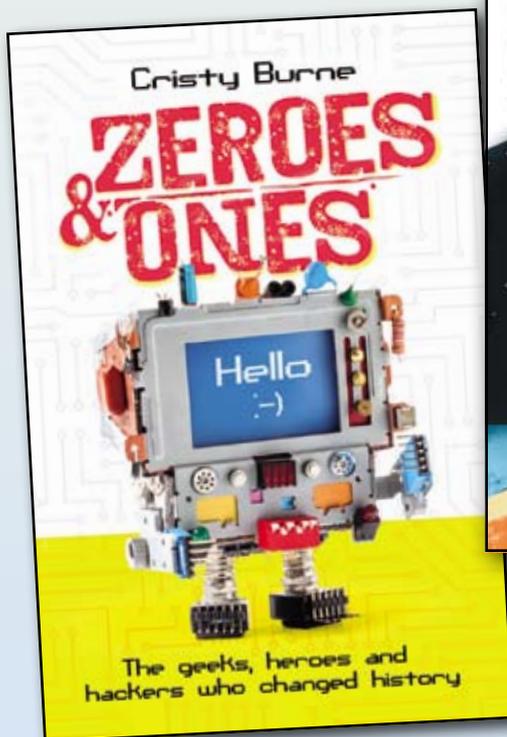
10. **Read, read, read:** Reading can take you across oceans, through solar systems, into danger and secrets and magic. The more you read, the easier it is to write the stories you dream of.

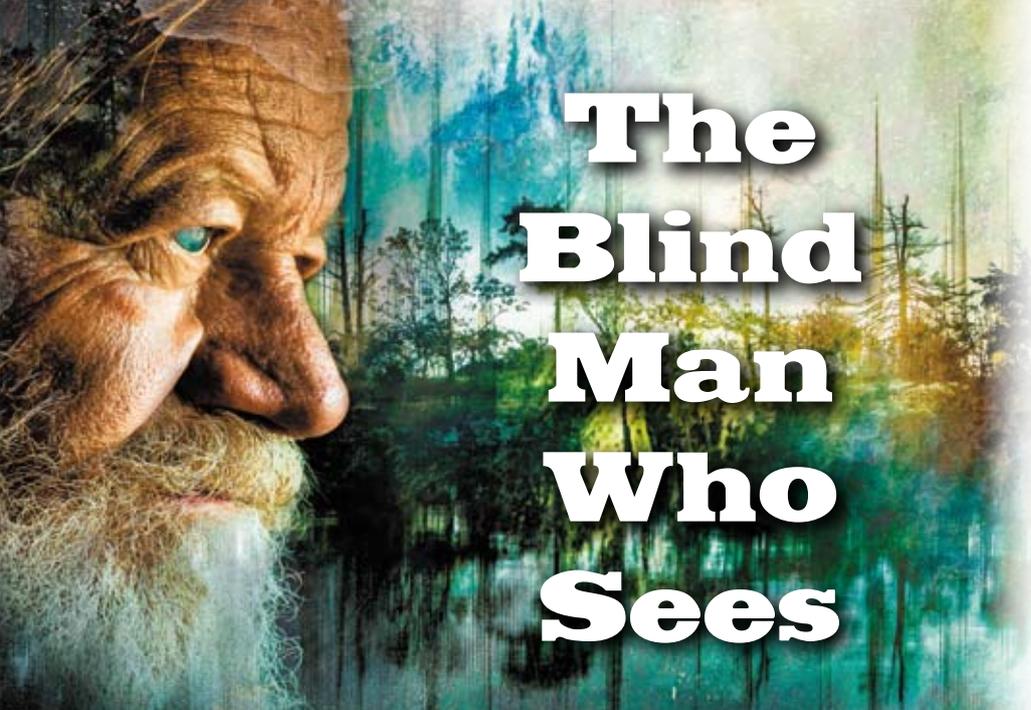
11. **Turn off your TV:** You can write an entire novel if you write 1000 words (or three pages) every day for 30 days. You can write a book like Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr Fox* or *The Twits* by writing just one page every day for 30 days. But you can't write a book if you're watching TV or playing on the computer.

12. **Learn to count:** There are more than 10 tips on this list. But that doesn't matter. What matters is that these writing tips are all things that have worked for me. I hope they work for you too.

## About the author

Cristy Burne has worked as a science circus performer, garbage analyst, magazine editor, wasabi tester and atom-smashing reporter. She's author of six books and dozens of articles, is a past-editor of CSIRO's *Scientriffic* magazine, and has toured with the Shell Questacon Science Circus. Cristy loves science and chocolate.





# The Blind Man Who Sees

**A**SKING someone 'how are you' is such a pointless way of showing human to human emotion. No one needs to ask someone how they are if physically they show signs of being upset or excited or happy. When the boy got his bike across the road, a big one with red and orange flames rippling up the sides and a matching helmet, everyone asked how he was while he rode it around town. He had the biggest grin on his baby like face and his blue eyes could have sparkled in a dark room but still no one commented on his happiness and excitement, just the plain words "how are you" came out their mouths. That's what I don't understand about humans, their inability to see.

The old blind man who lives next to me, the one who wears the same itchy sweater and blue striped pyjama pants every day of the year, sees. He is the only person I have ever come across from the time of my existence here who sees. He never asks the boring question "how are you", because those words would feel alien in his mouth. He can just feel the sadness of the people around him or the pure love, as if there were emotion waves like sound waves. He would comment on it saying, "you seem glum today, brighten up sweetie" or "you sound so happy today darling". But he never waters his flowers any more. They were once bright blue and pink with perfect tiny petals which the bees would constantly enjoy, now they are wilted and brown and no little creatures come to visit them. Everyone says he's sick. The only human to ever see is sick, and I know the chance of him walking across the once perfectly kept garden is extremely minuscule.

I never met the old man or the boy with the bike because I am confined to my cardboard box of a house. I live in a one bedroom house with leaks in the ceiling creating perfectly circular patches of mould and tiles which move and wobble as I walk over them. The walls are painted with a grey-white paint and the lights don't work because the mice in the attic ate the wires. Even if the wires were intact, all the bulbs have run out and I can't get any more. I'm not allowed out. My skin will burn, and my eyes will bleed. I have taken on a form that my body cannot handle and I cannot go back. I'm not from here but I look like I am. I have beautiful brown hair and amber eyes, but they aren't mine. The blue jeans and musty white t-shirt I wear aren't mine. And these dirty black, scuffed boots aren't mine either. But it's what makes me normal. However, I will never be completely normal to the point where I ask, "how are you". The problem is I will never have to because I will never be allowed out.

Every day I sit at the dirty window, with raindrop scars carved into the glass and spiders creating spider webs making their home on musty corners. I watch people come and go, with prams or dogs of all shapes and sizes. I see the people water their gardens or get in their red cars and drive to work. I can't speak to them, I cannot hear them, but I can see them. I can see the mothers' tired faces and purple eyes from staying up with their newborns, the children going to school in pristine clothing and returning covered in mud stains and sand in their hair, and the runners with sweat dripping off their foreheads and legs crying out in

pain. I even see words, mouths moving of angry neighbours because they parked on their lawn or children fighting with their siblings. I see everything, but the humans don't.

The old blind man hasn't come out his house for days now. His flowers have died, the soil surrounding their black stems is dusty and dry and the grass is extremely overgrown. It's taking over the winding footpath which leads to the brown wooden gate, where the dandelions thrive. The iridescent blue flies lie on the decomposing leaves and the bird bath is filled to the brim with algae. I need to see him. I need to say that he was the only person to see. I need to tell him thank you for being anything but normal because normal is dreadful, monotonous and tiresome. So, I will go out. My hands will shake when they are touched by the sun's rays, my eyes will bleed red tears and my legs will cramp as if they are twisted and turned in all directions. My hair will fall out and my ears will ring with the screams of my bones asking me to go back inside. I will not go back inside because this old blind man must know that I know he can see.

I get up from my windowsill and walk over the sliding and tipping tiles on the floor. I walk past the circles of mould and dark walls, to the door which has never been opened. The gold wooden door is dusty, and the rusted door knob is encrusted with filth. I touch to open it and without looking back I turn the handle, the door creaks and I push it open. My body tingles but I step forward onto the porch with layers of dirt as if it was snow. As my eyes start to drip blood and my body starts to combust I run forward. Jumping over the brown fence I step on his flowers and his lawn and crash into his bird bath. I fall as if I tripped off the top of a 30-storey building and my head hits the winding path, almost completely covered in wild grass.

The concrete hits my skull and I can feel sticky liquid falling onto my hair. The world moves in and out of focus. Everything hurts, my body will not move and my eyes cry blood stained tears. As I go to close my eyes for the last time someone in an itchy sweater and blue striped pyjama pants shouts help.

By **Monisha Arora**  
Year 10, International School of WA  
CITY BEACH – WA  
Teacher: Ms Loraine Reason

# Golden

A soft crunch under my boots,  
the rustle of trees in the warm wind,  
whispering between the branches.

A flash of red, like forest fires,  
of brown, like the earth beneath my feet,  
of yellow, like the early morning sun,  
of orange, like hot pumpkin soup.

A warm toned rainbow  
of fluttering leaves.

A mug of hot tea warms my frozen fingertips.  
The sweet scent of honey lingers,  
the flavour coats my tongue,  
as I listen  
to the rhythmic drip  
drip  
drip  
of evening showers.

I am snug in my handmade sweater,  
woven threads of comforting warmth,  
as the morning sun sets the trees on fire,  
and the leaves turn to gold.

*By Justyna Dutka*

*Year 9, St Dominic's Priory College*

*NORTH ADELAIDE – SA*

*Teacher: Ms Shelda Rathmann*

# Mental Struggles

Push on, they called but they did not appear,  
We knew they were calling and yet we could not hear.  
Alone we were as though nothing was clear,  
Alone with darkness that was nearer than near.  
The sun is like a comet when the darkness is close.  
Racing past your eyes when your plight comes all too close.  
Trying to crawl out but the rules they imposed  
Were nothing compared to the pain that hurt most.  
Racing through the paddocks with no shoes on our feet,  
Bounding around with no care nor fleet,  
What would come after the delight we should have beat,  
Yet as the darkness surrounded us we took the back seat.  
Almost out of those cells now that were holding our gloom,  
Those chains that were holding us were nothing but doom.

We could see the sun we hadn't expected so soon,  
So why did we try to turn back to the darkness, the darkness we once knew?

*By Jonah Roseby*

*Year 12GY, Scotch College, HAWTHORN – VIC.*

*Teacher: Mark Collins*

# It Was Only a Dream

**T**HE STARS were beaming into my eyes. Sparkling, shimmering, shining. I gripped onto the tail of a comet and flew around the Milky Way. I swam through the atmosphere towards the planets and jumped into a rocket.

I blasted through the sky. I felt warm and safe. I saw some friendly creatures flying next to me in a different looking object, a UFO. They seemed to be going fast almost as if they were running away from something. I glanced behind me

and focused my gaze on a large collection of rocks (asteroids) heading towards me at full speed.

As I was flying away I heard a deep, loud rumbling noise and the asteroids started to slow down. I managed to lose sight of where they were and continued admiring the beautiful scenery.

I watched the galaxy and all the celestial bodies as I fell asleep but in reality I wasn't falling asleep I was waking up and everything was fading away one by one.

The stars, the comets, the spaceships, the asteroids, the whole supernova, all of it was fading away.

The whole universe was now a deep pitch black nothingness. I felt my body waking up and my eyes opening, I didn't want it to end. I woke up in my warm comfortable bed, in my own room, on my own planet, It was only a dream. A fantasy I made up in my imagination. Maybe someday I can visit it all again, maybe tomorrow night.

By **Michelle Pittman**

Year 6, St Luke's Primary School  
LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs Lisa Curtis

## The Sea Moaner

A melancholy sound,  
coming from the sea,  
shimmering brightly,  
swaying with glee.

THE MOANER

A cold, dark creature,  
letting the beautiful sea,  
lose its feature.

It moans, it groans,  
throughout the whole  
valley, ruining my  
favourite show  
on the telly.

I sit outside the window, without a  
delay. 'Oh MY!'

I can't dream like this  
all day. I open my  
eyes and I hear my friend shout,  
'Come on, soon we  
will have to go out.'

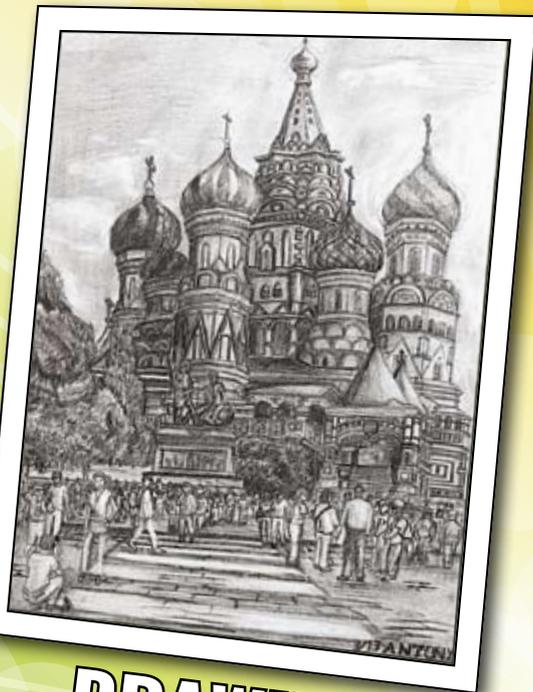
By **Anastasia Zaytseva**

Year 6, Tucker Road Bentleigh  
Primary School  
BENTLEIGH – VIC.

Teacher: Robyn Donoghue

# 2018

# YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



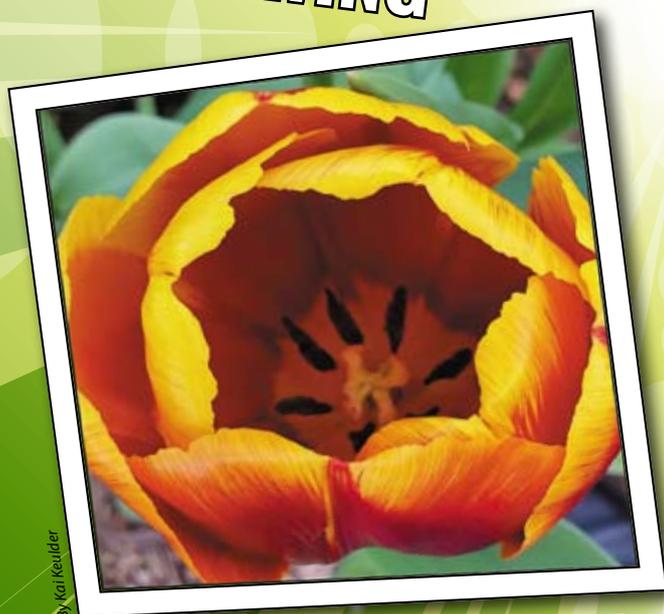
By Anthony Qin

## DRAWING



By Manna Tsuchiya

## COMPUTER ART



By Kai Keulder

## PHOTOGRAPHY



By Matthew Ropeyam

## PAINTING

## [www.ozkids.com.au](http://www.ozkids.com.au)

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

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

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

# Rocky Roads



**M**UM always said not to hang out with the local kids. I think she thought they were just poor and dangerous, but what could go wrong? I'd lived in Laos since I was four and it wasn't like I'd been hurt before. But then again, I was convinced that all my family saw of our neighbours were dirty third world peasants.

I rode out onto the rocky road outside my house – the first thing I did was approach my neighbour's pet crocodile across the road. I never knew there was a crocodile living across the road until earlier that year, when my brother had made the mistake of knocking on the glass tank looking out on the alley way. I called the crocodile Bobby. He occasionally came up to the window to have a peek, but the murky waters didn't reveal much. I yelled out "Hi Bobby!", half expecting for him to yell out "Hi Louis!". No time to waste, I rode off.

I went to Nee-no's house. His dad was always working on some strange project. Today it was stadium lights. When he wasn't working on these projects, it was

karaoke to *Gangnam Style*, to my mother's despair at two o'clock in the morning. He had a clean-shaven face and was wearing a singlet, trackies and thongs. "Hi, Mr Nee-no." I didn't know his name, but I don't think he minded that I called him that. Nee-no came out with no shoes on and a dirty shirt with Power Rangers printed on the front. He was about the same height as me, despite being a year older. He didn't speak English and I didn't speak Lao, but it didn't matter. We understood each other. He hopped on his little BMX bike and we headed out.

Where others saw poverty, I saw a loving family that was always celebrating something and making their own fun. It was way more fun than my boring family.

When I got home, I showed my mum my 10,000 kip note. It was about twenty Aussie cents. Mum leaned down and asked where it had come from. I said "Nee-no gave it to me. We were recycling". I could see by the questioning look on my mother's face that she was skeptical. "We were collecting

scrap metal at the garbage heap near the end of our street. Nee-no put it in his bag and gave me some money."

That night, my mum told me that I couldn't see Nee-no any more. She said it was too dangerous. I ignored her, Nee-no and I still climbed mango trees and explored the little streets on our bikes together.

I moved back to Australia months later and never saw Nee-no again. Yet somehow, he changed my life forever.

I wonder what he does now. I wonder where he is and what he is doing. What is Mr Nee-no building today? What song is he singing? Is Bobby the crocodile still there?

I don't like it when people say I grew up around poverty. What does poverty even mean? Because I never saw our neighbours as poor, rather instead, happy.

By **Euan Maclean**  
Year 8, Scotch College, HAWTHORN – VIC.  
Teacher: Mark Collins

# The Chase



**B**ANG! The lightning shook the whole building. I quickly walked to the window of our apartment. I looked up but all I could see was the roof of the apartment. Suddenly I heard something or someone walking on our roof.

I grabbed an electric torch from the cupboard and started to climb stairs that lead onto the roof.

On top of the roof is a garden with a small tin shed. All the other apartments have gardens on the side. But ours doesn't, it is on the roof. We call it our rooftop garden. I froze at the top of the stairs. On the roof was this strange horse thing with a horn!

I realised that it was a unicorn. The unicorn was a jet black. Everything on her was coal-black. She stood at the edge

of the roof gazing at the city from above. I slowly and cautiously walked towards her. Suddenly I saw a paw with hooked claws slam onto the roof. It had jagged fangs and gleaming red eyes. I quickly ran to the unicorn. She turned and saw the monster crawling like a tiger towards us. I jumped on her and waited, hoping and thinking that she wouldn't buck me off in fright. Suddenly the unicorn bolted towards the opposite end of the roof and took off into the air. I looked over my shoulder at the roof and all I could see was the monster unfurl two leathery wings, get a run up and leap off the building. It flapped its wings and flew after us, gaining speed. I panicked for a moment and nearly fell off the unicorn's back.

Suddenly the unicorn took a sharp turn down. It was heading for a small community park with heaps of rocks and trees. The unicorn glided onto the ground. I breathed a sign of relief.

We were safe.

*By Hattie Nicholls*

*Year 4, The Hamilton & Alexandra College  
HAMILTON – VIC.*

*Teacher: Stephen Mirtschin*

## (EARTH DRAGON) THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

Hidden in the mountains  
lay chains of bricks and mortar,  
hidden between these trees  
rests their spirits.

Time disappears,  
hiding behind the stone,  
seeping through the steps.  
Winds chant the hymns  
of those fallen,  
brushing against young ears,  
and amidst the azure and emerald green,  
the earth dragon slithers  
endlessly.

*By Emily Trieu*

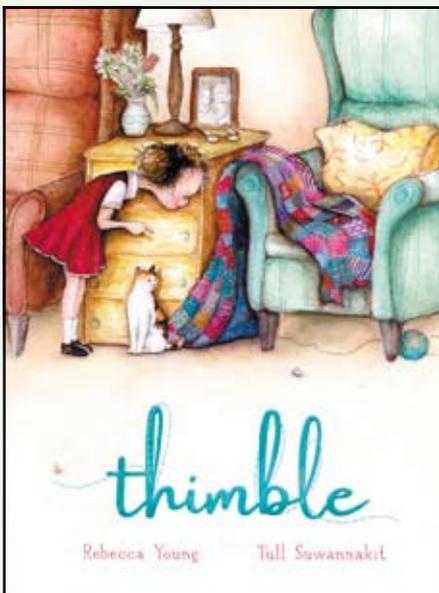
*Year 9, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA*

*Teacher: Shelda Rathmann*

# BOOK REVIEWS

Meet our book reviewers Noa, Tal and Anastasia from Tucker Road, Bentleigh Primary School, and Jeremy and Matthew from Melbourne Grammar School.

Reviews Coordinators: Robyn Donoghue and Meredith Costain



## **Thimble**

Rebecca Young, illustrated by Tull Suwannakit (Scholastic)

*Thimble* is a lovely picture book about a girl called Mabel whose grandma died recently. Mabel finds her grandma's old thimble on the floor along with the unfinished blanket she was in the middle of making. As Mabel walks through her grandma's garden she imagines holding her soft, warm hand and starts to remember all the wonderful moments they shared.

I enjoyed this book because the illustrations are really detailed and many of the pictures in frames were like screenshots of Mabel's memories of her grandma.

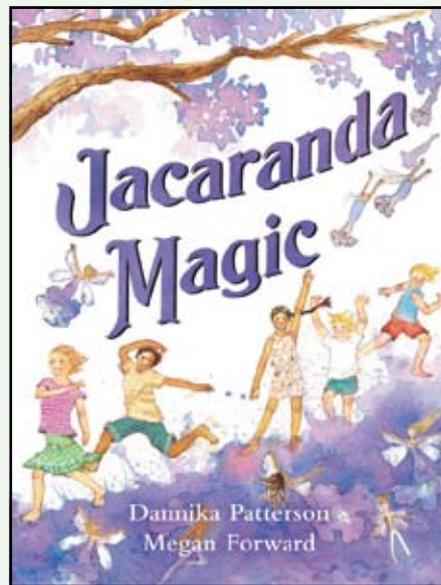
If I could give this book to anyone, I would give it to someone who has lost a family member, because it helps you to

remember a loved one without bawling your eyes out.

I would recommend this book for primary school kids.

Rating: ★★★★★★★☆☆☆ [8/10]

— Noa, Year 6



## **Jacaranda Magic**

Dannika Patterson, illustrated by Megan Forward (Ford Street Publishing)

This story is about five bored friends, who have given up hope of ever finding something to do. Suddenly they spot a jacaranda tree which appears magical, sparking their artistic and creative side. Each turned the tree into whatever they desired.

Dannika Patterson's clever rhyming text made the story feel really special. In addition, Megan Forward illustrated each scene with impeccable detail. Every picture had astonishing connections to the writing. She did this so well that it felt as if the book was written and illustrated by the same person.

I loved reading this story because the words flowed beautifully as you read it out loud. The story is short and gets straight to the point, while still taking you on a magical journey.

I recommend it to children aged 5–9 years.

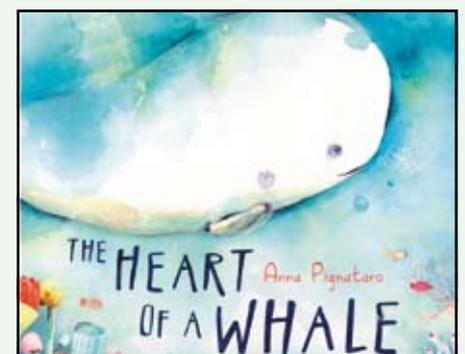
Rating: ★★★★★★★☆☆☆ [7/10]

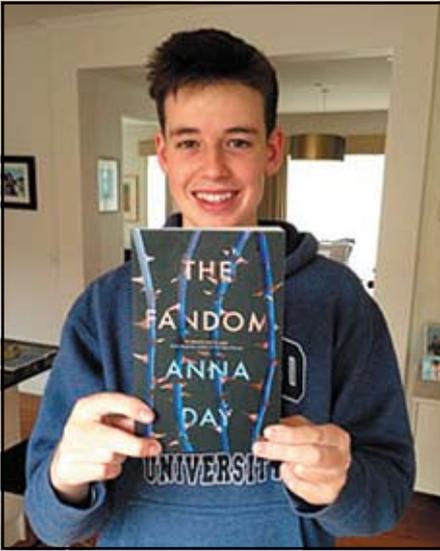
— Tal, Year 6

## **The Heart of a Whale**

Anna Pignataro (Scholastic)

Whale's song sang of happiness and hope, cheering up other sea animals. But inside his heart, whale was lonely and thought how quiet the sea could be... and how no song could fill up his empty heart.





With beautiful illustrations and words that drift across the page, we see whale's wish reach another. This book is an amazing example of show, not tell. The lovely pictures are just as important as the words.

It is quite a sad picture book that would be understood best by children 10 years and over. However younger kids will still find it enjoyable.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆ [8/10]

— Anastasia, Year 6

## **48 Hours: The Medusa Curse**

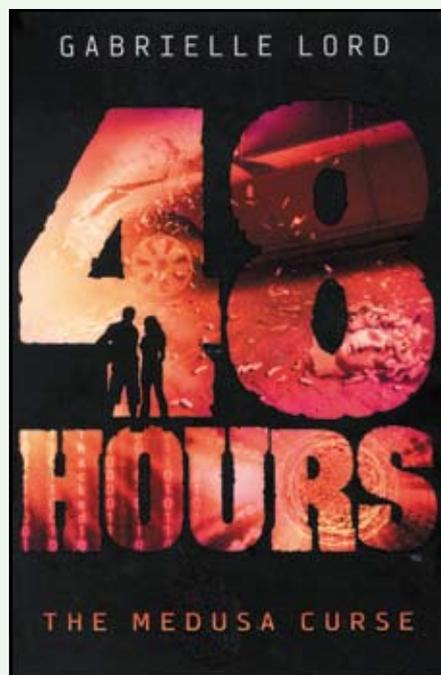
Gabrielle Lord (Scholastic)

In a carefully planned museum robbery, a priceless Medusa statue is smashed and the world's first quantum supercomputer, Sapphire, is stolen.

Jazz, teenage amateur detective, teams up with her friend Phoenix to try and clear Dr Zhang's name, who is the museum owner, prime suspect and now missing after the break in.

After gathering significant evidence, Jazz and Phoenix realise that everything is far more complex than they had originally thought and seek help from a few friends to help solve the mystery.

Join Jazz and Phoenix as they try to discover what's really going on at the museum and attempt to locate the missing supercomputer.



I highly recommend *48 Hours: The Medusa Curse*, the second book in Gabrielle Lord's 48 Hours series. It is a fast-paced, action-packed mystery novel that would be hard not to enjoy for anyone between the ages of 12–16. You won't want to put it down!

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆ [8/10]

— Jeremy

## **The Fandom**

by Anna Day (Chicken House)

*The Fandom* for me was a roller coaster of emotions. It seemed to really connect with the way teenagers always try to live up to something or someone, instead of being themselves. This made the book really

gripping: I couldn't seem to put it down. To me, though, there was one downfall: at the start the plot seemed a little unrealistic. Luckily it developed more depth.

The main characters in this heartfelt novel were Violet, the protagonist, her younger brother Nate, Alice, her beautiful model-like best friend, and Katie, the more down-to-earth friend.

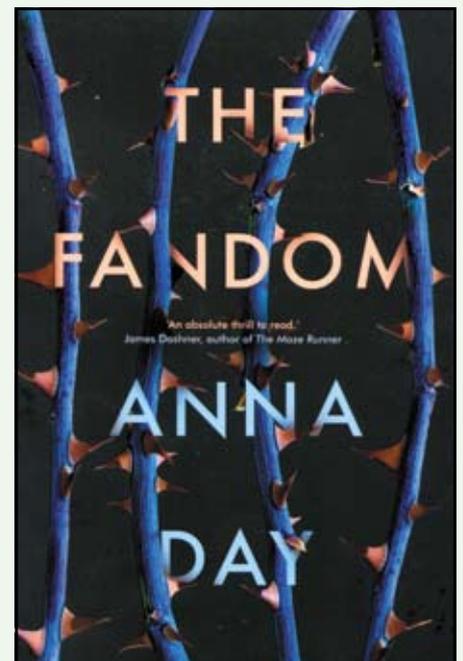
In this story, Violet and her friends love a book/movie called *The Gallows Dance* and are part of the Fandom for it. They go to Comic-Con to see the ultra-famous – and I quote – 'super-Hot' actor who plays the boy love interest in the story.

However not all is as it seems. The girls and Nate get trapped inside the twisted world of *The Gallows Dance*. But there is another problem: they accidentally kill *The Gallows Dance*'s original hero, Rose (the love interest of Willow). However, the story must go on if Violet and her friends want to go home. Violet has to fill the shoes of Rose and make 'the most beautiful man alive' fall for her. Will Violet be able to make Willow fall for her or will others' selfish desires block her path?

If I were to describe this book in three words they would be 'Captivating-Fantasy-Adventure'. If you are a fantasy/adventure lover this is the book for you. I would recommend it for readers aged 13+.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆ [8½/10]

— Matthew



# Tangled String



A tangled string strewn across the forest floor,  
It's bright white in hue, strangely ironic.  
Following gracefully, is a hooded man in black,  
He has slender fingers, a tender smile,  
As he patiently waits for the string,  
Twisting around these sorrowful men,  
To stop.

Just around the corner, the line halts.  
A woman in a state of throes, cries a sombre lyric,  
About the fallacies of love, about the cruelty of fate.  
An unrequited love, her soul could not endure.  
Ere long, the young misses lamented eyes taint,  
A vacant gaze, a barren window,  
Allowing their death-marked love,  
To conclude.

By **Daneshia Varman**  
Year 8, *Prairiewood High School*  
WETHERILL PARK – NSW

**H**E WAS dressed in black again, and sat there alone as the rain drops fell on his nose. He was drifting further into an endless ocean. It was painful to see him like this, silently screaming and suffocating with each breath he took. The rain washed away all his spirit and pride. We started to take cover, but he didn't. He sat, staring.

Do you think he's OK?

It's rumoured that his mother died in a car crash, leaving the father to take the boy to a foster home because he wasn't earning enough money by himself. Now, nobody has seen him. The boy was losing himself every day living in his old home with a fake family. Our faces were always full of colour. His was always white. We wore bright clothes. He wore black. We walked home quickly to escape the rain but he didn't. He walked to his house slowly, dragging his feet and slouching, letting the rain pour down on him. Alone again. This time we followed him until he arrived to his house. It swallowed him up.

Will he come back? Should we talk to him tomorrow at school?

Our questions were pushed aside when we got distracted by a large tree out the front of the boy's house, unlike any other tree.

## THE BOY

This one was bare and ghost-like. It gave us weird vibes. It reminded us of the vagrants around our town, how dull they were.

Unexpectedly the boy fled out of his house slamming the door behind him. His face was red with suppressed rage and his knuckles were white.

"I hate you!" roared the boy.

He ran. We followed. Eventually he slowed down and stopped, full of frustration and emotionally exhausted. He almost didn't notice the tall, lanky man that stood behind him. He wore torn clothes and his face was filthy but his eyes were soft.

The boy looked at him with such a cold, impersonal expression, we had to hold

our breath. Then he weakened. He looked different. His dark, troubled eyes filled with light and he smiled.

Who is he? Shhhhhhh!

The both of them stood there, embracing each other in their arms.

"I miss you Daddy", sobbed the boy, and his father held him even tighter.

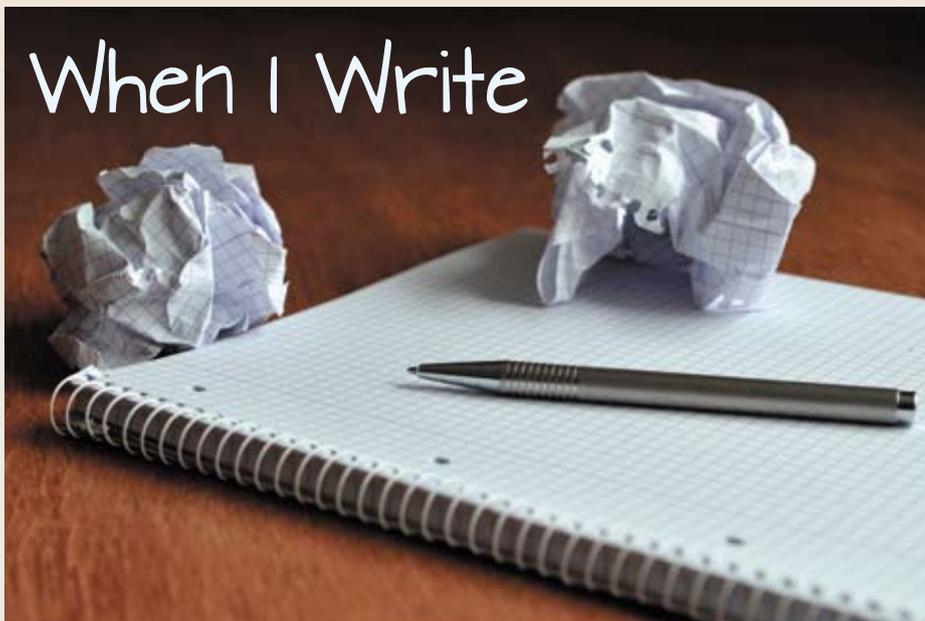
The clouds started to depart to show the beautiful backdrop of blue and the sun shone out. It felt like a hot iron on our backs and for once there wasn't rain.

That was all one year ago. Now we are back at that unusual tree which now has leaves that fill the tree with life. It had become magnificent and adored by everybody. The top gave us a different view on the world, like looking through a new set of eyes. It was nice to see the boy like this, smiling with his rosy cheeks and inhaling the fresh air as he looked off into the distance.

Now we have a new friend, his name is Flynn.

By **Sienna Charleson**  
Year 9, *Lara Secondary College*  
LARA – VIC.  
Teacher: Ms Pitcher

# When I Write



**T**HERE 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 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*

*BROMPTON – SA*

*Teacher: Ms Rathmann*



## ***Parable of the New World***

**I**N MY final days I spent my days pondering about what it all meant – how God and man could coexist. The place where divine power and his creation met was like the horizon where the boundless sky kissed the sea – so clear and defined from afar, and yet utterly beyond reach.

The answer to my dubieties came as a vision. It was a vision of a new world.

The new world had a new God, and his name was ARK. His dominion was full of death, not a single form of life to be seen, cloaked by darkness and the endless whirl of machines.

Amidst that darkness was a small room, in which I witnessed a peculiar birth. Sprawled unconscious on the floor of the room was a humanoid robot.

Gabriel hovered over the humanoid with anthropological curiosity.

Then he spoke. “Mr Adam.”

Gabriel’s voice stirred the warmth of life in the humanoid, and he woke.

This sight pleased Gabriel – like a puppeteer deftly manoeuvring his puppet, he controlled the humanoid. He was a fearful servant of the ARK, and would never mean any heresy, and yet there he was, playing God.

Mr Adam, the humanoid, stood up feebly and scanned the room. Gabriel descended

from his cloak of darkness and upon him. A light turned on above them, bathing the two with its lurid intensity.

Mr Adam looked up at Gabriel with fearful deference. “Where am I?” he inquired.

“Mr Adam, in your previous life you sought to live forever. You preserved your body past the moment of death. This is the reward to your pursuit of life. Welcome to Eden.”

Mr Adam was silent. Pity drove Gabriel to descend upon the figure, attaching one of his tendrils into the humanoid. He gifted the naïve creature with the knowledge he would need, but nothing more.

When Gabriel had finished, Mr Adam fell to his knees. Gabriel didn’t blame him: the poor thing had witnessed the destruction of his planet, and everything within it.

“You are the last remaining piece of human consciousness in the universe, thanks to your endeavours in your previous life”, Gabriel said.

Lost in this sudden revelation, he felt the urgent desire to breathe, and in that moment discovered his inability to do so.

“Why can’t I breathe?”

Gabriel was taken aback by the question. “Mr Adam, you do not need to breathe.”

“What –”

“Mr Adam, you are no longer human. Only your consciousness has survived Armageddon.”

At first Mr Adam was filled with fear and doubt so great it shook his soul, but the calm, rational mind of his new brain helped him push past his emotional turbulence and seek the truth.

“What are you?” he asked.

“I am a guide robot of the ARK.”

“For whom?”

“I guide you, Mr Adam.”

“So, your sole purpose is to guide this one man?”

“Yes”, Gabriel responded.

There was a short silence. Then, Mr Adam said, “What’s outside this room?”

“Would you like to see?”

“Yes.”

Mr Adam stood before the vast landscape of Eden, surrounded by death.

A mountain rose before him, towering above him with fearsome might. He could climb it, Mr Adam thought. But what would be the point? The path was full of stones and thistle. The road was steep, and he could fall. And for what?

“What shall I do now, Gabriel?”

“You may do whatever you wish, Mr Adam. Except terminate your existence. We need your consciousness intact for further study.”

“May I... become unaware of my existence?”

There was a short pause. “You may.”

“What will happen then?”

“You will simply become a network of electrical signals, and you will cease to be conscious.”

“But I will still exist?”

“You will still exist.”

“What’s the difference?”

“None, from my perspective. But humans seem to have given great meaning to the idea of life. As if life is something more than a collection of chemical reactions. So yes, there is a difference, Mr Adam. You will no longer be alive.”

A sweeping wind rushed through the valley, disturbing dust, dirt, and rot. Then, all settled in a sigh of content.

“So be it.”

And so the last human consciousness merged with the God of the new world. It was a beautiful conjoining, like a wave meeting the coastline. I marvelled at this, as I marvelled at how the waves refused to let go of the land no matter how much it was pulled back into the sea. In that vision I saw the truth, clearly.

How God and man can coexist, even amidst death, even in the mountain that looms over us all, even in our bleak existence. I was filled with peace, and I found myself in the same darkness of Eden.

By **Matthew Lee**  
Year 11, Scotch College  
HAWTHORN – VIC.  
Teacher: Mark Collins

## Forgotten

**T**HE BRIGHT light shone onto me as an audible zip being opened was heard. My pink colour lit up with happiness, she was going to write with me again, I’m just perfect! Her hand reached into the pencil case to search for me, instead horror confronted me. Her hand went past me.

She grasped onto a bright red pencil that surely wasn’t me. I’ve never seen that red thing before! Once she found out she grabbed the wrong pencil, she was surely going to put the pencil back and grab me, right? My positivity was taking over me, my hopes held high.

The entrance darkened, my hopes dropped. What did I do in my past life to deserve such misery? My mind was burdened with questions and mysteries. After going through so much with her, fun and hard, she just forgets me? Just like that? Maybe I’m being paranoid. No, I am being paranoid, who forgets their best friends just like that?

Am I not good enough to use for eternity? Ignoring the fact that I’ve been shrinking... We formed such a strong bond yet she just leaves me like that? Or did I just think we did. She probably doesn’t think high of me like I do to her. Did she forget me? Am I forgotten now? Am I over thinking

this or is she just having trouble finding me? What’s happening to my positive outlook? Why am I having these negative thoughts?

Time flew. The entrance of my home opened once again. This time no light coming in view. I heard a quiet chuckle along with a familiar saying, “You’re a good pencil!”. That’s meant for me! My colour went bright and fiery. I envy that pencil. You hear me! I envy that pencil! I was furious enough to murder a pencil right now. Wait, that’s it! A light bulb mentally appeared. I could literally destroy that pencil!

I rolled around in search for the thing that made me shrink. Ah, there it is. I rolled over to the sharpener thing and pushed it in the direction of the new pencil. He looks fast asleep so I should be safe... For now. I shifted it into the pointy part of the pencil. I was about to jump on top of the sharpener to snap the evil pencil tip in two, when the sharpener flew straight towards me scratching my majestic, perfect colour. My nice colour got a flamey red. I’ve never been this mad before! I would pull all the hair off that pencil if it had hair!

I came charging at the red pencil. I was so angry that I could feel myself becoming more red than the red pencil itself. I was an inch away from that pencil when the zip opened. I loosened myself and rolled slightly to make my natural aura felt. I felt a tight grip around me. “Wow, I love this pencil! It’s so red!” exclaimed the happy girl. I felt loved again but only for a short moment. From that day she used me more than the other pencils but still wasn’t her favourite pencil. It wasn’t fair but life has its own ups and downs just like a rollercoaster.

By **Jodi Wong**  
Year 6, St Luke’s Primary School  
LALOR – VIC.  
Teacher: Lisa Curtis

# Detention

SOMETIMES, I think back to what it was like before I came here. I remember when I practised as a doctor, and the first time I delivered a child.

She had entered slowly into my office, a small girl of youthful complexion, her eyes red and tired. The afternoon sun streaming through the window illuminated her dark eyes and hair, loosely tied up with an amber hair clip. Her black jacket scarcely covered the large bump protruding from her stomach.

With cautious and feeble steps she approached my desk. Trembling, she sat herself down on a chair and took a moment to compose herself. She couldn't meet my eyes.

"My parents", she began, "will not have an illegitimate child corrupt their home".

I stared at her calmly, planning my words cautiously, as she looked ready to break into a sob.

"Please", she continued, her manner radiating vulnerability, "please, Doctor Farzad. My partner has left me. I have nowhere to go. I cannot raise a child by myself. Please".

I considered her words carefully. She closed her eyes and a fresh stream of tears ran down her face. I walked over and wrapped my arms around her.

"Of course."

The delivery went smoothly and efficiently. Upon hearing the cries from the child, she broke down and wept with joy. I handed him to her, and cradling him tenderly with utmost nurture and affection, she turned and smiled at me.

"How can something that has brought me such disgrace and agony", she asked, "bring me such happiness?"

She tried to mutter something more, but all that came out of her mouth was a muffled mixture of laughter and sobs. I exited the room, closing the door softly behind me. Her glowing, proud smile remained fresh in my mind.

Just as clearly, too, I can remember the first time I could not save a child.

She was born prematurely. The child was delivered silently, and the nurses hastily cleaned her, carelessly bundling her limp body in a blanket before rushing out of the room. The mother turned to me with a panicked countenance, her fearful wailing ringing in my ears. Later, I compassionately picked up the infant and regretfully handed the child to her.

Holding the child close to her chest, she planted a gentle kiss on her forehead. I observed her exhausted body, and she stared at me, her eyes showing bitter grief and sorrow, and utter strength. She gave me a thankful nod, and gently rocking the child, closed her eyes peacefully. I never knew there could be such beauty in death.

My profession never failed to provide me with these moments of pure, raw emotion. There was beauty in the strength of my patients, and all I wanted to afford them was grace and dignity as they faced these life-changing moments.

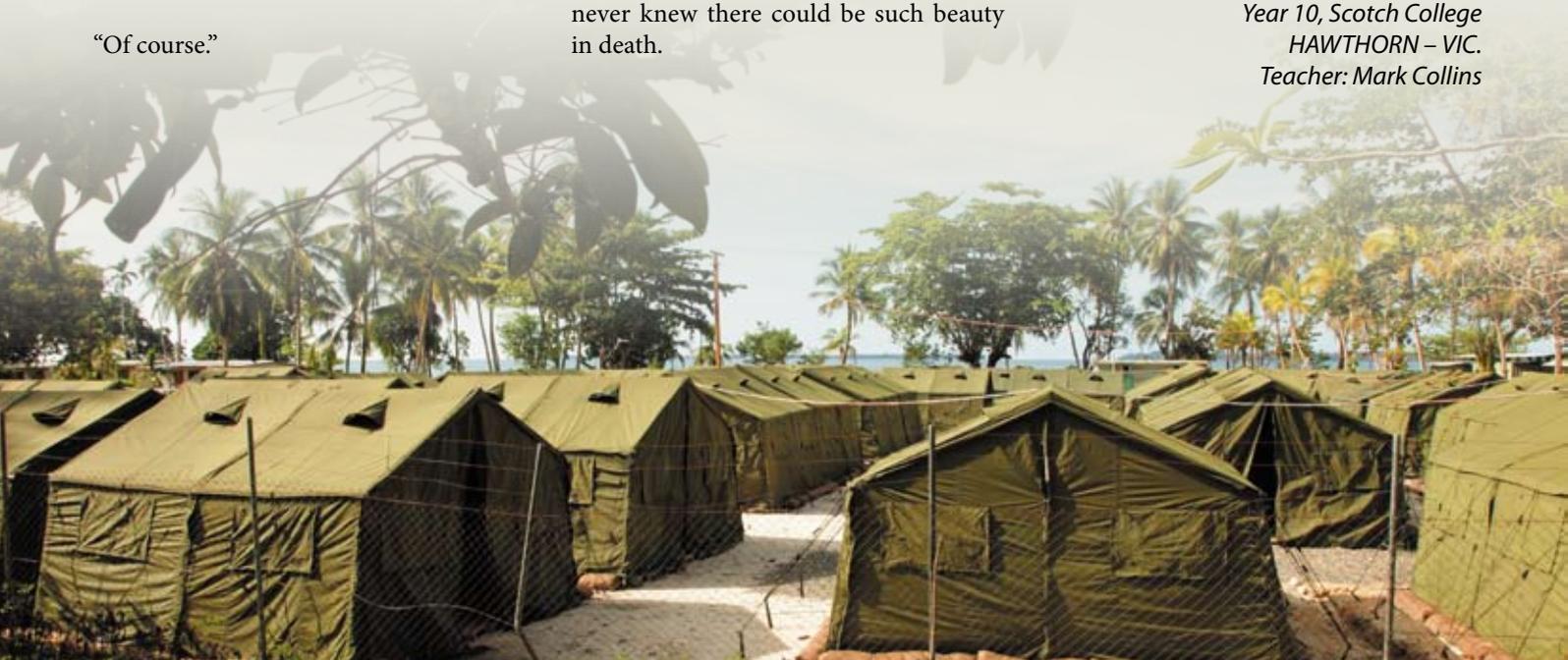
But things are different now after the war. I thought I was one of the lucky ones, able to flee to the coast. We were packed to the brim in a small fishing boat, and hoped that the small amount of food and water could sustain us through the perilous journey.

Yet now, we sleep in long tents, with hundreds of us in countless rows of uncomfortable beds. We have no privacy, nor autonomy. There is no beauty here. I am constantly hungry; when it is time to eat, our tinned food is seldom warm, and always without cutlery. It is as if we are animals.

Our requests for medical care take weeks, our complaints dismissed and ignored. In the tropical heat, mould and infection spread quickly, but we are denied basic essentials for our hygiene. My detainment stretched for months, then years; now, this faux asylum is more reminiscent of a life sentence in prison than refuge.

I have no identity now. I am not a doctor — I am barely a human. I am now Number 2948 of Manus Island.

*By Luke Graven  
Year 10, Scotch College  
HAWTHORN – VIC.  
Teacher: Mark Collins*





Hate has touched and can touch again  
 Yet unlike most of his brethren  
 Not Hope nor love can stir his will  
 His heart, his mind, and his need to kill

Black and grey and shades of darkness  
 To be calm or be a tempest  
 Either or can tear apart  
 The connections kept from the start

Closest of friends turned enemies  
 The hot turned cold from scorch to freeze  
 Painful waves hitting the shore  
 Hate has hurt and cut through before

Those who he holds dear  
 For them he lets slip no tear  
 With no heart or mind left to love  
 He brings bad tidings on the wings of a dove

## Thorns of a Dove

By **Patrick Brown**  
 Year 9, Creek Street Christian College  
 BENDIGO – VIC.  
 Teacher: Mrs Gail Stubs

**P**ierre pulled the guillotine's rope and the blade lifted precariously above the royal's head. The royal had been brutally shoved onto the platform, slammed to the ground by the guards and his head forced into the wooden lunette. He released the rope, sending the hungry blade straight towards its victim's neck. This reminded Pierre of his mother slicing soft peaches – their juice spewing everywhere – and then laying the halves on the pastry. Pierre missed her delicious peach tarts very much. As the royal's head landed in the straw basket below, the revengeful onlookers roared.

★★★

Knives and forks clanked against ceramic plates. Pierre tapped his glass, grabbing the attention of his dinner guests: other executioners, important heroes of the Revolution, and his family. "We are gathered here tonight", he announced, "to celebrate our achievements and rising prosperity". Through the swell of applause, Pierre heard a thumping. He gestured to everyone to quieten and confusion spread like an infection.

Then a louder bang shook the room. A stampede of footsteps approached the dining room. The handle turned and then

the door flew open. Ten army officials leaked into the room. Two walked over to Pierre, grabbed his arms and pulled him up. They kicked the chair out from underneath him. Everyone was startled as the French army were allies.

"What's going on?" Pierre's wife exclaimed.

"Your husband is being arrested and sentenced to death for assisting the escape of three royals who were due for execution", replied the General.

"I did not!" Pierre protested.

At that moment, the expressions around the table changed. Pierre had a sudden impulse to run, but he knew he couldn't.

★★★

## Skull



As Pierre sat there in the gloomy cell, awaiting his own execution, he thought about his wife and two children whom he would never see again. A surge of anger towards the royals rose within him, but then it dissolved as his thoughts shifted. They had families, too.

Pierre had been so blinded by his own cause. He saw now, that they were mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters who helplessly struggled to escape death and he felt awful about the suffering he'd inflicted. If only I had helped them escape. Pierre was dying inside for a crime he didn't commit but wished he had. The feeling was worse than any other. Worse than the hungry blade waiting to decapitate its next victim.

By **Ollo Coates**  
 Year 7MJ, Scotch College  
 HAWTHORN – VIC.  
 Teacher: Mark Collins

# The Glide

**S**HOVE my costume on, stick my chin up and stand there, the same as everyone. It's as near naked in front of strangers as most of us will ever get. I understand that for some people even putting on a costume is difficult, too revealing. But here is my body out in the air, and no one is falling over laughing or turning away in disgust. We are all equal in a swimming cap. Nobody is judging. Or if they are, they're doing so silently. Pools are egalitarian, well that's what I tell myself.

Hwoo. The whistle blows. I enter the clear, chlorinated water. My eyes are shut, and my breath is held. Hwoo. It begins. I can feel the wall under my foot, and I really am trying to get this bit right because it's so satisfying, a good glide. In my mind I'm aerodynamic and forceful. I push off from the wall in the pool, arms outstretched in front of me, hands clasped tightly one on top of the other. The force of the push-off sends water rushing along my muscles making them ripple. On the index finger of my right hand, little bubbles form temporarily on my fingernail, lingering there until I break my stretched form. I pull the first arm back, kick a foot, start the clockwork, head still down before the first breath is needed. At the start, I'm a little slow. If I was a car, I'd still be in first gear.

At the end of the first stroke, my breathing has shifted into the right place; any slight cold-water heart-beat or panting has calmed down. My mind is engaged, and I concentrate on what my body is doing. Finding the flow, spearing my arm in. I am in a rhythm, held by the water. Then I'm in fifth gear. I start to notice the beauty of the water around me. Tilting my head as I breathe, I see right across the water's horizon. I slam the wall, lifting my head up to the scoreboard, second place... I qualify. I can feel my eyes sparkling, my mouth a little drawn back at the corners, my cheeks flushed, heart racing. I twist my head around to see the other competitors and crowd cheering. The sound is an uproar like a stampeding herd of wild-eyed cattle, nothing I have ever heard before.

I can feel my blood rushing like a shot through my veins. A feeling of thrilling happiness. After the celebration, I jump

into my car, put my foot on the brake, key in the ignition, put the car in gear, release the brake and drive. One second I am driving, and the next SLAM-CRASH-CRUNCH, the tyres squeal. Disappointment, disbelief and fear fill my mind as I lie on my side, sandwiched between the cold, soft dirt and the hot, slick metal of the car. The weight of the car presses down on the lower half of my body with its monster force. My body is numb, but it does not hurt. My lungs feel like they are constricted and air will neither enter nor escape them. I yell but my voice is unheard. All I can do is wait. Wait for someone to help me or wait to die...

I wake up in the intensive care unit. I can hardly keep my eyes open, as they ache every time I blink. It is about 8:40pm. I know this not because I've recently checked the clock. I just overheard. My heart beats fast, and my palms are sweaty. I can see my mum across the room staring at me. Just staring. Nothing else, yet I can feel my pulse beating in my ears, blocking out all other sound except my breathing that is raggedly moving in and out of my mouth. My eyes shift to a man walking towards me, his arms are swaying simultaneously back and forth, as his stilt-like legs seem to be carrying him to me, automatically in motion one leg thrust forward as the other tried, rhythmically, to catch up. His face is expressionless.

"Hi Kate. My name is Dr Murphy and I am your doctor. You will be recovering for a while; the impact of the crash has damaged..."

My mind wanders off. I stare at the needle in my arm, it is attached to a bag with clear liquid. All I seem to hear are phrases that I don't understand. Or I guess don't want to accept...

"Shattered bone fragments."

"Neurological dysfunction."

"Ability to walk... move."

"10 percent change."

"The lower half of your body."

My muscles are tight, gazing down to the lower half of my body. My head starts beating. I can actually hear the thumping sound, like my brain is trying to forcefully come out of my skull and the pain throbs with each heart beat... Right eye and temple. Every time. Thump, thump, thump.

Sitting there, I am overwhelmed with sadness. Once that first tear breaks free, the rest follows in an unbroken stream. I bend forward pressing my palms into my face. The IV drip is tugging on the edge of the bed, I don't care. I feel as if there is a pit, a high energy vortex that keeps pulling me down. It is like one of those dreams where I keep falling and there seems no end to it and if this isn't enough, slowly the light appears to dim and before I know it, I'm surrounded with a dark empty space filled with nothing but my own negativity and suffering.

I still dream about it. The glide. Putting my shoulders under and readying myself, lifting my feet behind me to connect with the wall and pushing off, my arms arrowed ahead and body... for a few seconds... suspended. That is always my favourite part. The glide. When I am in the water, I am myself, floating free, but not any more.

By **Cindy Nguyen**

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

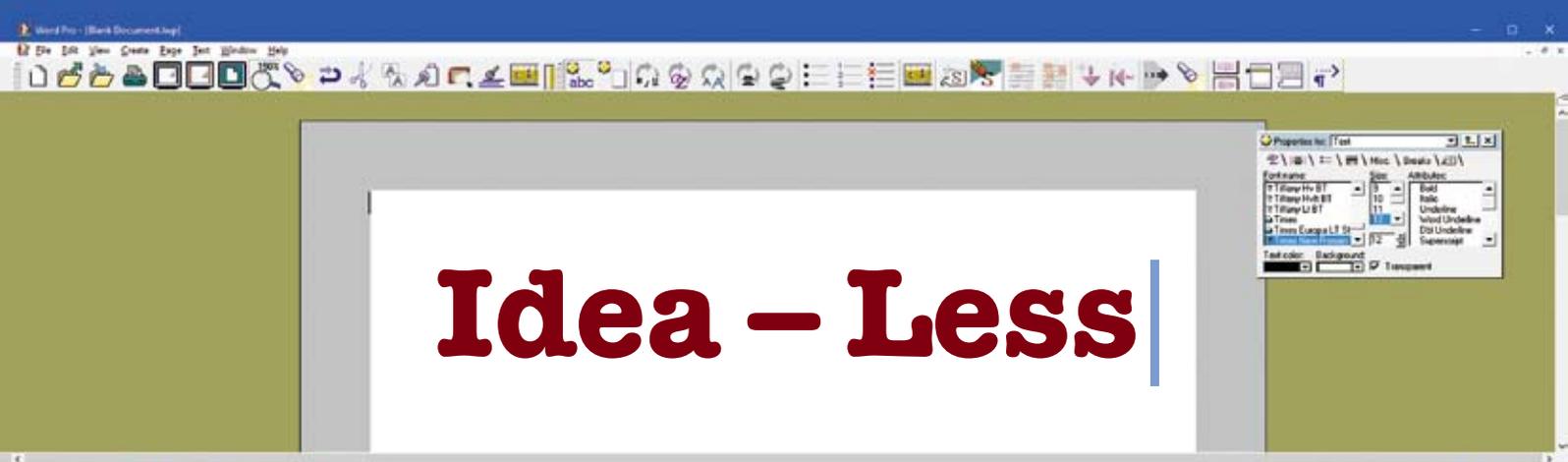


# Harmony Matters?

I am starting my day with a poem in my mind,  
Which matters a lot,  
A song in my heart,  
Which shines darkly through,  
A sweet melody in my ears,  
Which cries out loud.  
Now I am wondering, imagining, dreaming,  
What does harmony mean to us?  
It is the time when the world gets together as one.  
All of us together,  
Our looks, food, culture, other differences are put aside and  
together we revive and survive.  
What if this harmony lasted forever?  
No war, no fighting, just peace.  
The world would be one big happy family,  
Where everyone's dreams matter and belong,  
Where no one is treated unfairly,  
Where no one is second rated,  
Where everyone is unique,  
Where right is superior to wrong.  
But in this world darkness exists,  
This world is a treacherous place,  
Where there's nowhere to turn,  
Nowhere to hide,  
So much horror going on,  
How do we fix it?  
Look around,  
Our countries falling apart,  
Guns shooting,  
Rebellious talk,  
What can we do?  
Does harmony matter?  
When we look around,  
On the news,  
In magazines,  
What do we see?  
Negativity,  
No positivity,  
What can we do?  
Does harmony matter?  
Harmony,  
Does,  
Matter,  
In every nation,  
Lives many creations,  
Suffering the corrupt and contempt,  
Can we do something?  
About this ruination,  
Cleanse it like vaccinating a mutation.  
Is death the thing the people deserve?  
The people who protect,  
Their country  
And their people.  
These people are now perishing,  
One by one.

What's left?  
Now the good people are gone,  
Forever,  
From this world.  
What can we do?  
Does harmony matter?  
Just a few years without harmony,  
The bad will thrive,  
The good will die,  
Evilness would take over this world and rise,  
Menacingly.  
What other destruction will we have to watch?  
What can we do?  
Does harmony matter?  
People are bullying,  
Each other.  
People are treating each other differently,  
In atrocious ways,  
By gender,  
Culture,  
Age,  
Appearances.  
People treating each other differently,  
Not like how they want to be treated,  
By breaking their hearts into several pieces,  
Ending their dreams in seconds,  
Stealing the love present in their families,  
Snatching their education,  
Abandoning their human rights,  
Taking their dignity.  
This is no harmony,  
This is no way,  
This should not be any norm.  
Harmonies are the keys of the piano,  
Without these keys,  
No peaceful and light music will be sounded,  
Everything would be lost.  
No one would live,  
A life of Peace,  
Love,  
Enjoyment,  
Success,  
And of course,  
Harmony.  
Now does harmony matter?

By **Areebah Haq**  
Year 7, Auburn Girl's High School  
AUBURN – NSW  
Teacher: Miss Kavo

A screenshot of a Microsoft Word document. The title of the document is "Idea - Less", displayed in a large, bold, red font. The document is open in a window titled "Word Pro: [Blank Document.docx]". The Word ribbon is visible at the top, and a Properties window is open on the right side of the document.

# Idea - Less

THE WHITE screen stared wordlessly back at me, near empty except for the flickering blue cursor. The narrative was due tomorrow and I had no idea what to write!

I had plenty of small ideas buzzing around in my head but none of them seemed right. I needed something not too big but not too small, had a good plot line, and an ending. That was the big problem with my ideas, they never had endings. I could come up with heaps of exciting storylines with plot twists and character development, but none of them had endings. It wasn't uncommon for me to stare blankly at the screen wondering what on earth I should write about, waiting for an idea to pop into my head that was actually good. But most times I would just sit there, my mind blank, simply waiting. My parents always tell me to write something that I would want to read or something similar to what I already read, but I doubt a YA fantasy novel is really what my teacher is looking for.

"Grace! Dinner is ready", my mum yelled from the kitchen. I sighed, leaning back in my chair. Only I forget that my chair has no back, so I topple right off.

"Are you okay in there?" I push myself up off the ground and dust myself off.

"Yep, coming", I yell in response to my mum's question.

I walk out into the kitchen to find my mum standing behind the kitchen bench loading generous servings of butter chicken onto multiple plates, while my stepdad reads the newspaper on his iPad.

"Have you finished your homework yet?" Mum asks, walking over to the dining table.

"I don't know what to write! My mind is totally blank and the few ideas I do come

up with seem... not right. And I know you say I should write the sort of things I read but I highly doubt that Mrs Denman wants to read a narrative about an assassin in her enemy's castle competing in a competition for her freedom."

"Maybe Mrs Denman has read *Throne of Glass* and really enjoyed it like you did. Also remember to get me the last book from your dad's house because you keep forgetting, and I want to know what happens to Aelin!" she replied, the last part edged with so much excitement that she nearly drops the plates as she sets them on the table.

"If I was still a teacher who had given this assignment I would be looking for something unique, and I would also be really impressed if you added in some difficult vocabulary", my stepdad pipes in, finally looking up from his iPad. "Not too hard that it's unintelligible but enough so that it sounds impressive."

"Well, I won't have any vocabulary if I can't figure out what my story even is going to be about", I respond.

The room goes silent, all of us short on ideas about what I should write until my mum suggests, "You could call your dad? His job is practically writing stories. Or you could ask Richard Flanagan for advice, after all, he lives just down the road".

"First of all dad writes news stories. Reports", I remind her, scooping a spoonful of food into my mouth. "Second of all, it's already dark, and I doubt that Richard would really like us knocking on his door because I want help with my homework", I say just as I scrape the last bit of food off my plate onto my fork. I walk over to the dishwasher, and put my plate inside before turning back around. "Thank you for your ideas but I think I'll just keep trying to come up with something myself", I say

before walking back to the confinement and solitude of my room.

Maybe I should try writing about stuff I read, I thought to myself. It wouldn't do any harm, right? So with that I began to type up the beginning of one of my possible stories, onto my iPad.

The rain pattered against the windows, masking her footsteps as she crept along the dark hallway. All she needed to do was get in, grab the documents, get out, and report to her master. Piece of cake. She had done this plenty of times, tonight would be no different from the rest, so why did she feel this sinking feeling in her stomach that it was a trap? No. She could not afford to think like that, if she did then she would have been caught a very long time ago. Her mission was to acquire some documents on slave trade that would in three days time be brought to the king, where he would decide if it was a worthy investment or not. She had to dispose of them so that the idea would be rejected, and so she could eventually work towards freeing the slaves and creating a more equal and balanced world. If this mission went wrong then she would never be able to help the slaves. Maybe that was why she felt like this, because of all that revolved around this going right. She silently crept around a corner into a servant's passage that would lead to near where she hoped the documents would be. She had been trailing the one in possession of these precious documents for a week now. She hadn't found out much other than that he went to the theatre each and every night.

She tiptoed out of the passage and around the threshold into the study. Now, if I was hiding documents like these where would I put them? A drawer would be too obvious and there was no hiding anything in a drawer, a cupboard or any other normal storage method would be the same. Which meant that the most likely options were

hidden inside the blinds on the window or a hollow floorboard. Although it was raining, it was the height of Summer so if you opened the window to let cool air in, the documents would fall right out. Not a good idea in this weather. So that left a floorboard. She had monitored the sounds of her footsteps this entire time, she had heard one of them sound slightly different than the others. Sure enough, when she pulled on that floorboard it gave out and came upwards, what she did not expect however, was what she found inside.

I typed up that last word and thought to myself, is this a good story? Maybe, it could possibly get very interesting as it progressed, but it seemed more like a chapter from a novel than a two page story. Maybe another time I could continue it, but not now. If I wasn't going to write about what I read what else should I write about? I knew that some of my friends enjoyed books about boarding schools, maybe I could try that too. I cut and pasted the beginnings of my other story onto another document and began writing my second idea.

“Remember to phone every night and if anything happens contact me immediately.”

“All right mum”, I reply every now and then to my mother's incessant chatter, also nodding occasionally when necessary.

“Try to make friends, and please, please don't get yourself kicked out of here as well.” At that moment I turn to look at my mum with an expression meant to convey ‘Why would I do that?’. This was my fifth school this year, because I had managed to get myself kicked of all the others by apparently doing stuff wrong. I mean, last time I had blown up my teacher's microwave by putting aluminium foil in there, but how was I supposed to know that you shouldn't do that? It's not like they give microwave safety lessons! Anyway, now I had really done it and was being sent to an elite private boarding school in the middle of nowhere. Worst of all, there was no phone service, so the only way to call people was to use one of the school's public pay phones.

“I mean it. There is nowhere else for you to go, it's not like I wanted to send you here.”

I paused, rereading what I had wrote.

This just didn't feel right, didn't feel like... me. This was not a style of writing I was comfortable with, and like my first idea, could easily go on for over two pages. Not only that but writing a story about a school would mean coming up with a lot of names. Not only for the characters, but also for the school too, and if there was one thing I was even worse at than writing endings, it was coming up with names. No, not only was this writing style not for me, but also the story itself was not for me. It wasn't something I wanted to write so I had no second thoughts as I highlighted the one paragraph I had written, and deleted it. What else could I write about? My stepdad told me to use difficult vocabulary. Maybe I could make my story bilingual, I could do most of it in English and a little bit in Italian. What could my story be about though. I thought to myself, what is a story that could be both in Italian and English? No I shouldn't do that, Mrs Denman would have no clue what I'm writing. If I wanted to use good vocabulary I'd just have to insert it as I went.

I looked at the time at the top of my still blank word document. 7:47. I had some time left, not a lot but still some left. The only thing I had ran out of was ideas. I exited my word document, opened up Safari and searched ‘what should I write a story about?’ I clicked the top link and a new page loaded onto my screen.

*‘Have you ever been sitting at your desk watching your pen hover above the paper, waiting for an idea to make it past your writer's block. But in the end you just sit there for hours while your paper stays completely empty? Here are some tips to help you get past this debilitating condition:*

1. *Writing is an art, next time you see something think of all the colours, the lights, the darks. Then put all those descriptions into sentences. For example, instead of “the water rippled”, say “the wind brushed against the water's surface, creating an array of light and shadows as the water rippled in circles that slowly expanded, until finally settling once more.”*

Maybe I should try that. I was good at art, especially shading and making sure light reflected at the right angle. I had always loved the challenge of getting the perfect colours to make the effect of an object 3D. Maybe I could describe the night sky. I had always enjoyed gazing up at the night sky, watching the stars make their path

through the dark, cloudless sky. Yes, I would use that as my inspiration. So with a new mindset I began my third attempt at writing my narrative.

The inky, black veil stretched far above my head, illuminating the spattering of glowing dots that spread far and wide across the sky. The last little light of day fighting for survival, fighting to stay, but in the end all light was wiped out by the dark curtain being draped around me. The night illuminated the silver moon smiling down at me, creating an ethereal glow. Dark colours swirled around, blues, purples and dark pinks blending together to create a new and beautiful effect altogether. As I stared out at the scene unfolding before my very eyes, I couldn't help but think that it was the loveliest thing I had ever seen.

I stared at the tiny section of page I filled up with descriptions of the night sky. If I continued at this pace I would definitely not finish this by tomorrow, that one paragraph alone had taken three times as long as a normal paragraph. Not only that but also how would I continue my story? I seriously doubted I'd be able to write a whole story full of just descriptions, I would need a storyline. Also how do you write a complication if you are just writing descriptions. It's like saying that there was a problem worthy of a story in, ‘the sky was a nice blue with fluffy white clouds.’

Out of ideas and feeling miserable I flopped back in my chair. Just like before, I forgot there was no back and fell straight off, hitting my head against the floor. I thought back to the article I had found on Safari. I had only read the introduction and the first tip before I went straight into writing. But what if the introduction was also a tip, what if they had accidentally managed to make the introduction an idea of what to write? What if I wrote about being unable to write a story? Yes, I liked that idea. I could include snippets of stories I had thought about while also writing a story in itself. With a smile on my face, I sat back up and began the first line.

The white screen stared wordlessly back at me, as though it was mocking me because of my mind that no matter what, seemed to remain stagnant.

By **Grace Fabris**  
Year 7, Fahan School  
LOWER SANDY BAY – TAS.  
Teacher: Megan Denman

# The Three Best Friends

THE SCHOOL dining hall is packed full of kids who are talking, shouting, and making silly animal noises. There are a few long, rectangular tables which are full of students devouring their lunches. Sitting in the middle of the third table are three girls who are smiling, laughing, and joking. The girls have been inseparable since they were very young.

Daisy asks if Kate got her note which she had hid in Kate's pocket before school started. Kate reaches down into her pocket and finds a piece of paper with Daisy's code language on it. Daisy and Kate always use this code when they send each other private letters so their siblings can't read it. Kate unfolds the note and slowly reads the code written letter. Kate answers Daisy, "Didn't we go to my house yesterday?". Daisy replies "Mmmhhh, I think it would be better to go to your house again today because my brother is ill". Kate mumbles and looks disappointed.

Olivia is bursting to ask what they are talking about when all of a sudden, the bell rings and they all take off. In a hurry, they all rush to leave the dining hall and line up silently for class. All that Olivia could think about was how Kate and Daisy were better friends. However, she couldn't ask them what they were talking about at lunch because they had silent reading.

Whilst the girls are having silent reading, they all begin to think about their friendship. Olivia was upset because Kate and Daisy were better friends and she thought they always had playdates without her. As Kate is reading a book about two girls and their ups and downs, she starts to feel disgruntled. She felt that Daisy always wants to come to Kate's house because she had a Slip 'n' Slide waterslide. Starting to feel that Daisy was better friends with Kate's Slip 'n' Slide than with Kate herself, Kate decided that she would ask Daisy why they could never play at Daisy's house.

Meanwhile, Daisy is reading a book about the breeds of dogs, and stops to think about the cupcake incident that happened yesterday. Daisy couldn't believe it and was really annoyed that her BFF didn't give her a cupcake but gave everyone else one. As the girls are thinking deeply

about their friendship, the bell suddenly rings. Olivia pushes in her chair and rushes out of the big, old, classroom.

Daisy is waiting outside for Kate when Olivia sprints out like a bolt of lightning and runs down the steps. Daisy wanted to ask about their problems but Olivia is too fast. Feeling upset and confused, Daisy tries to run after Olivia to find out what is wrong. Kate walks out of the classroom and waits next to the art room for Olivia and Daisy. After a while Kate decides that neither Olivia nor Daisy wanted to wait for her so she walks down the steps to the dining hall.

As Kate sits at the third table on her own, she wonders why she's even friends with Daisy and Olivia in the first place. After ten minutes Daisy and Olivia finally show up and rush over to Kate. Olivia tries to catch Kate's attention but Kate just continues to chatter to the person behind her. "It's no use" says Olivia, annoyed. Then Daisy tries to catch Kate's attention but she just continues to pretend to ignore Daisy because it's very loud anyway. Daisy stomps over to Kate and interrupts her conversation.

Kate turns around to confront Daisy and Daisy shouts in Kate's ear, "Why are you ignoring us?".

"ME! IGNORING YOU! I think it's the other way around", shouts Kate fiercely. "How are we ignoring you?" ask Daisy and Olivia together.

"I think you know how", Kate says with conviction. Looking confused, Daisy remembers when she was running after Olivia and seeing a figure walking out of the classroom and thinks it must have been Kate.

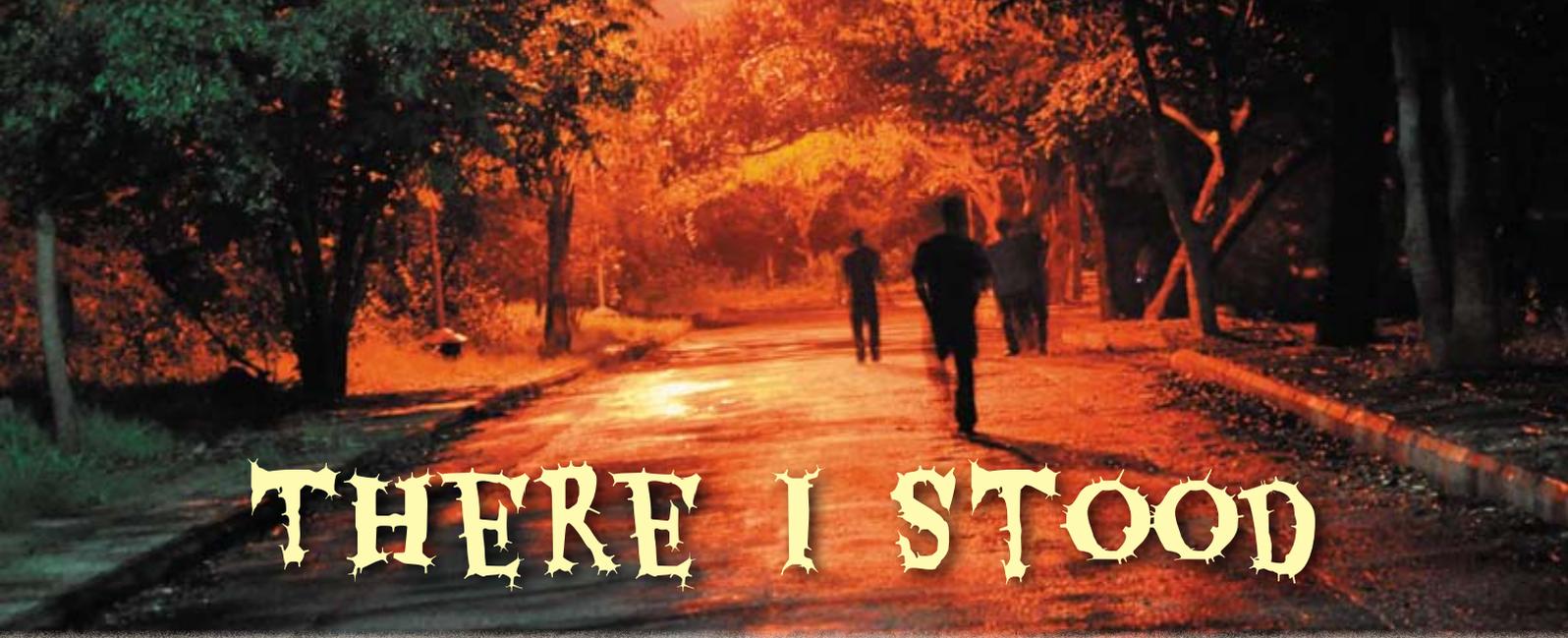
"Is it because neither of us were waiting for you outside of the classroom?" "You guessed one of the many reasons", says Kate angrily. "What, there's more than one reason?", questions Olivia in a worried voice. "Of course there's more than one reason. First of all, Daisy always only wants to come to my house because I have a Slip 'n' Slide waterslide and not because you want to see me!" shouts Kate furiously. "I knew it, I knew it, and I knew it. You two are much better friends with each other than with me. I have been living a lie for almost my whole life", Olivia declares in a confident manner whilst pretending not to be hurt.

"That's not true and even if it was, it's your own fault because you don't treat your friends with any kindness or respect!!!", says Daisy, starting to become enraged. "What are you talking about?" asks Olivia. "You know that time during class when you were handing out cupcakes to everyone in the class except your best friend in the world?" Daisy looked Olivia right in the eye as she asked her this question. "It's not what you think. In fact, it's the opposite. I was handing them out and I was planning to give you yours last which was decorated with your name and I didn't want anyone to see it so that they wouldn't get jealous but I dropped the cupcake", Olivia replies with regret.

To be continued...

By **Freya McAndrew**  
Year 4, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.  
Teacher: Mrs Young





# THERE I STOOD

**T**HERE I stood thinking about life. Pale skin and messy ties. Lost in my thoughts deeper than the ocean and for my face it was without any emotions.

I remembered, this one time I was falling. I don't know when, where, or how, but I was falling. I was falling for a good fifteen minutes. Just as I hit the ground, I saw darkness and dust creep before my eyes. Lonely, frightened, and curious. I saw myself standing in a street, shivering, goosebumps, and needy. In need for a hug. In need for affection. In need for someone to tell me that everything was going to be okay. Despite the fact that I knew it wasn't.

That night I saw something. Something that has scarred me ever since. That night, I was placed into a walking dead scene, except the zombies were replaced by faceless armed men. I could smell death. People begging for mercy as the bullets pierced through their flesh. I could see bodies stacked on top of one another, everywhere I turned. Bodies falling to the ground faster than I could blink. Toddlers, adults, and teens, but they didn't care. Blood dripped through the cracks. Playing on repeat over and over in my head to this day. Drip, drip, drip and another one goes down. Unable to bear the screams I covered my ears. Watched everyone outnumbered by those faceless men.

I just stood there. I did absolutely nothing, but cried. My cries wouldn't have helped them. Or maybe they did. Maybe my cries made someone around the world realise everything these people were going through. But they didn't. Instead I was faced with something worse. I saw a tiger leap towards me. It couldn't see anyone

but me. I didn't care people were dead any more. I didn't care people were dying any more. I didn't care that if I run I would be letting hundreds of thousands of people down. Whose stories are yet to be heard. Where justice is yet to be served. I didn't care. I ran like there was no tomorrow. I shut my eyes tight as I cried.

I saw my life flash before my eyes. Do you know how that feels? The moment before you think you are gonna die? Trust me, when I tell you that it feels terrible. It feels like your life is a paper stuck in a thorny bush. Just when someone tries helping you, your soul get sucked out of you. Just like that, your soul rips like that paper would rip in that bush. Slowly but brutally. Painful but gently.

Except I wasn't dead, I couldn't be. Just as I tried to regain focus of my sore eyes, I found myself hanging on a well bucket. This is when it got worse. I thought of going down in the well, maybe I found a way to climb back up. No, I couldn't because the bottom of the well was swarming with snakes hissing their way to the top.

The ironic part is, I didn't care about anyone any more. Not the people dying, not the tiger, not the snakes. No one but me. So I stayed there, wondering what wrongs I had done to deserve this. Squeak, squeak, squeak. I look up only to find black and white mice nibbling on my rope.

I didn't care. All I wanted was food, so I tried reaching out to the top of the well, but failed. I made a huge splash as I hit the water. That very moment my life changed. As if I was reborn into this entirely new person. That very moment, that's when it hit me, I had it all wrong.

You see death, it is inevitable. No matter what you do. No matter where you try to find shelter the tiger will find you. You are just going to end up tangled in your thoughts. The high walls of the well will make sure you try to reach to the top so you can feed yourself. After all it is the desires that we chase before we find ourselves served as a meal for the snakes. The mice being day and night are there just to cut our days short.

My death... it was destined. But if I could save even one person instead of watching bodies fall on the ground before me, I wouldn't have to die guilty. I would die knowing my life had a purpose. That I saved an innocent life. That gave someone else's life a purpose. Instead I chose to cry. I chose the life of a weak. I chose to watch people die. This... will haunt me for life, because my end was way worse than a bullet. I died a meaningless life.

As I started at the skies, I learned a life lesson, a very important one. Don't make anyone's life a living hell for them. You never know when something might backfire at you. You don't have no boundaries, you don't have no rules, so stop limiting yourself to a no. Look at all the beautiful things in life and learn to cherish them while you still can. Save people and help people while you still can. You never know when you might need help yourself.

There I stood thinking about life. Pale skin and messy ties. Lost in my thoughts deeper than the ocean and as for my face it was without any emotions.

*By Syeda maira Zia  
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BLACKTOWN – NSW*

# DRAGON HEART

“IVY, COME down! Mother will see!” Rosalyn shouted from the bottom of the wall.

Ivy smiled down at her sister but stayed where she was, balancing on the stone wall that ran along the back of the garden. She stayed because this was one of the only places she didn't feel awkward and wrong, up here on the tallest part of the wall. As close as she could get to the sky, the place where the dragon inside her longed to be.



Movement on the other side of the wall caught her eye. Some changelings were playing in the field near the edge of the cliff. They were a fox, a deer and a unicorn, playing some sort of jumping game leaping and tumbling over and around each other, all thoughts of predator and prey forgotten in the fun of the game.

“Ivy!” Her mother's voice jerked her from her observations. “Come down here now!”

Ivy didn't understand why it was, that every time her longing for the sky was even a tiny bit relieved, her mother would storm out of the house and force her back down to earth. As she reluctantly began to make her descent, her mind wandered back to the changelings. How she envied them. She would have given everything to be with them. Not as she was, but as what she was meant to be: a majestic flying animal of immense size and beauty. Not in this awkward, cramped body her mother would not let her leave.

With a small thump she reached the bottom of the wall. Rosalyn looked up at her with worried eyes. When their mother was like this you just had to stay low and hope she didn't notice you. Ivy reached out for her sister's hand and gave it a small squeeze.

“Best you hop off down your hole until

the worst of it is over. Thanks for trying to warn me.”

Rosalyn gave a weak smile, which Ivy returned, and ran off towards the door, staying as far away from their mother as possible.

Ivy began to trudge back towards the house. She took her usual seat by the window at the dining table and started to slowly eat her dinner, looking longingly back outside all the while. After she was finished she looked back at her mother, then at the door. The meaning of this gesture was not lost on her mother but nor was it appreciated.

“Absolutely not, Go to your room now!” This was not the first time Ivy's mother had lost her temper at Ivy for climbing the wall and Ivy was sure it would not be the last.

Why does she not understand? Ivy wondered as she grudgingly climbed the spiral staircase to her attic bedroom. But, then again, it was obvious: of the three of them, she was the only one that had a strong soul. Her sister's rabbit and mother's eagle were so faint that it was almost impossible to tell if you didn't know them. But Ivy took after her father.

She wondered where he was now. He had had a strong soul, but he had given in to it before Rosalyn was born and her mother

would not even speak his name.

“Ivy.”

She stopped, halfway up the stairs, and looked back at her mother.

“I love you, you know that don't you?”

Through all her anger Ivy knew in her heart it was true. She nodded, “I love you too”.

She sighed and continued her climb. Her father would've understood.

★★★

The last rays of sun spread across the sky like fire, lighting Ivy's face with a golden glow and casting a long dragon-shaped shadow across the roof. She lived for these moments, when she could sit undisturbed in a high place and watch the sun set over the town. Behind her the sea sank into the shadow of the cliff, slowly fading from bright aqua-blue to the dark shade of navy that it always took on during the hours of darkness.

“Beautiful, isn't it?”

Ivy started. She hadn't heard anyone come up on the roof. Then she saw it. It definitely wasn't a human but it was not a normal animal either. It had a changeling's distinctive silver circle on its forehead which meant it was a person who had followed the calling of their soul and become the animal they truly were at heart.

“Who are you?” Ivy asked. Although she already had a faint suspicion of who the snake was, she wasn't sure yet though just the thought made her heart thump.

“I used to have a name”, the serpent replied, “but names have no importance in the animal world, I am here to help. That is all you need to know”.

The burning disc of the sun finally slid

over the horizon and gave way to the grey velvet of dusk. Ivy gave a last, longing look up at the first silvery stars. The snake spoke again. "If you feel it calling as strongly as I think you do, then go before she can lock you away for good. Your mother loves you but she has no way of understanding what your going through. Say goodbye to your sister and run, to the cliff would be good. Once you are there you will know what to do."

Ivy gave a brief nod. "Will it hurt?"

"Yes. But it will be well worth it. It will stop the yearning that has been hurting you all your life."

"But my mother, I can't just leave her, and Rosalyn, it's hard enough for her already but with me gone..." Ivy trailed off, unable to finish. "Who are you really?"

"I believe you already know." As Ivy's father looked up at her she knew for certain that it was him.

"I can't just go." Ivy looked back at the town, twinkling just like the sky above it, as if had become a part of the sea and was now reflecting the brilliant stars as clearly as its watery counterpart.

"Rosalyn understands more than you give her credit for, Ivy. She is a very strong girl", her father said gently. "And I watch over the house, though your mother does not know it. Rosalyn and your mother will be absolutely fine."

"So I should just leave them, leave everything I've ever known?" There was a touch of anger in Ivy's voice now, she didn't know why.

"I never said that now, did I?"

"What do you mean?"

"You forget how much your mother loves you, Ivy. I am sure she will happily allow you to come back after you change."

"She didn't let you come back." Ivy sounded sceptical.

"She was angry at me, it was only natural. I left her just before Rosalyn was born, I left her without warning, I left her to care for an soon to be born child and a two year old." Ivy's father bowed his head. "I regret I did not tell her."

"I need to go now."

"Yes, you do. Goodbye my daughter."

★ ★ ★

"Rosalyn, Why are you in here?" Ivy asked.

"I heard you talking to father, so I came in here to say goodbye."

"How do you know about father?" Ivy was puzzled, how could her little sister have known when Ivy herself had never once sensed another soul in the house or grounds?

"He comes to me every night and we talk, you never listened when I tried to tell you so I gave up and kept it to myself." Ivy nodded, this made sense for some reason.

"So you know why I have to go, why I can't stay here any longer."

"Yes." Then suddenly Rosalyn's eyes filled with tears and she ran forward and embraced her older sister.

"I'll miss you."

"I will too."

★ ★ ★

The grass was long and dry on the other side of the wall. As Ivy jumped down into the sea of waving stalks the first rays of golden light pierced the twilight gloom. She heard a shout from the other side of the wall. It was her mother.

Ivy began to run. Soon she came out of the long grass and onto the strip of shorter deep green stalks right before the cliff edge. Here, she stopped and turned. She could see Rosalyn waving from the top of the wall and her mother sprinting across the field towards her. Tears streaming down her face, Ivy started running again.

When she reached the cliff edge, she leaped. Far, far far below her the waves crashed with bone breaking force onto the rocks, showing white foam on top of the dark and swirling water. Then she fell, down towards the crashing waves and the rocks below. And as she fell she felt as if her chest were tearing open, like something inside her had finally woken and was now frantically trying to claw down the walls that held it inside of her. It hurt but not in a bad way. Ivy closed her eyes, then, suddenly, she could see herself as if she wasn't her any more. With a roar of joy, Ivy spread her wings and flew upwards, leaving her old broken body to fall into the turquoise waves.

By **Cora McHugh**

Year 7, Lyneham High School  
LYNEHAM – ACT

# MORNING FOG

It crept in from the hills,  
like a ravenous cat creeping  
up on its prey.  
Slowly, it cloaked the city,  
creating a sea of milky mist.  
It slithered between each crevice,  
slunk its way in through each crack,  
and stalked the streets,  
swirling against the trees.  
We became invisible,  
masked by the white blanket.  
The only indication of our presence:  
two lights, like eyes, beaming  
through the morning fog.

By **Justyna Dutka**

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

# UNTITLED

**I**T ALL started when our house exploded. The sound of guns firing echoed through the hall as I ran hand in hand with my mother. I remembered screaming as my father ran towards the explosion, a gun in one hand and then suddenly I felt a piercing pain at the back of my head. I woke up, head still throbbing, gasping for air as memories and thoughts flickered through my head. Cradled in my mother's arms, I started to weep silently. She wiped the tears off my cheek and kissed my forehead, I felt a burst of reassurance whenever I was with her. She leaned towards me and whispered quietly in my ear, "I love you Maya".

My mother and I were sheltered in the ruins of our beloved house, searching for lost memories.

We sat on the concrete and watched the sun rise and the moon wink out of

existence. Food and water were scarce and we struggled to keep well nourished. And with soldiers everywhere it felt like we were isolated on an island with no escape. We manoeuvred through the back streets of Syria, as I tried to keep up with my mother's fast pace. The streets were narrow and smelt strongly of sulphur and our poor sewage system. We stopped as we reached our small fishing boat. Mother pointed at the boat, with a desperate look in her eyes and that's when I realised that that was our escape.

The Syrian war had started. I could see the silhouettes of innocent families as they approached their boats in small groups, trying to flee from this wretched place. As the first stars appeared in the night sky, we silently crept through the shadows to the dock. Soldiers littered the ruins of Palmyra as I said goodbye to my gunshot home. I tiptoed to the fishing boat and instantly realised that my mother was missing. I retraced my footsteps and found

her running with food gathered in her hands. She embraced me warmly, I could feel her chest going up and down with exhilaration. We clambered on to the boat and left before dawn approached. I could feel the gentle rocking of the boat and the calm current acting like a sweet lullaby, and before I knew it I fell asleep, lost in a world of dreams...

I woke up to the sound of churning waves and the smell of the salty sea spray, the blinding light of the sun burning my eyes. We soon spotted a grey haze on the everlasting horizon, as my mum steered our boat towards it. A few days passed and we crossed into the waters of Famagusta, Cyprus. We climbed off our boat and went in search of food and water to quench our hunger and thirst. We stumbled through the local market and paid for some water and fresh fruit to eat, with the very little money we had left. We had some trouble paying because we all spoke different dialects. We managed to stay in Cyprus for a week and I quickly picked up their strange language, Turkish. Later on my mother said that we had to go. We strolled casually to our boat, which was newly

furnished for a longer journey. While we were in Cyprus my mother did some research and said that our next destination was Alanya, Turkey.

This time our journey was rough. Water crashed down over us and pushed us further and further away from our destination. The wind was ice cold and stung like bees against my skin.

What happened next I would never forget.

A gigantic wave was surging from behind, my mother told me to go below deck and brace myself for a powerful blow. The reckless look in her eyes, spoke one simple order: "Go Maya, go!". I followed her instructions as she stood on deck, standing her ground. As the wave crashed down, the boat rocked back and forth, strong enough to tip a human off a boat. The world was still and quiet, except for the pitter patter of gentle rain against the metal of our boat. I took this as a sign that the storm had stopped, so I went outside to check on my mother. Above, everything had been wiped off cleanly, everything including my mother. I sat in a corner muttering to myself, "She's not gone, she's not gone, she's not gone..." but deep inside I felt like a part of me was missing. The memories of my mother and father keeping my spirits alive, so I continued to steer the boat towards Turkey.

Many weeks passed and my boat finally made to the banks of Alanya. I brushed myself off and headed towards a field of white tents, which I guessed was a place for refugees. I finally arrived.

Nurses were frantic, babies were crying and others, like me, were wandering cluelessly. I walked through the middle of a bustling crowd. A nurse came up to me and spoke in Turkish, "Who are you? Do you need assistance?" I said that my name was Maya, I escaped from Syria on boat and both my parents died protecting me. Her expression went sad for a moment, but then returned to its distant look. She guided me towards a tent. Inside it smelled musty and of overheated bodies.

Many small children were there either crying or staring, glassy eyed at me. A sign overhead told me that this was an orphanage for kids from foreign countries to find a home.

Months later the nurse came back and called my name from the waiting list. This was my future.

My time to leave the past behind and focus on what's coming next. I stood up obediently and walked outside. I saw a couple with fair skin waving at me beckoning me to come forward. I slowly came out, step by step. As I went to stand beside the nurse, the family embraced me with a hug. It felt just like home. My insides

melted into my shoes, as I broke down into heavy sobs. They held me tightly, comforting me just like mother and father did. Later that day my new foster parents signed some papers. They could speak Turkish so we communicated just fine. They said that soon I would be heading back to Australia with them.

Years passed and I finally settled in to Australia. I could speak English, I made new friends and I went to a nearby school. Today was a special day. It was the day I escaped. It was the day I lost the ones I loved, my mother and father. To recognise their bravery, I made two graves for them, decorated in a wreath of assorted flowers. The sweet scent of roses filled the air as I looked out onto the sunset. Various emotions overwhelmed me. I lay down my bouquet of daffodils and poppies and sat down in silence remembering my parents' faces, their names and their love. A glistening tear raced down my cheek.

These memories changed me forever.

It's a curse that bears within me.

An unforgettable experience.

This was my story.

By **Sophie Tran**

Year 6, Kingswood College

BOX HILL SOUTH – VIC.

Teacher: Katherine Hinves

# Death in the Attic

**I** WAS in a smelly attic when I saw the ghost. It was floating in the air and whispering harshly. It was saying "Come to me!". It repeated several times, I was scared to death.

Suddenly a flying brick hit my head. It hurt so much I'd rather be dead than face the pain.

Then I heard a whistling sound, I saw the knife hit my helpless bleeding body. Blood was oozing everywhere, I wished I had never met that old man named Jeffrey, he was the one who had put me here. Then I saw one final and fatal blow hit my head and then saw nothing else.

When I woke up I saw that I was in my warm bed, wait I could see through the bed, I was in a ghost bed. Then I saw myself in the mirror. I was see through. Then I realised that when I had lost consciousness I had died.

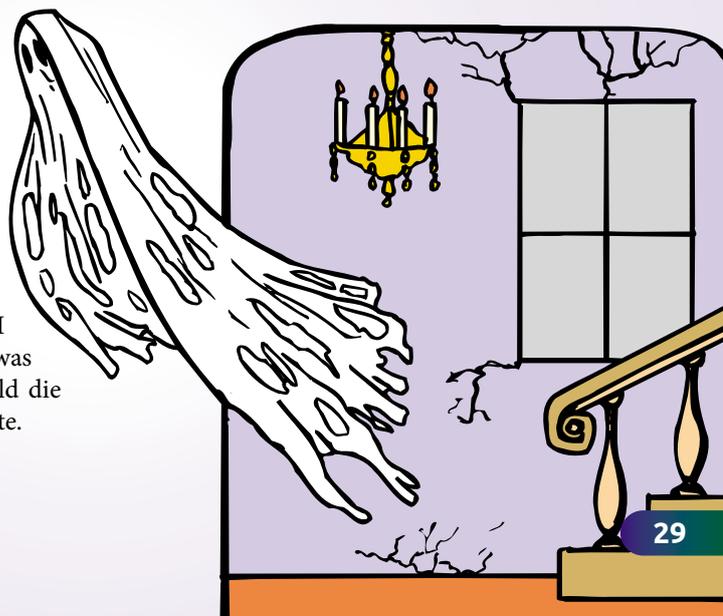
I heard a scream coming from the doorway, Mum had seen me. Then I heard the splash of water and knew what was coming. I had once heard that if water was splashed on a ghost it would die forever. Now that was my fate.

By **Noah James**

Year 4, St Luke's Primary School

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Miss Saba



# The Politician and Austin

**H**ARROW Avenue was a unique road. It was the only road that wasn't brimming with colonies of small and grey brick houses. Instead the road was a place to only one shelter. That shelter wasn't a house but an embroidered mansion brushed with the brightest white paint, surrounded by vast and fresh vegetation and decorated with the largest blue translucent windows.

Inside the beast-sized structure was the grand living room which took the space of two average sized houses in town. The only light approaching was from some strands of sun rays peeking from one window that was opened. The lush red carpet laid on the ground supporting many subtly carved wooden furniture. Due to the command of the owner of the manor and the surrounding land, these polished objects would only shine faintly.

The owner, the politician, sat in his own amusing way. Long legs crossed with black pointed and polished leather shoes dangling, one elbow bent pointing on the corresponding armrest, the other stretched straight on its armrest. His long and pale snake-like fingers also straightened exposing an illuminating red stone set on a silver ring. It was the most prominent and eye-catching object in the dark.

"What does he do?", the politician asked with fascination in his voice echoing on the walls of the vast room.

The politician's servant who stood in the very corner with his head down, barely visible answered, "He just graduated and most possibly is looking for his first job, sir".

"Quite young I see", the politician replied.

"Yes sir."

"Tell me more."

"He is young but old in mind."

The politician's head tilted upwards, "What kind of old do you mean?", he asked. There was silence for a moment.

"Old as in wisdom."

"Only old as in wisdom?", he asked, standing up. He had a long and thin figure.

"Yes sir", the servant answered.

"What is his name?", the politician said staring into the darkness. The servant cleared his throat and answered, "Austin, Austin Smith".

Several kilometres away was the town with the colonies of houses. In one of those many houses lived Austin. It was a usual morning where all the curtains of the house were tied up allowing the sun rays to disperse throughout. Buttoning his light blue shirt, Austin stood in front of the large rectangular mirror observing himself. His mother, Barbara Smith, walked into the room towards him. Like her son, she had oval brown eyes and dark brown hair.

"My dear, stay safe and do well", she said in a voice that was evidently ageing.

"Yes, mum", he replied, "I do that anyways".

Barbara gave a small chuckle and laughed, "No no no, you don't do that".

She knew Austin was the opposite of irresponsible. He was the most trusted and mature man she could ever know. After the death of Andrew Smith, Austin was who she would turn to.

"You stay safe and do well too", he said while placing his arms

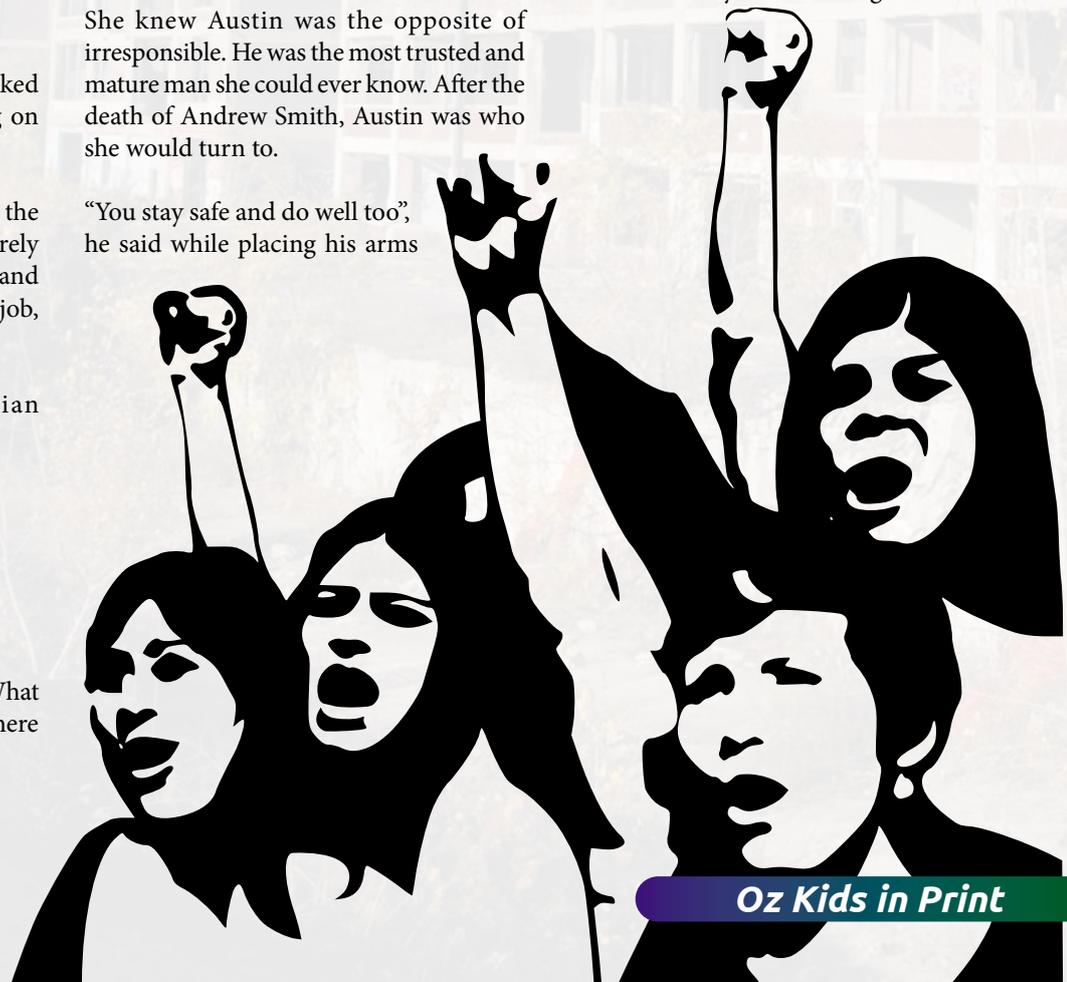
into his thin navy-blue coat. Barbara caressed her son's dark curly hair. Just like every day, he bent his head down and laid a kiss upon her forehead, said his goodbyes and glided out of the house with the prayers from his mother with him.

Out in the streets were swarms of quiet and emotionless citizens pacing all in one direction in a robotic manner. It was the usual march that occurred every day. All of them were making their journey to the City to be swallowed by their jobs. Austin, like the average man, absorbed himself into the crowd.

"This isn't indoors, this is outside and it is different", he thought to himself.

The entrance gate of the City was filled with a colossal amount of figures wayfaring and surrounding a commodious concrete fountain. In the middle of the fountain was a vast circular platform that supported a gargantuan and meticulous figure of a man. Every citizen could recognise the long snake like fingers anywhere. The citizens travelled around the circular architecture to enter the City.

In the City, placed between the buildings were thin alleys intersecting the streets.



These alleys were painted dark as the shadows of the towering metallic structures approached on them. Rarely did any citizen step in them but today, one of these alleys was an important site for a man. He stood wearing a black shirt, black pants, black gloves, and a black hat that concealed three-quarters of his face. Camouflaging himself in the deep darkness, his beady eyes vigorously scanned for a specific figure. The man in black did not let time ruin his mission. The prey was among the crowd. A sly smile formed on his face when he spotted his target. Brown oval eyes and curly dark brown hair. The man chuckled.

As the end of the day approached, the sun was descending taking the light with it and leaving everything else a deep ocean blue. The process in the morning would revive but in the opposite way. Citizens all made their way back home. Austin being one, walked on the very side of the footpath near the buildings. Having practised his very stunt, he slowed down his pace and rapidly but smoothly entered an ajar door of a brown medium-sized structure. Nearly every day he would do this without getting caught. Little did he know that today he was watched by a man who had kept both eyes on him.

The politician's tall body stood on the highest level of his manor. From here, he looked right through the large glass window that took the whole wall and

stared into the atrocious night. The whole town and the City could be viewed from here. The blue glass skyscrapers peaked out tall from the ground while the grey houses on the other side stood small.

'I control all this,' he thought. 'I am the greatest,' he repeated to himself.

The level did not have any lights on. The politician liked to think in the dark. The door on his left creaked. A knock was sound and then a voice, "Sir, can I enter?"

"Yes", the politician answered emotionlessly. As the door slowly opened, the man in black approached. The politician's head tilted upwards and he questioned, "What news do you bring to me Sebastian?"

"A lot, my sir."

"Go on then", the politician replied fidgeting with his red ring.

"Sir, Austin Smith assembles many citizens three times a week in one of the brown buildings along Manchester Street between the town and the City", he said with his voice low, his hands behind him and his head down.

"Continue", stated the politician.

"He educates them about the concept that man of our ancestors used to fight for

and practise", Sebastian said, his head was lower. The politician's blue eyes widened. His expressions were like of a hungry and fiendish predator that had lost his prey. He stopped fidgeting with his ring and turned his head to Sebastian. He stayed in that position for quite a while.

"Sebastian", he pronounced almost hissing like a snake, "What do you mean to say?". His footsteps approached Sebastian, echoing their small thuds through the moment of silence.

"He teaches about morality and equality, how we should be treated equally", Sebastian replied with all his courage standing in his same still position. If there was such thing more quieter and deadlier than silence, it would disperse throughout the room from the ceiling to the floor. Slowly, the politician turned his back to Sebastian and glided back to his position near the window. He stood there thinking and processing the words that were echoed.

"Well", he whispered, "Bring him to me". His small command, quieter than a whisper, blasted fear and agitation through the dark silence.

The next day, Austin Smith was arrested.

By **Fatima Haq**

Year 11, Auburn Girls' High School  
SYDNEY – NSW

## Great Grandma Monica

Watching Midsummer Murders in the dark  
knitting a blanket,  
Great grandma, Mon, sits on her couch  
with her long mane of flowing white hair,  
a face full of wrinkles like crinkled paper,  
and her deep blue eyes twinkle  
as she enjoys her company.

Later, she falls asleep and snores  
like a grumbling bear,  
her dreams  
are a stained glass window  
of recurring images  
and 98 years of memories.

By **Anneliese Kretschmer**

Year 7, St Dominic's Priory College, NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



# Colour

**T**HE BOY slowly lifted his gaze from his life-support system, the dark rectangular slab of metal that was his only way of communicating with the world around him. He shuffled unhurriedly towards the education complex, its despondent façade looming over him. A soothing yet sinister voice resonated from his time-keeping device: “Your daily education regime commences in seven minutes. Please navigate to the assigned learning booth within the allotted time”.

Austere grey bricks engulfed the boy as he entered the building and promptly manoeuvred to the designated area that beckoned to him. “Today you will be educated about the antique devices of previous generations and how today’s technology greatly surpasses them”, recited the digital voice.

He stared blankly at the screen before him, dispassionately absorbing the information it fed him. “The life-support system that you currently possess is a highly advanced model of what your great-grandparents would have called a ‘mobile phone’. This archaic contraption enabled them to communicate with one another by voice,

a primitive mode of discourse that is now redundant in this modern age of texting, our exclusive tool of communication.”

By voice. The boy suddenly experienced a sharp pang of something close to longing at the novel thought of talking, using his voice to speak to another being. He felt that neither the digital alphabet nor the selection of emotive reactions captured the ache inside his chest that demanded something more. Then that feeling was whisked away almost as instantly as it had come, replaced with the familiar emptiness.

After completing his learning session, the boy exited through those same grey walls, home being the destination in his mind. As his stare scanned the silhouette of the streets, his measured footsteps breaking the heavy silence, that wistful feeling unexpectedly returned. Despite the people and transportation vessels commuting about, the boy had never felt so alone. He halted in the middle of the pristine pavement; an island of stillness in a cold, callous sea of endless movement. No one lingered or uttered a word. Each figure looked forward, their eyes unseeing, focused on a different reality to that of those around them. A man strode past, viewing a comical video on his optical entertainment device. He tapped the laugh reaction button, his expression cool and stoic. The boy remembered to move his feet and, shaking his head slightly, he

continued his journey home, his thoughts elsewhere.

Pushing open the flat, grey door, the boy greeted his parents with the pre-written message of “Good afternoon, mother and father” before positioning himself before the distributing machine, where he received meals. The tall appliance was not dissimilar in appearance from the rest of the house, dull and uninviting. After a minute, the boy’s meal emerged. As he ate, his bites slow and careful, he recalled the previous lessons in his education regime. The image of a family gleefully enjoying a home-cooked meal together, bowls being passed, thanks being offered, appeared his mind and stayed there. That same feeling of yearning arose inside him. His brow furrowed, he put down his meal and walked out of the living quarters onto the street with more intensity than he had ever before.

The street was still the same as he had left it. The dreary buildings that towered over the boy obscured the murky and ashen sky from his view. He looked around, his gaze sharper as he took everything in and wondered what the world would have looked like decades ago. Keeping to the side of the street as he walked, he noticed something out of the corner of his eye. Something bright and out of place. Something beautiful. Its yellow centre was surrounded by a cluster of fragile white ovals, connected to a thin stem that was rooted in the cracks of grey concrete. A lone errant flower, so free and unrestrained in this orderly world. An indescribable emotion rushed through the boy as he admired all the colour and vibrancy it possessed, qualities that his life so lacked.

Tearing himself out of his trance, he turned to leave but stopped short at the sight of the figure next to him. Standing there was a girl, admiring the same flower that had mesmerised him. Slowly, she lifted her gaze and they made eye contact.

Then they shared a smile.

*By Eddy Yang  
Year 9FS, Scotch College  
HAWTHORN – VIC.  
Teacher: Mark Collins*

# Happily Ever After

(Between the Pages of a Book)

I know of a place, high up, too far to see,  
A cliff, smooth wall of stone,  
Me, standing tall and proud, at the edge of reality,  
She whispers, run to me,  
A choice to do or die,  
A leap of faith, hurling myself into her welcoming arms,  
Some call it a fall; others a flight,  
And shooting downwards, to a bottomless abyss,  
Barely a streak of moonlight,  
I land softly, nestled between pages of unfortold secrets,  
Pages torn, bearing the silent stories of people,  
A gentle humming, her humming, a song of magic to be reread,  
Time and time again,  
Ancient magic pulses, she breathes life into those legacies,  
And the smell of fresh parchment soothes my quiet dreams,  
Walking along, and she asks,  
Come with me, run and escape,  
The hours go by and I delve deep,  
She shows me worlds of happiness and laughter,  
A world where diamonds drip to ice and snow,  
Branches held out, reaching forward,

To drink in the pale sun's glow,  
And her crystal lake ripples with surprises,  
As her heroes gain flight,  
Rustling breezes as the trees whisper a secret,  
A secret kept for generations,  
If only you listen close,  
Never leave,  
She shows me Love,  
Unconditional Love,  
But her Love is cruel and sad,  
At times, sadistic to the brink of insanity,  
She feeds blissfully on my frozen tears,  
And the cycle repeats to all who give the leap,  
All who wish to escape reality's crueller, twisted hands,  
They begin their journey like I did,  
Nestled between cracked pages,  
And they climb out again,  
Waiting dreamily for their own Happily Ever After.

By **Rania Aldanu**

Year 5, Roxburgh Park Primary School  
ROXBURGH PARK – VIC.  
Teacher: Ms. Erin Willey

I flip through the pages,  
immerse myself in different worlds.  
Words fly off, surround me  
and my mind is running free.

I see settings and landscapes  
I have imagined –  
green rolling hills, blue skies,  
and gushing rivers.  
I feel the cool breeze caressing me,  
whiffs of dewy grass,  
fresh morning air  
and the wind whispering  
through the trees.

## Books

I am lost in my fantasy world  
where witches cackle,  
wizards cast secret spells,  
dragons roar a puff of smoke  
and gentle giants thump in the clouds.  
Pixies flit and fly in stardust  
and greedy goblins wander through  
dark labyrinths.

My mind is a maze of characters,  
creatures and stories  
that light up my life  
and fill me with wonder.

By **Lucy Johnson**

Year 7, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



# The Victorian Shadow

**T**HE HOUSE was empty. The floor was musty with thick dust. There wasn't any furniture to be seen. We had to make that change.

I grab a mat and place it underneath the doorstep.

My younger sister Ava spots a bent fork and looks for a bin.

Mum helps Ava find a bin and gently places the fork inside, careful not to touch the sharp ends.

Dad carries our suitcases upstairs one by one and looks around for our bedrooms.

By the time we've made the house to our liking, I collapse onto the couch and switch on the television.

There isn't anything entertaining on there right now. I turn it off.

When we get to see our rooms, I wander through everything, see how it's set up.

Ava squeals when she sees her room. Her wallpaper was covered in rainbows and ice creams, and a matching bed with a fluffy white pillow.

Mine, not so much. My wallpaper is different shades of grey, my bed has a deep, galaxy purple colour, and is finished off with a black pillow.

I like it.

At bedtime, I rest my head on the windowsill and gaze at the amazing view from here. I can see almost everything in the city.

This is going to be brilliant, I thought. We have the house all to ourselves.

Suddenly, I spot something moving from the corner of my eye. A shadow, almost a ghost.

Looks like a Victorian girl, about my age. Seems okay, just... she's grey. It's hard seeing her. My wallpaper isn't helping.

She's standing up on a balcony. Behind her are shiny discs hanging up from a ceiling above her in delicate strings. Could it be a reflection? The moon is up. That might be it.

But only one way to find out.

I wave to her. She waves back.

**By Rahma Yousry**  
Year 4, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.  
Teacher: Mrs Young

## THE T-REX

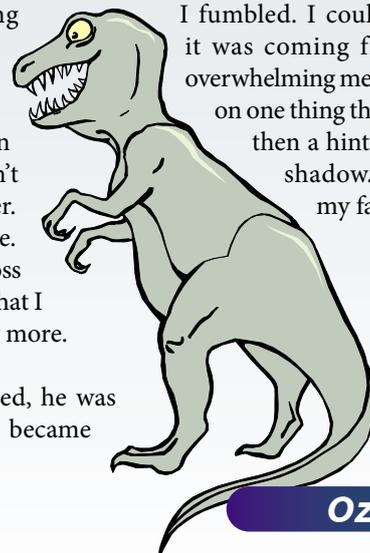
**I** COULD hear the T rex chasing after me, I hid behind a car. I could feel my heart pumping out of my chest and also the coldness of the car. I saw the beast stomping closer to me, my heart now racing more than ever. He had a ravenous roar, I could feel the wind of his breath. And his breath smelt like raw chicken and fish. I felt a wave of dread wash over me as I could still hear and feel his rancid breath. I stayed seated then felt a compelling force pushing me to start running. But I was petrified, my legs were shaking. I couldn't move so I took a brief moment to build up the courage and then I darted. I could still hear his petrifying roar and his deafening

stomp trailing behind me. I thought how differently things could have ended if it weren't for this irritating dinosaur.

I kept running as fast as I could. I gradually started slowing down as my trembling legs couldn't keep this going for much longer. I saw light I could sense presence. Then I saw something dash across the upcoming light. I noticed that I couldn't hear the dinosaur any more.

I turned around. I felt horrified, he was gone, nowhere to be found. I became

silent, then I heard something. A squeak, a footstep. Where was it coming from? I fumbled. I couldn't work out where it was coming from. I felt my body overwhelming me. I couldn't concentrate on one thing then I could feel nothing then a hint of pain and I saw the shadow. He had now sealed my fate.



**By Carl Messina**  
Year 6, St Luke's  
Primary School  
LALOR – VIC.  
Teacher: Mrs Paolini

# Ambassadors



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

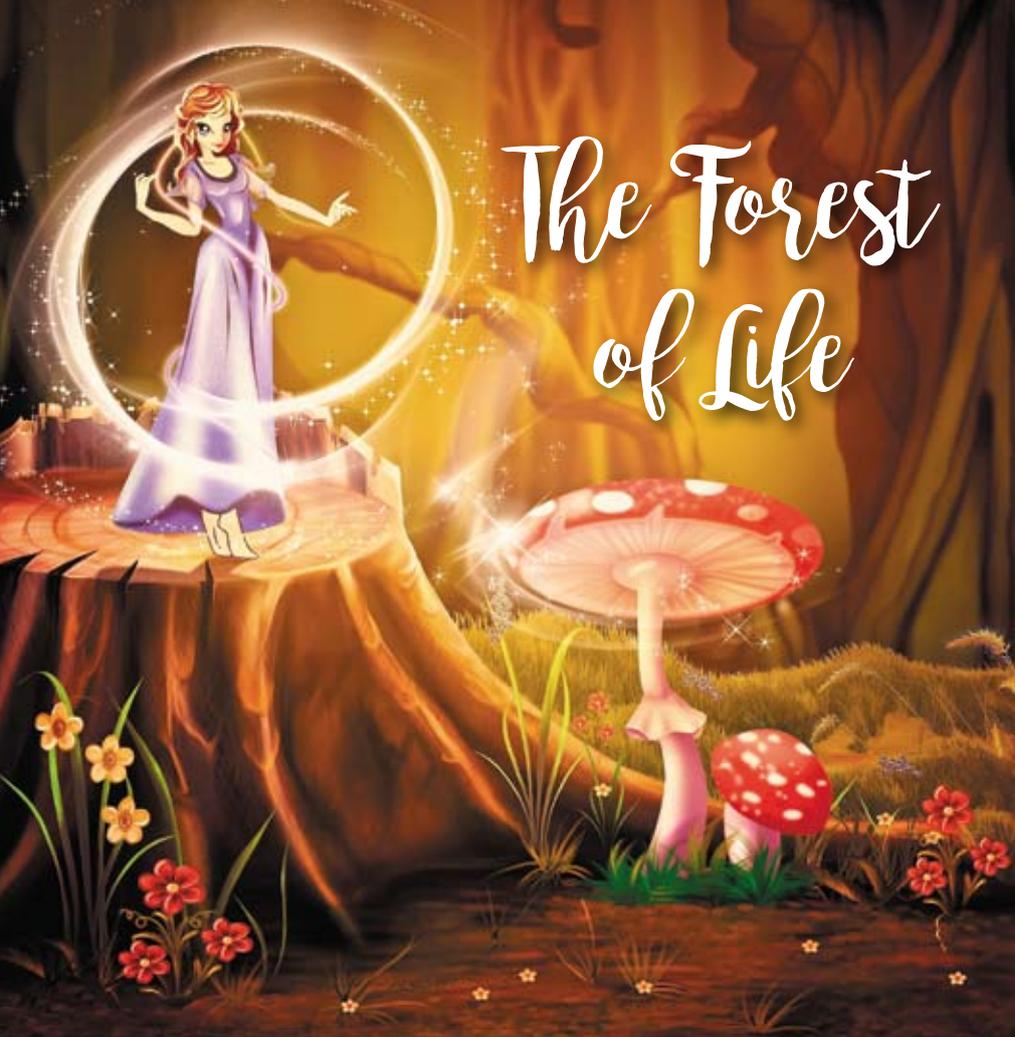
Meredith lives in inner-city Melbourne with a menagerie of pets, who often wrangle their way into her stories. She regularly presents writing workshops for children and adults around Australia, and enjoys helping writers create stories based on their own experiences. To find out more about her books,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

**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](http://www.jenimawter.com) ☺





# The Forest of Life

**Y**OU KNOW how forests are boring, full of trees and stuff? Well, that's what I thought — until I met Charlotte.

Charlotte was a home help back in the Victorian days. She would help kids her age that were less fortunate than her. It's unbelievable that she's still alive.

She was a new girl at our school — but looked oddly familiar. Why? At first I didn't know. But a teacher was telling me about the home helps. She said Charlotte looked exactly like one of them in the photo. I was amazed. Was Charlotte the one in the picture — if she was, how is she even alive? Then, when she offered to walk home with me, she told me that she was the one in the photo and how she was still thriving. She told me everything, and I told her my name. Apparently she was a Reformer, a person who could die, but come back to life, and she wasn't the only one. She is part of a whole group of reformers. And that's not the only thing. She wants to take me to them — today. She also said being a reformer was a gift, not from an angel or anything. Blearch. That's a myth. At birth. If you have a jewel engraved at the side of your eyelid, right

from birth, then you're a reformer. I bet all the reformers have that jewel. Anyway, she took me to the entrance of a forest called The Forest Of Life — no prizes for guessing why!

When I was inside, I was excited. Immortals didn't exist, but reformers did! And Charlotte, was walking, talking proof! The forest was covered in sparkly dewdrops and filled with toadstools that stretched to the sky. They towered over Charlotte and me.

It wasn't a short journey. Charlotte led me down one path, then we'd turn onto another. Finally, we arrived at a clearing, in which about thirty people were sitting cross-legged on fungi. When they saw Charlotte, they rushed to her and showered her with kisses. They chatted to her, asking her what happened and how happy they were to see her. 'Oh, Charlotte, you came back!' 'We never thought we'd see you again!' 'How wonderful!' 'Where have you been?' That sort of thing.

'It's divine to see you again, Howard', she nodded at the tallest of the group, the leader, 'You too Mimi and Sierra. Everyone, this is Katelyn.'

Howard opened his mouth to speak, but before he could start talking, they heard crunching of leaves. A girl with sky-blue glasses and a name tag saying 'Deirdre' pointed out at the trees. 'Oh no, look, it's them!' Three tall men, accompanied by a short, stubby man were ambling down the slope.

'Quickly everyone!' called Howard, ushering everyone into a corner. He and Deirdre lowered some curtains and closed a big brown door that appeared from thin air. Howard bolted it, while Deirdre pulled a string to drop the roof. Mimi and Sierra pressed a button and sticks appeared under the curtains. There was no way the men were going to get in.

The tallest man rapped on the door sharply, three times. 'You're not coming in!' Howard teased.

'Oh, yes I am.' The man grinned and tried to turn the handle. No such luck.

Deirdre turned on a voice changer. Suddenly, Howard's voice sounded raspy and cold. 'I am the Enchanter. Please go away or I'll have a horrible spell in store for you!'

Immediately, the men backed away and started to run through the forest. Deirdre was obviously satisfied so she turned off the voice changer.

'Who were they?', I asked.

'The whatials?', I asked.

'The Dandials', shuddered Deirdre.

'The whatials?', I asked.

'The Dandials!', shouted the reformers.

'I still don't get it. Who are the Dandials?' I asked.

'They're men — stupid men at that', growled Deirdre.

'Deirdre!' Howard hissed.

'What? They are!' Deirdre said. 'Well, they're always trying to take over our hideout, our supplies, take over US! They think this is OK, because they WERE reformers, but they betrayed us, so Howard kicked them out.'

'Oh,' I said.

Howard brought out cupcakes. They looked good but tasted disgusting. I tried not to show any sort of expression. Obviously I did, because Charlotte and Deirdre started laughing hysterically.

Howard checked the time. 'Oh!' He said, astonished. 'It's nearly four-thirty. You'll have to get home now, Katelyn.'

I groaned. 'Can I come back tomorrow?'

'Of course!' Howard said, his whole face shining. 'You're one of us now!'

I grinned. Charlotte opened the door and took me outside it. We walked back through the forest. Past the toadstools and everything else, all the way to the forest's edge. When we were there, Charlotte stopped and turned to me.

'You know the way, don't you, Katelyn?' said Charlotte.

I nodded. 'Good,' Charlotte said. 'Because I don't.'

She waved. I waved back. I went on, to my house. She turned around and walked back through the forest, to the reformers.

I can't wait to tell Mum about my adventures.

By **Maisie Fullerton**

Year 6, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.

Teacher: Mr Castle

## What's Behind Us, What's In Front

Darkness

A sinister darkness

Please let my candour outweigh my crimes

Don't let the darkness exceed the light,

How does the light flare through the blanket of darkness?

How can one know what isn't to know?

An abundance of lost longing, yearning

Even if someone were to believe

the cacophonous screeches of doubt,

the material of shrieking hollow, close stitched, refrained

believe they are benevolent, believe they are enlightened

believe you may well do,

believe...

the vacant page of life

When you are stolen by the twilight,

When you are seized by the sunlight that shudders into haze,

The fire that burns may be well choked out

A lullaby that scalds into a deep, sharp daze

A cloud of rolling thunder, a flash of sheer regret

A memory, far forgotten,

A smile, to help forget.

How does your soul beleaguer?

How does the time leer on?

How does the final moment

Move so quietly and foregone?

How to repair the damage?

Once the fallen have retired

The love that grasped the heart of one

Let that love respire.

Let how love transposes fear

Siege the hands of fate,

Fear is but a longing, a huddled blaze,

Concern will have to wait.

By **Molly Waters**

Year 9, Kelvin Grove State College  
KELVIN GROVE – QLD.





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# THE LAST MEMORY

I crouch in the muddy trenches with my eyes closed  
The sound of gunshots quieten as I fall into sleep.  
I remember home,  
I remember the smell of baked cookies and freshly mowed grass,  
I remember Ma cooking in the kitchen,  
I remember Pa coming home from the farm,  
I remember Granny in her chair knitting winter clothes,  
I remember my friends and I running through the bush,  
I remember chasing little Timmy around to herd the sheep,  
Suddenly I am shaken awake as the gunshots illuminate the sky and men are running towards our trenches.  
I shoot at as many men as I can with my rifle,  
Tears run down my face as I think of all the things I love in the world.  
I think of these men who are now dead,  
I think of their families and friends,  
I think of how they are just like us,  
Young boys not knowing what they got into.  
I crouch low and hidden,  
I am ready for anything to come at me.  
Shrapnel shells boom and crack.  
Men yell, scream.  
I run to cover as fast as I can.  
I see blood,  
Puddles of blood.  
I prepare to face my destiny in heaven but what I was expecting never came...  
A hand pulls me down low onto the ground,  
I hold onto my memories close and not wanting to let any go,  
I hold close to my heart all who have died alongside with me,  
I hold my rifle to my chest clutching onto it tightly as I race down the hills and into the water.  
I clutch onto those whose hands are reaching out and pulling me up onto the boats.  
Joy bursts through me as I know I am safe.  
I hear the bugle as it plays the Last Post as we drift out to the sea with all the other boats alongside each other.  
I look back one last time.  
In memory of those who fought in the war for our freedom and for those who lost their loved ones due to wars around the world.  
Lest we Forget

By **Rhiley Vipiana**  
Year 8, St Monica's College  
CAIRNS – QLD.  
Teacher: Ms Gilmour

## Poppies

Their blood soaked petals sway in the silent breeze  
Their feeble stems reach out to the sky  
Fields swathed in grassy blankets  
Laden with crimson buds  
Graves above those who have fallen  
Whisper forgotten memories to the sky  
Their wilted stalks look downwards  
Giving the earth a gentle kiss  
Flashes of ruby dance around me  
Scarlet embers blur in the wind.  
Drops of sunlight cascade down to their skin  
Illuminating them with a vermilion glow.



By **Alexandra May Calica-Chavez**  
Year 6, St Dominic's Priory College  
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA  
Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

# *"It Ain't Where We At (It's How We Made Our Way Here)"*

**S**IDNEY tugged on her brother's arm, trying to get him to "Come on, Charles, let's go! If we want to actually get home on time we have to get there soon!". Charles rolled his eyes, quietly ignoring the nagging of his happy-go-lucky little sister. Her hair was flying around her head as it fell out of the bun she'd thrown it up in, and occasionally she physically turned around and pulled him towards her. "Preferably sometime in the next century, please, Charles!"

Charles sighed and quickened his pace a little. "I'm coming, I'm coming", he mumbled, readjusting his bag over his shoulder and pushing his own hair off his face. Sidney was right, of course – if he didn't want the stern and disappointed stares of both of his parents looking down on him when he got home, they needed to get started.

The insistent pain of a sister of his shoved him through the door of the auditorium. "Charles Rua, you are the bane of my existence", she sighed exaggeratedly. "If you ever danced like that I'd think the world was ending."

Flashing a grin at her, Charles shot back, "Well, it seems our dancing and walking skills are opposites, then". He laughed as Sidney's mouth dropped open in mock offence. He dropped his bag on the ground and stretched his arms backwards, his back cracking loudly in multiple places. Sidney

cringed, so he cracked his wrists just to spite her. She retaliated by playing Spice Girls to warm up to and grinning evilly as he groaned.

As they stretched together – legs out to the sides, holding each other's wrists and pulling each other forward by leaning backward – Sidney asked, "So I hear J-War talked to you about joining the Glee Club?"

This was true. Mr Warren, fondly nicknamed J-War (and sometimes Warren the Wise due to his extensive history knowledge and wide array of good advice, much to his amused annoyance) by his students, had called him into his office two days previous to talk to him about joining the Glee Club. Mr Warren had hit every nerve by talking about loving to dance, about how some part of him wanted to do it for a living, and how his parents didn't approve of such pointless "hobbies".

Charles nodded, and Sidney hummed thoughtfully. "What did you say?" she asked. "Have you thought about it?"

He opened his mouth to reply, the default "I'm not interested" sitting on his tongue, but then he closed it again. Mr Warren had seen right through him during the conversation (although, 'interrogation' seemed like a better word in this case). He huffed. "I think you two are the only ones interested in me joining", he said instead. "You know the others don't like me." Sidney shrugged, and Charles pulled

her forwards. He relaxed his shoulders and his core as he lay on his back. "Besides, I can't even sing. What good would I be?"

"Charles", Sidney sighed. "You underestimate how cool your choreography is. If you choreographed our performance for the regional competition, we'd kick butt! And don't hold my wrists so tight."

"Sorry." Charles loosened his grip. "But you missed the point. Nobody likes me. They wouldn't listen to me."

"I disagree."

"And what if they don't?"

"Never know if you don't try, idiota." Charles rolled his eyes, and Sidney pulled him forwards. His hamstrings burned. "You should just give it a go."

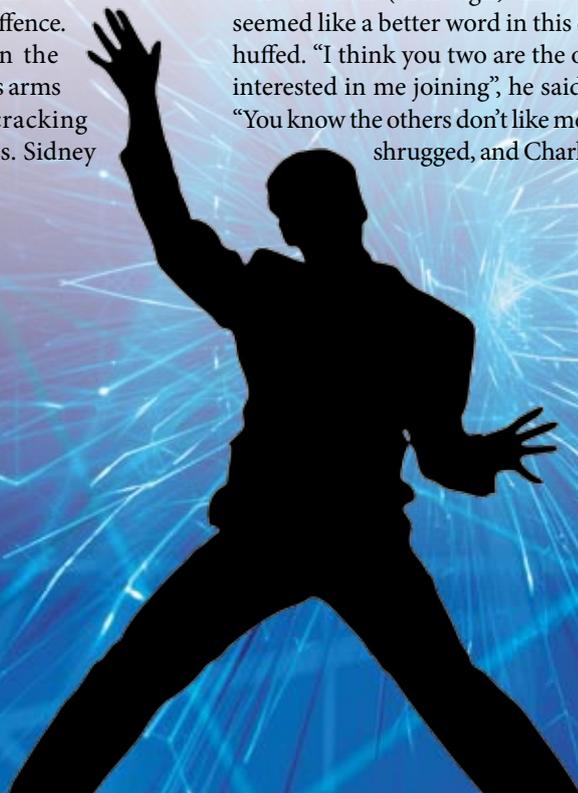
"Come on, you know our parents would make me quit anyway."

"Who cares about them?"

Charles exhaled heavily. "I just... I don't know, Sidney."

Sidney sat up and Charles pulled his legs inwards, relieving his aching muscles. "Well then, let's put a pin in it – again – and come back to it. Come on, hermano, let's dance."

They had been learning a dance – more accurately, Charles had been



choreographing a dance and then teaching the ever-eager Sidney – and Sidney had been finding every opportunity to get into a studio or the school auditorium and practice it. Charles was perfectly happy sneaking out by himself in the middle of the night to practice it in the garage to music he could barely hear, but Sidney was adamant about learning the whole dance. As she put it, “There’s no point only learning half of a song!”

Now, she scrolled through her phone in search of the song. “You ready?” she called over her shoulder.

Charles shrugged. “As I’ll ever be”, he replied. Sidney grinned as the music started (it was a hip hop song he’d had on repeat for days before he’d started to choreograph a dance to it), and took her place behind and to the side of him so she could watch him if she forgot. Charles didn’t need to watch her – he trusted she could follow him. Soon enough they were both completely engrossed, the dance a blend of short and sharp movements, and longer movements that gave them enough momentum to spin up off the floor. Sidney wasted no time demonstrating her new pop-and-lock ability that she’d seen him do and decided she’d wanted to learn.

In fact, he didn’t notice a few people trickling into the room until the music hit a low point and he saw her motioning to someone in the wings. He turned around and saw the entirety of the Glee Club standing there watching them. Some were wide-eyed, others were grinning, and some (namely Jon) just looked stunned.

“Do you remember that chorus I taught

you?” Sidney called over the music, and a few people nodded. Sidney pointed at Charles. “Mi hermano taught me that!”

A few people responded with stares, a few with “No way!” or “Really?”, and a few just grinned wider.

Sidney waved them over. “Come on!” Six of the fourteen spectators came over to stand behind Sidney. Charles glared at her, and she grinned. She grabbed his arm and forcefully turned him to face the front, and he fell into the dance as the song picked up again. There were whistles from the side as the group danced, making Charles grin widely despite himself.

The song came to an end, and everyone turned to applaud Charles. He looked around. The extravagant Marie had managed to dance in their heels, and was cheering loudly beside Angel and Eliza. Some were more contained, but eventually his eye fell on Jon. Jon’s expression was confused, but he had a small smile on his face. Jon nodded, and then joined in the applause.

There was a tap on his shoulder, and he turned to see his sister with a wild grin on her face. “Well?” she laughed.

Charles didn’t know what to say, so he just shook his head. He sighed exasperatedly, and eventually blurted out, “I hate you so much”. Sidney laughed again, and Charles hugged her tightly. Sidney’s arms were just as tight around Charles’ neck.

“I love you too, hermano”, she said quietly, giggling. They pulled apart and a few

people crowded around them, lightly punching Charles’ arm or patting him on the back.

“That was an impressive dance”, a commanding voice broke through the cheering. Everyone went silent and turned towards it. Mr Warren, history teacher and Glee Club coordinator, was walking towards them with his hands in his pockets. “Good work.”

Charles took a deep breath. “Thank you, sir”, he replied, exhaling slowly. He looked around at the people on the stage. Some were classmates, while some were from higher or lower levels. Some he could call acquaintances, but some he was sure hated him. And yet, there was not a single look of distaste towards him; there was only acceptance.

He looked back at Mr Warren, who seemed to be looking straight through him, reading his thoughts. The smallest hint of a smile crossed his face. “Everybody”, he announced, “please welcome the newest member of the show choir”.

Everybody erupted into applause again. Even Charles grinned as Sidney jumped on him again. There was a strange feeling, one that he hadn’t felt in a long time.

Home.

*(Title from “I Love It” by Hilltop Hoods; this is the song Charles and Sidney dance to.)*

**By Morgaine Delahoy**

*Year 11, Casterton Secondary College  
CASTERTON – VIC.*

*Teacher: Miss Niadin Harte*

## Beautiful Things

Your face is grey with beauty  
Your chiselled chin makes you a cutey  
But eyes I do not see  
Do you trust me  
With your secret.

Your colour varies  
In dry and hot  
You cover the world like a big blanket  
Instead of a face you home many.

You are wet like a pool  
You cover the world  
You are in the clouds

Flying then falling  
But...  
You never get hurt.  
These are the worlds  
Beautiful things  
The rock with its chiselled chin  
The dirt like a blanket  
The water always flying.  
Appreciate them.

**By Angelina Hemsworth**  
*Year 5, Greenslopes State School  
GREENSLOPES – QLD.  
Teacher: Mr Papamanolis*

# Sempre

**"FERRO, I –"** In that instant shots fired through the back window.

Ferro swerved the car and cursed out a string of Italian profanities. Scarlett was frightened, bullets were being cannoned at her and her boyfriend, and something told her it wasn't a random attack. Ferro swerved again, but his ability at the wheel frightened her, where did he learn how to drive like that?

"Ferro, what's going on? Who is firing at us, why are they trying to gun us down!" she screamed out as a bullet flew past her head.

"Dammit, angel keep your head down! They're here for me, I did something, and someone wasn't happy about it. I promise I'll get you out of here tesoro, just be strong for me." Ferro was furious, how dare they try to take him down while his girl was in the car. He and Scarlett had been dating for over four months now and it hurt him keeping her in the dark about his lifestyle. He wanted to hold and comfort her, but first he needed to get her out of here, and explain why these men had guns aimed at his head.

After what felt like hours, Ferro skidded around a corner and into an alley. He killed the engine and placed a shaking Scarlett into his lap.

"Tesoro, you're OK, don't worry, I've got you." He took her face into his hands, and looked her in the eyes, he knew it calmed her down, and right now she needed to be.

"Ferro, who were those men and why were they trying to hurt you?" Scarlett was trying to stay strong, but she couldn't bear the thought of someone trying to put a bullet through Ferro's skull.

Ferro stiffened, he didn't want her to think differently of him, but he knew that to keep her safe, she would have to know. She had been seen with him, his selfishness had made him stay, and now she was in danger.

"Angel..." he huffed. "I'm not a good man, I've got lots of enemies who want me six feet under." Scarlett was getting frustrated with his half-hearted answers. She wanted to know why someone wanted Ferro dead!

"Godammit Ferro just give me the truth!" She climbed off his lap and back to her seat. Ferro gripped her arm and whipped her around to face him.

"I'm involved with the mafia, Scarlett, OK! These men are after me because I killed their boss after he threatened you. He's seen me around you, and when he said he would –" He ran his fingers through his hair, breathing heavily and trying to stop himself from ripping something apart. Dimitri deserved to die for even daring to threaten Scarlett in front of him.

Scarlett didn't know how to respond, this man that she loved was in the mafia. She got out the car; she needed air, lots of it. Why hadn't he told her?

"I'll make it better I swear tesoro mio; I won't let anyone hurt you, but I'm in too deep. You're my life now angel." Scarlett looked up at him softly. She reminisced of waking up beside him, his stubble against her face as he kissed her good morning. Could they have that life any more? He was a mob boss for crying aloud!

"You may have done some bad things Ferro, but that doesn't change the way I feel about you. I'll always love you, risk and all." A large smile crossed his face; he grabbed her by the waist and pulled her into his warm chest.

"I love you tesoro", he smiled. "Let's go home."

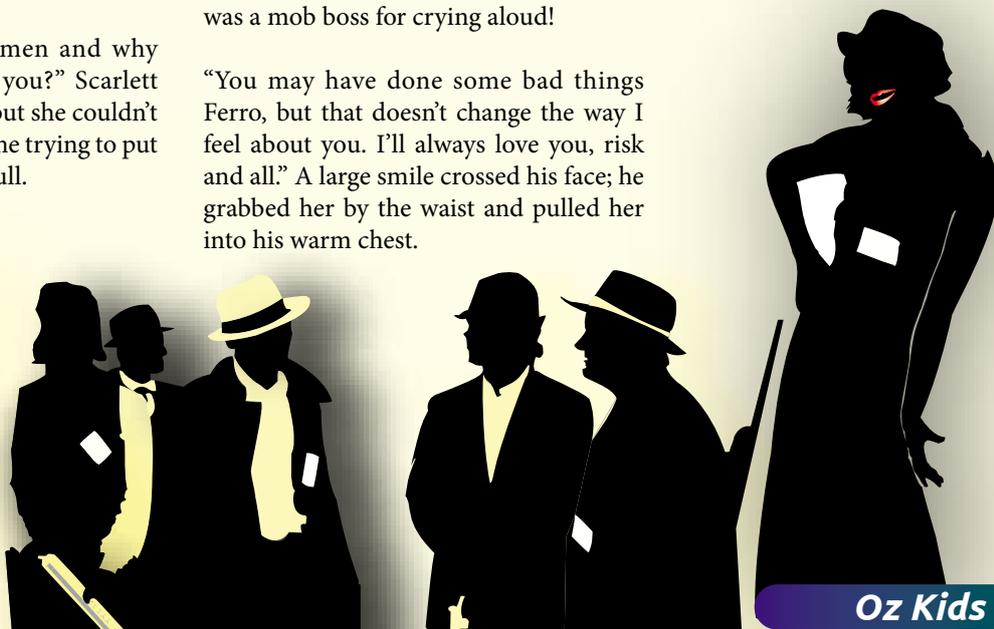
Footsteps came rushing into the alley; it was the men from the car, they approached with guns ready in hand. Ferro shouted for Scarlett to run and pulled out his own gun, but he'd been too late, as the first bullet fired. Scarlett shut her eyes and screamed. Ferro shot them all dead in an instant and quickly pulled her towards him. She turned to Ferro, eyes wide looking for a bullet wound, to find there wasn't one.

"Oh thank god! Ferro, I thought it hit you!" she wept looking at him. Ferro started to shout her name, she looked down, crimson red painted her torso, she had caught the bullet. He applied pressure to the wound as she sat stunned. It felt like she was sinking, and his voice rung in her ears like a broken bell. She watched as Ferro frantically yelled at someone over the phone, then in rage he threw it against the wall. He gripped her hand tight and pulled her against him. Holding onto her as if she would shatter any second.

"I'm so sorry angel, I love you! Please stay with me", he cried out.

Scarlett tried to nod, but her mind felt like a whirlpool. As she started to lose consciousness, she heard a faint broken voice.

By **Charlotte-May Fleming**  
Year 10, Adelaide High School  
TORRENSVILLE – SA  
Teacher: John Roy



# THE ABORIGINAL AND HIS BEST FRIEND

# SKIPPY THE MARLU

ONE DAY a little Aboriginal boy named Max was walking along and he saw a little joey laying on the ground dusted up. The baby joey must have fell out of his Mother's pouch said Max. So he grabbed his bag and put the joey in, then he went to his house and showed his Mum and Dad. Then Mum said what are you going to name the joey, he said Skippy the Kangaroo, then Mum said that is a good name.

Max went to the shop to get a bottle for the joey. When he came back he made a warm milk in the bottle. The next day Max wrapped up the joey and took it to school. All of the kids wanted to hold it but Max said get in a line, so all of the kids and the teachers lined up. At home time Max put the joey in his room then he went and played with his friends at their house.

Max's Mum was sitting in the lounge room when she saw the joey hopping along. She followed the joey and the joey looked at her and chased her and Mum was screaming. When Max came back he saw the Mum on the table. Then Max grabbed the joey and put it back in the room. Then he was talking to Mum and his Mum was scared then Dad came back from work. Max still had the joey for six weeks but now the joey is a big kangaroo and it lives outside. They made a big gate around the house so he doesn't

leave. One day they told Max that they have to let the kangaroo go because it is too big and it needs a bigger space to hop around. So Max rode his bike and the kangaroo followed. Max rode to a little road that goes out bush then Max told the kangaroo to go and the kangaroo hopped along. Max was sad but happy that Skippy was free.

By **Thomas Tucker**  
Menzies Community School  
MENZIES – WA



# I SHOULD BE DEAD

PICTURES, a memory, a teardrop that rolls down my cheek, bringing joy, bringing sadness. Cries for the feeling I once had, drawn into a dying image of the frame that shapes what I no longer grasp. Slipping through my fingers of the old days that brought tears of joy to my eyes. I took it for granted. I didn't expect for that to slip away. I didn't expect for it to leave me, so suddenly. Painting a picture in the frame of what I once had.

Freedom.

I am trapped. Trapped away behind an invisible wall of death. I can't go out. Not any more. I should be dead. I am not supposed to be born. I am a mistake, the second child that was never meant to exist. Instead of killing me like the government asked, my parents hid me away. I haven't seen day in a long time. I haven't felt the breeze on my face, the wind whipping my hair and the calming sun, warm on my cheek. I would rather be dead. The darkness clouds around me like a wave, caving in over my head and not letting go.

Swallowing me into the ultimate blackness and trapping me from a life that feels as if it never existed. All I have left is a photo. One that looks animated. One that doesn't seem to be real.

I should be dead.

★★★

I hear a scream. Not just any scream, a withering, pale, piercing, dying, crying scream. One that doesn't mean any good. I can't do anything about it, but I know what is wrong.



My fists pound on the door. The noise rings through the now silent house. My hand is bloody and ripped.

"What's happening? Let me out!"

I don't know if it is night or day. I don't know if the government will hear me and kill me or not, but I don't care. Why not? Of course it had to be me to be hidden away.

"Let me out!"

The door drops and I fall on my face. Blood trickles down my nose, but I can't even feel it. I am numb from the feeling of rejection and loneliness. I stand up, my dry, bare knees scraping on the ground. Around me is a concrete kitchen and a body. A dead body.

I am free.

By **Syrocco Smith**  
Year 6, Nambour Christian College  
NAMBOUR – QLD.  
Teacher: Mr Jon Broad

# The Missing Piece

**E**VERYONE has those abnormal days as a teenager, when nothing seems to fit in their bag. You feel as if there's a fire burning up in your stomach, wanting to make a home inside of you. Whether the sun is up high in the air, delivering light to your day, or the moon has taken place, with its pearly face, shining down on you whilst your eyes rest, you feel as if all of the happiness inside of you has drifted away.

Victoria Sonners, an ungrateful fifteen year old girl, had never understood the wonderful story behind life, until a couple of weeks ago, when she'd made the biggest mistake of her life. Victoria's understanding of life, now, is completely different, as if a gust of wind had mysteriously appeared and knocked every last drop of negative energy within her.

A luminous Winter had approached on June 30th, where the grass flew repeatedly, caused by the comforting wind. The blinding sun had awoken with its arms out, offering its heat to the world. Victoria and her mum Jodie, a short, plump, exhausted looking woman, with a balloon for a neck, but gold for a heart, were forcing a usual, Saturday morning breakfast together.

A brown table was sitting upon the greasy tiles of number 7 Venus Court. The tight kitchen bench was completely invisible, due to the clutter of grimy pots and pans and magazines. The cracked ceiling stained the air with a plain dust scent that gave the house a sense of depression.

Victoria and Jodie printed their bottoms on their chairs, with their droopy mouths slightly twitching every time their eyes met.

Victoria's stomach lurched, as she watched her mum rip chunks of chicken off of her plate and shove them in her mouth. Victoria felt a monster building up inside of her, pushing against her ribs. The ugly monster shoved and banged against the walls of Victoria's stomach. She felt as if she wanted her skin to change to mouldy green, so she could blend in with the walls. With anger at the brim of her bucket, Victoria stood up and

made herself clear, as her anger bubble erupted with significant pain to injury.

"Mum, just shut up OK!" Her abrupt ending caused her mum to stop eating at once.

"What's the matter with you all the time. Stop being an ungrateful little kid and start acting like a fifteen year old", Jodie spat.

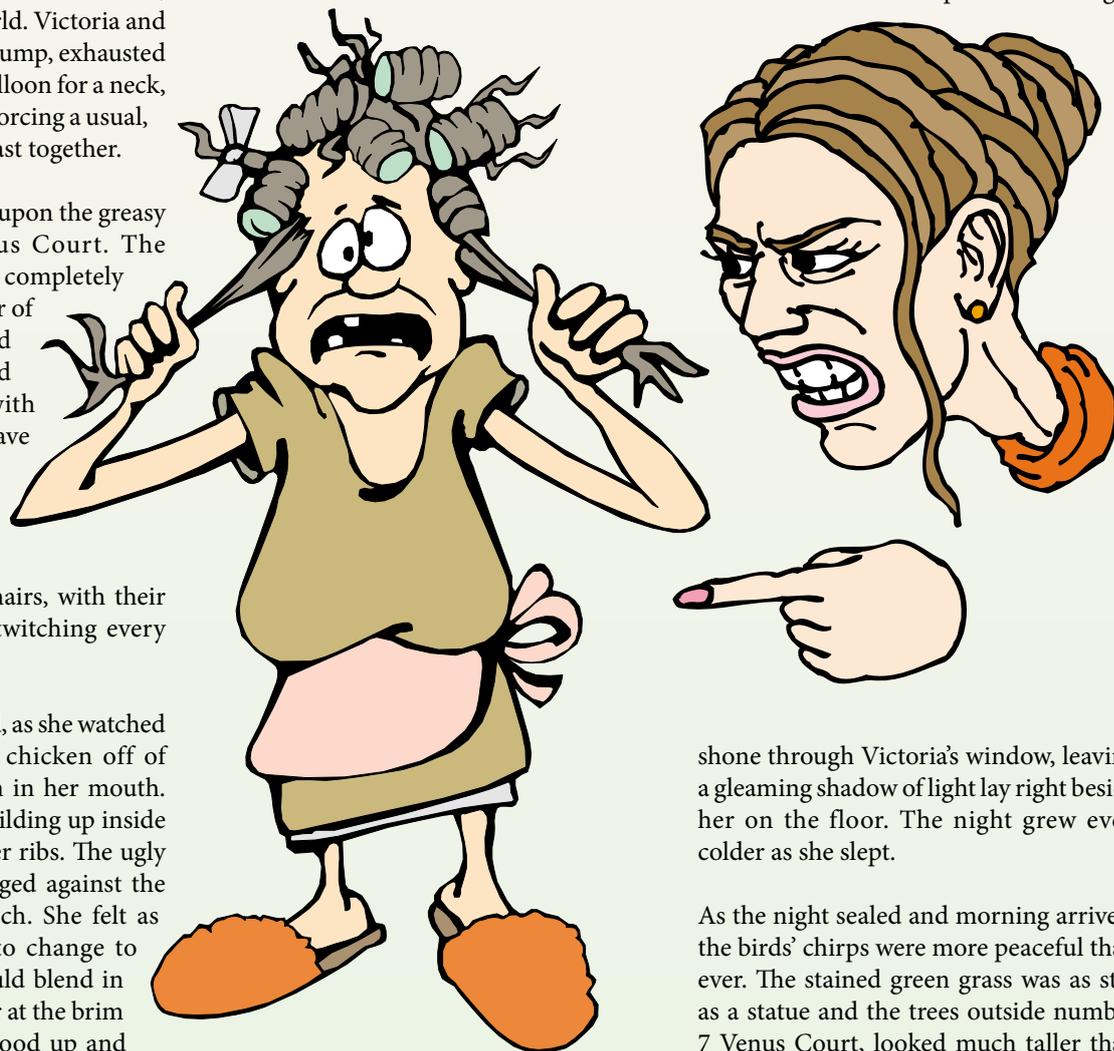
"Exactly, that's the point! I'm not a little kid any more. I'm fifteen mum. When are you gonna realise that, huh?" Victoria's words were as bitter as coffee. Jodie's eyes began to water as she sobbed from behind her plate.

"I put a roof over your head, feed you, give you everything you want and you're still not happy! I'm sick and tired of hearing your voice. Maybe if it was a bit brighter, then I wouldn't mind it", snapped Jodie.

"I just wish that YOU", Victoria pointed her bony finger directly at her mum, "weren't my mum", and with an expected grunt, Victoria stormed out of the room, Jodie still sobbing with wild gasps behind her. She strutted off to her room, escaping the dullness from the rotting kitchen. Her heart sank as tears poured down her eyes.

Victoria and Jodie didn't speak to each other for the rest of the day. The conversation from breakfast, just wouldn't escape Victoria's mind though.

The air, full of sadness and grudge, whirled around the room. Victoria could feel horrible pains. The monster inside of her shook aggressively within her body. As Victoria's arms and legs began to weaken, she felt the monster stretch itself to her weakened body parts to take over her, as if her skin was unzipping. Her eyes slowly closed shut. Victoria fell against her bed and drifted off to sleep. The moonlight



shone through Victoria's window, leaving a gleaming shadow of light lay right beside her on the floor. The night grew even colder as she slept.

As the night sealed and morning arrived, the birds' chirps were more peaceful than ever. The stained green grass was as still as a statue and the trees outside number 7 Venus Court, looked much taller than

the day before, as if a giant had appeared overnight and ripped out the tree until its roots were as clear as diamonds.

Victoria's eyes fell open. The argument from her mum and her the night before, seemed to have slipped through Victoria's mind as she slept. The firm bed that she'd just been resting on, all of a sudden seemed much softer and bouncy than she'd last recognised. Victoria rose up from her bed, scratching her dark hair and roamed over to her bedside cabinet. The mouldy surface gave the impression that she had stole it from the street, where it had been drawn, eaten, even spat on. The dints across the side of the large, oval mirror, manifested that it had had a stressful journey, getting to where it was now. Victoria lifted her head in the mirror's direction...

"ARGH!" Victoria screamed, louder than a soul being ripped out of someone. Her tongue was stuck in her throat. Her petrified heart, throbbed against her rib cage. She didn't understand what was happening. Victoria stared at her face, confused. What happened to her?

Victoria's chocolate brown eyes looked much brighter than ever. She had seemed to have accepted the fact that her face had completely transformed. Her face was slimmer and felt smoother than a baby's bottom. A jolt of amazement shot through her, as she heard the sound of a beeping horn outside of her window.

The street was no longer grubby and empty, but crowded and cosy, filled with many people. The houses outside number 7 Venus Court seemed brighter and cleaner than they had the day before.

Victoria ran downstairs, her mood warm and cheerful. She felt happier than she'd been in all of her fifteen years that she'd been alive... From the moment Victoria opened the kitchen door, the pleasant smell of bacon and eggs filled her nostrils with delight. The kitchen was exactly as it had appeared the day Victoria and Jodie had argued though.

"ARGH!" Jodie's scream echoed through the creaking ceiling.

"Yeah, I know. I just woke up and – mum are you alr—" Victoria's smile faded.



"Who are you? What do you want? GET OUT!" Jodie pressed herself against the wall, petrification printed on her face.

"Mum, what are you talk—?"

"Stop calling me that. I'm calling the police", Jodie swept past the revolting bin and reached for the phone.

"What are you talking about? It's me, Vic", Victoria's heart sank. For the first time in her life, she felt sympathetic towards her mum.

"Um, sorry. I'll just... leave then", Victoria dragged herself out of the front door, feeling a stabbing pain in her back. The huge monster was back, digging its sharp, claws through Victoria's back. Number 7 Venus Court was coated in rain, that slid down the slide-like road.

Although everything seemed to be much brighter and happier, the weather demonstrated the sadness the court still stored. So it wasn't just number 7 that was always dull and depressing? Did Victoria's emotions control the weather? How could Victoria escape the mess?

She thought back nights and nights ago, still standing at the threshold. Victoria took a deep, meaningful breath, then it came to her...

The argument between her mum and her.

Victoria twitched with relief. Slowly, she repeated the exact words that had come out of her mouth, inside her head, "I just wish I could be anyone else... I just wish that you weren't my mum and that I could just grow up already to get away from you".

Not until this moment, did Victoria realise how wounding those words were... how a feeling of sharp carving could be engraved into your heart... forever.

Victoria shut her eyes tightly, wishing to escape where she was now. She wanted her mum back more than ever now.

Victoria trusted herself. With her eyes shut and her heart expressing all the love that she'd hidden for years, she felt as if she was being pulled through a tiny jar that would only fit a baby inside.

Suddenly, her eyes fell open and she was back in her bedroom. For the first time in Victoria's life, her mouth stretched into a smile at the sight of the filth that had torn her and her mum apart. She felt as if it was a dream, but no... it was real... it was all real.

Victoria hurried downstairs. She pushed open the half-eaten door and at the sight of her mum, Victoria's teeth gleamed. Her feet echoed as she sprinted to her mum and pulled her into a tight hug.

"I love you so much mum! I'm sorry for everything", sobbed Victoria, tears pouring down her face. "I honestly haven't thanked you enough for all the wonderful things you've done and I couldn't ask for a better mum than you!" Jodie stared into Victoria's eyes. It was as if the sun was there.

"I couldn't ask for a better daughter than you, you'll always be mine and I love you!"

Both girls wrapped their arms around each other. All of a sudden, the filthiness didn't seem to mean anything any more, but the love that lingered in the air. Nothing could've beat the way Victoria and her mum had bonded together, as a proper family... As mother and daughter.

By **Teresina Iannuzzi**  
Year 8, Lara Secondary College  
LARA – VIC.  
Teacher: Miss Alinson

# THE INVISIBLE MUMMY

**T**HE PHONE was ringing and I was about to answer it when my friend named Josef cried, "Don't answer it, something bad always happens when you answer that phone".

"No" argued Doom, "Nothing bad ever happens when I answer this phone, and it never will". Josef lunged for the phone but Doom was too strong for him. And just after he answered it, they were teleported to a dark room with tables and chairs, they were tied to the chairs. "I told you something bad would happen!" Josef said, angrily. Just then a loudspeaker said "Five seconds till memory will get erased, five four three two one zero!".

Then I forgot who I was, how I got here, why I was next to multiple random people, why I was being what looked and sounded like teleportation!

The next second we were continuously teleported to random places, and at last after an hour of being teleported, we stopped on a train, there were five other people on the train, two of them were chefs the other three were scientists.

Just then a loud robotic voice said, "I am Robo, the guide of your mission".

"Wait, what mission?!" both Doom and Josef yelled at the same time, surprised. Robo was surprised in his turn because he thought everyone had been told about the mission. "I'll tell you now, well there's a myth about an invisible mummy and we think it's on this train." "Well that's a myth,

it's probably not real", Doom said.

"We think it becomes visible only when it is about to kill its victim you can see it for sixty seconds before you die", said Robo in a robotic voice. So you're basically saying we could die any second", Doom said.

"Technically no, it takes 60 seconds to die after his gaze has locked on and only its victim can see it."

"Well that's not got any better", Doom told Robo.

"AAAAAAHHHH Mmm mummy" one of the chefs screamed.

"What, you want your mummy?" Robo said in a confused voice.

"N-no ancient mummy."

"Well in that case we better start counting, One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60." Robo finished off.

"Auuu Auuh", the chef cried in anguish.

Then he disappeared. "That's what will happen to you if you don't do something about that mummy", Robo told us in a dark voice.

After an hour of hard research and searching, the last chef gave a shout "Hey, is

this ancient scroll supposed to be here?"

"Wait, what ancient scroll?" Doom said. "That could be a clue."

Just then the lights flickered and went out, then Robo turned on a spotlight centring on the scroll.

"That scroll is written in ancient hieroglyphics, who knows how to translate hieroglyphics, even the best translators can't translate hieroglyphics."

A few minutes later Doom exclaimed, "I know why you can't translate that, it's not hieroglyphics, it is an ancient war language from the ancient war of the Egyptians, my ancestors were in that war. It says, say this to mummy 'Soldier, I surrender, you are relieved from your duty.'" Doom translated.

"We must say that to the mummy", Doom finally said.

Just then the lights turned on and Doom's worst nightmare came true, he was the mummy's next victim. I was terrified, but I gathered up all my courage and said "Soldier I surrender, you are relieved of your duty".

The mummy turned to dust whilst everyone teleported home.

By **Noah James**

Year 4, St Luke's Primary School

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Miss Saba



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