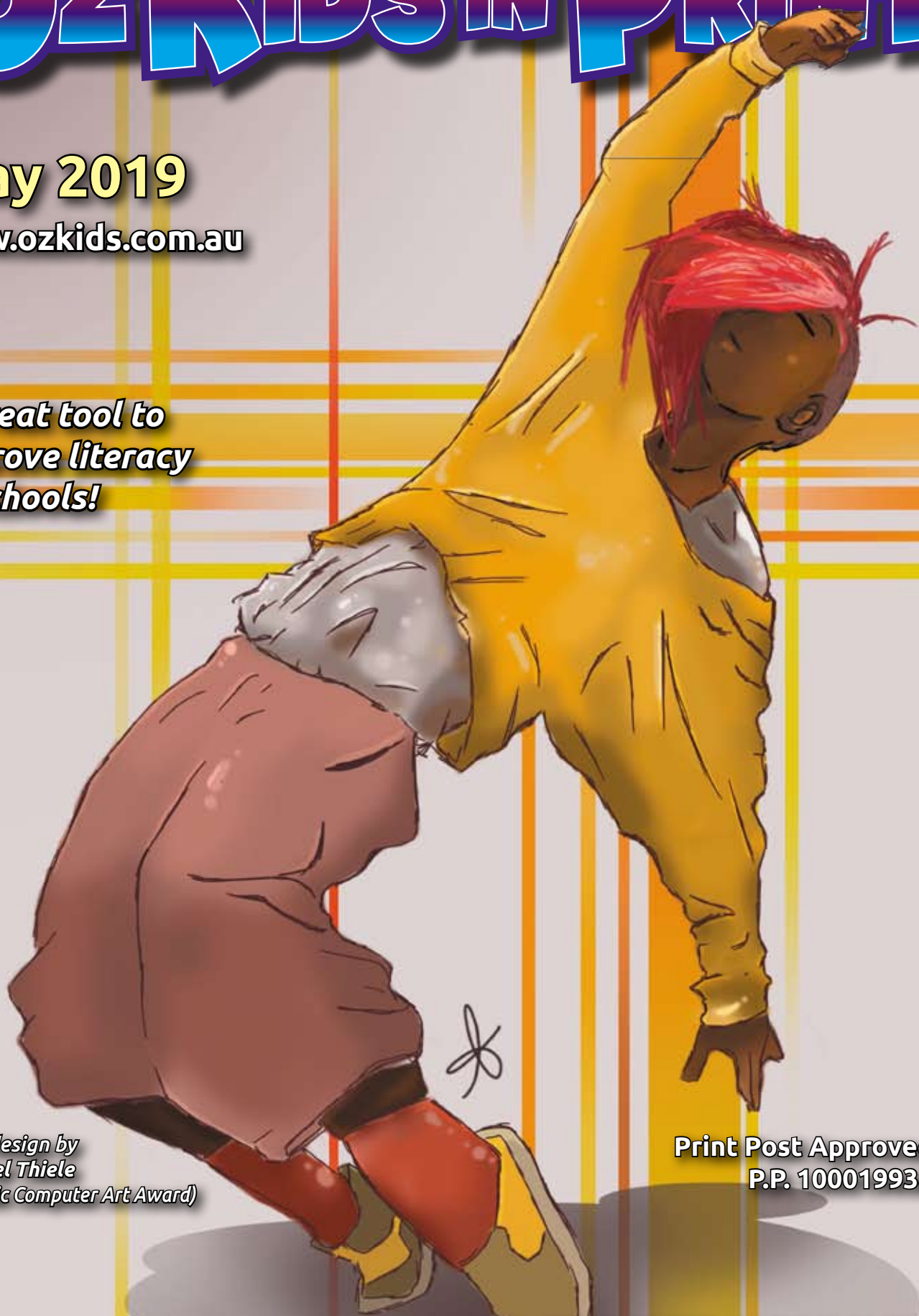


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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Our student reviewers have been busy reading and reviewing. So check out the books they have been reading.

Check our page on Chrissy Bryans <https://www.chrissybyers.com/> and her newly released book 'Playground Circus'. We love showcasing our Author Patrons and we plan to give you more insight into what they have been doing.

Don't wait until September to get your entries in. Also, 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!

Keep on reading... And Keep on Writing!

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Carol Dick
Managing Editor

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Logan

LOGAN stood in the destroyed world. His world. One couldn't take a step without the remains of buildings in their paths. The partially-covered sun sprayed shattered light on the remains of what once was a beautiful world. The clouds were a dull and vague colour of grey, almost seeming lost and out of place. There was no stunning blue of the sky, only replaced with the grey of the clouds. Logan's eyes were moving constantly, observing the empty buildings, half-buried cars, fences which were broken and on an angle. The wailing voices carried on the winds from afar. The building windows which once emitted rays of light, now seemed so barren, so desolate. Dark.

Logan started to take steps, careful not to put his foot in debris. As he walked along, he saw, through those many building, his home. Logan struggled to process the destruction of his home. The house had given in to the pain and destruction. It now lay, with barely anything left standing.

The very thought of his perfect world being ruined and being filled with emptiness was just too much for Logan to bear. His mind flashed back to the days. Those days. The days when his world just popped with colour and happiness. The days when the sun was out and about, dancing, not ever concealed by the cloud. The days when families were out and about, whether it be in a children's park or a blossoming garden that laughed.

Logan looked around the beautiful world. His world. Then he saw him. The little boy. A little boy with nothing to worry about in his world. A little boy with a family and parents. A little boy

roaming the green grassy fields and thick, long grass of Logan's beautiful world. Logan turned to view the boy as he ran through the grass to his parents. The parents had a picnic blanket set out in a sea of families with their picnic blankets. The little boy sat down next to his smiling parents. His mother planted a kiss on the little boy's head and his father put an arm around his shoulder. The sight made Logan ache with sadness and he had to look away to spare him the grief. The little boy got up again and made his way to the top of a grassy hill and laid down. He rolled and rolled and rolled down the soft and smooth grass. He finally stopped at the bottom of the hill and stayed down. He looked up to the beautiful clouds with the sky dripping with colour and brightness. The little boy closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

Logan saw the little boy close his eyes and empty his mind of emotion. Just laying there, in the bright sunlight, in the soft, green grass, in the exquisiteness of his world. Then he opened his eyes and got up. He looked at Logan and smiled.

Logan opened his eyes again. Just like that, the smooth green grass, the colourful sky, the smiles on peoples' faces... all gone. Logan sank to his knees and didn't make an attempt to stop his tears streaming out of his eyes. The torn buildings, the despondent feeling, the debris... all had returned.

He wished he was that little boy again.

By **Dev Sheth**
Year 10, Hale School
WEMBLEY DOWNS – WA
Teacher: C. Liggins



Good Morning Athens

I HAD always underestimated how close Athens was to the sea. The coursing sounds of tidal waves fill my ears, as if I am a beautiful siren, rushing through the Mediterranean waters. “Come now, Xanthia”, my new master calls to me, snapping me out of my distant state and back to reality. Yet again I begin to feel coarse dirt beneath my feet. The journey between the slave-market and my prospective master’s home is quite long and somewhat tiresome, however the conditions could never compare to what I was experiencing weeks ago.

Eventually my eyes fall upon the small courtyard of a house not far off our path. Its exterior was similar in shape and colour to the ones surrounding it, with slanted white walls and balconies adorned with bricks. It was a generic Greek household, like my own back in Mytilene; or what used to be my own.

I began to look more closely at the building when I came to the realisation that it was the destination of our journey. “This is my new home”, I thought to myself, but it wouldn’t be my home. There were people who lived there. Possessors that may do the unthinkable harm to an insignificant slave. Anxiety crawls up my spine like thousands of tiny scorpions, preparing for a dastardly

sting. Disturbing scenarios begin racing through my pounding mind. What name will they decide to address me by? Will I be force-fed alcohol? Slaughtered for the purpose of proving power? Yes, these events were common in Sparta, but should I be the victim? A click in a lock arouses me from the wicked daydream. The oak door before me slowly opens, and I am pushed into my new home.

“Welcome!”, a youthful woman pronounces. She appears flustered yet kind, her chiton dyed a sensible light yellow. She gestures to me and I begin to follow her down the narrow hall. Eventually, we come to a small wooden table that sits in the centre of a conventional kitchen. However, this table was a sight to see. Two children sat around a large, crispy baked fish drizzled with olive oil. The great sight was surrounded with small helpings of bread at each chair. As stunned as a goat, I slowly sat down to the mouth-watering meal alongside the rest of the family. The dinner commences. I begin to take a small bite of the grand fish. “Tastes like home”, I think. The family begin introducing themselves. I soon learn that the wife’s name is Melina and that the

husband, Adonis, is a fisherman. Their two daughters, Thais and Reah are both soon to be married off. After some time of cheerful introductory banter, Melina asks, “So, what shall we call you by?”. Adonis rises from his place and declares “I’ve thought about that topic for quite some time. Although Xanthia is a pretty name, it shall not do for you. I have decided on Korinna. Shall we all agree?”.

Korinna. I do believe that is a pleasant name of such. I reflect on all that I know of this family. Adonis and Melina are very much people of caring spirits. Although I would give anything for my life before the Peloponnesian War, it seems as if I have pleased the Gods with the fortunate outcome of my enslavement. I miss Mytilene, but with much dignity I say; “Good Morning Athens!”.

*By Ashlee Palmer
Year 7, Lourdes Hill College
HAWTHORNE – QLD.
Teacher: Miss Farrell*



The Chronicles of Isocorea: The Killing of the Gem

Chapter: 1

Chang sprinted as the tornado swirled closer and closer. He slid under a nearby car and held his breath, hoping that the tornado wouldn't be strong enough to pick up the SUV. He screamed as the car above him disappeared into the mist. Chang got sucked up into the gargantuan spiral up above. That's when everything went black. For a moment he was swirling in the tornado, then he found himself lying on soft, warm sand. The only thing Chang knew was that he wasn't at home.

Chang had never known his parents. They had both died when he was born. So Chang had lived his life as an orphan.

He was adopted by a wealthy English family who took care of him until two weeks ago, when they had moved to another country. They left him in the care of an old Australian who had decided to live in China. But about 2 weeks after the change, the Australian passed away. Chang was forced to live on the streets, which meant he had no cover from the tornado that had zoomed over. He had been plucked up and here he was in this mysterious place.

Chang slid his hands into his pockets. There was something in there! He didn't remember putting anything in there! He slid it out and looked at it. The something was a scroll. The scroll shone like gold in the sunlight. On the outside there were pictures of giant scorpions, giant flying scorpions, trees with faces and things that looks like they were jumping on water. He turned it over and saw something.

Isocorea. That must be the name of this island, he thought. He opened it up and tried to read it but something huge was shaking the bushes with terrifying strength. It was a giant beast and he could see a spike poking out of the bushes. The monster pounced out of the bush. It was an enormous scorpion! Before he could calculate what was happening, the spike was embedded in his chest. He screamed with a mix of agony and terror! He wrenched the spike out, snatched up a stick and stabbed it in the eye. It did a short squeal and scuttled off. Chang collapsed on the ground, dead. A few minutes later he was lying alive on the ground again, but he couldn't get up. He pushed as hard as he could, but it felt like something as heavy as an elephant was lying on top of him.

Chapter: 2

When he opened his eyes he realised that he was being crushed by five of the palm trees which the astronomical arachnid had rammed over! Suddenly, he felt a warmth in his body. He touched the ground then.... BOOM!!!!!! An earth-shaking blast rocked the island and blew the palm trees kilometres into the ocean. He rose up in the air as all the power rushed from the island into his body. Then he fell down, exhausted.

When he jumped up he realised his skin was golden! Chang had golden plates along his back like those of an armadillo! He tensed up the muscles in his face and then... his vision turned gold. When he stopped tensing up the muscles in his face, the rock in front of him had a hole right through the middle of it. He knew what he had, he had powers. Then he remembered the scroll! It was lying on the sand a few metres away from him. Chang darted over to it and picked it up. He unwrapped it and this is what it read:

You have found the scroll of Isocorea. Anyone who touches this scroll will be immortal and will have the powers of the sword of legends. The creatures on this island are: Aricoso (giant scorpions), Laricusts (giant flying scorpions which are magma-filled), Waaesh (moving trees), Raashk (killer water-hopping tribes) and Azyyc (invisible electric tiger-like

creatures). If you dig up and find the sword of legends and the Isocorea gem and destroy the gem with the sword, you will break the curse of Chen.

All the animals will immediately die and Isocorea will be saved.

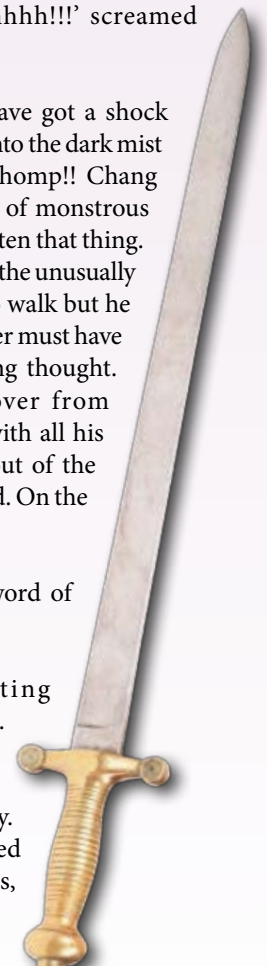
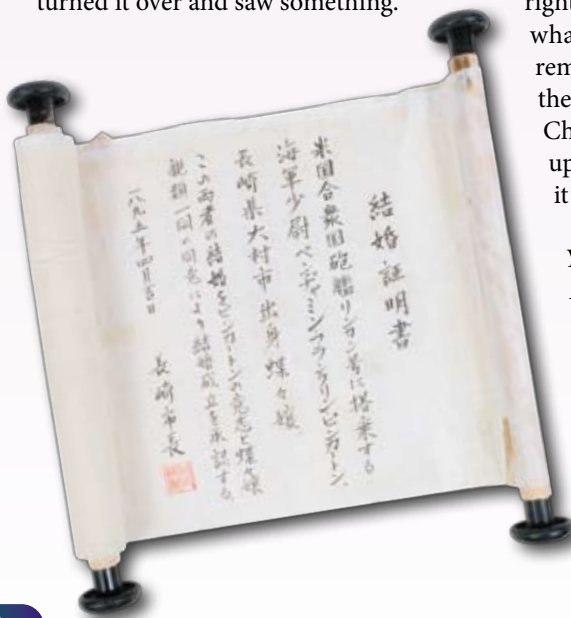
Chang realised he had to find the gem. Somehow he knew exactly where to look.

Chang went over to the cliff's edge, found a stick and started digging. He dug like a wombat in the soil, surviving on bugs and worms. He dug day and night, non-stop. Soon, he came to something hard. He thought it was a very long and unusually thin rock. SPLASH!!!! A NO-FACED CREATURE SLAMMED INTO THE CLIFFSIDE! It jumped on him, trying to suck his head off! Chang kicked it off the cliff but it held on, trying to pull him down with it. He tried to shake the thing off his leg but it wouldn't let go. He was sliding down. He grabbed a small plant, hoping its roots would be strong enough to hold his weight. Then, one by one the roots began to snap. 'NO!' he screamed. All of a sudden... snap!! 'Aaaaagggggghhhhhhhh!!' screamed Chang.

The creature must have got a shock because it fell, down into the dark mist of the sea. Then... chomp!! Chang wondered what kind of monstrous creature must have eaten that thing. Then he remembered the unusually thin rock. He tried to walk but he couldn't. 'That monster must have broken my leg' Chang thought. So he scrambled over from the cliff's edge and with all his might, he pulled it out of the ground. It was a sword. On the side it read: *Legends.*

'This must be the sword of legends' he thought.

He started sprinting towards the forest. Once he was in the forest everything went dark and gloomy. The floor was carpeted with wild strawberries, each one shining like



a ruby in the dim, afternoon sunlight. Suddenly, he felt a willowy tendril creeping up his back. Chang tried to run but it held him back. He slowly turned around and tried to scream but no sound came out. It was a tree. It was moving. It was holding him back with its branches. It begun to pull him back towards its trunk. Then, whoosh!! It threw him towards another tree which he smashed through, then the next one, then the next one, then the next one until another one caught him, then slammed Chang into the ground again and again. It did this until there was a rustle in the bushes next to the tree. The tree dropped him, and sank into the ground. A few other trees did the same.

Rustle, rustle again, then a sound like the time his little brother stuck a fork in the toaster. An electrical sound. THUMP! Footprints were seen in the mud beside him but the creature was nowhere to be seen. Chang ran as fast as a bullet. Then he



tripped on a mossy tree root! The tree sank into the ground. He screamed! Something was ripping his whole foot open! Then, the bone inside his lower shin slid out! The pain was so intense he couldn't scream! Then, fur was felt against his arm. ZAP! He tried to scream but he couldn't! He felt burning all over his golden skin. He

was being electrified! All of a sudden he dropped down on the spot where the tree had sunk down. FOOMP! Chang got sucked down into a dark, damp cave. Then he saw something glinting purple in the corner. He grabbed the sword and paced over. He raised the sword above his head then paused. 'Could this thing be dangerous?' he thought. But it was too late. He found himself wielding the sword towards the gem then... SMASH!! The gem splintered into a million pieces. All of a sudden Chang was swirling in the air. Next he was lying under the car again.

He crawled out and realised that everything was new as if the tornado hadn't come over. His skin wasn't golden any more. Then, Chang heard a buzzing sound overhead.

By **Sam Sebastian Francis**
Year 4, Greenslopes State School
GREENSLOPES – QLD.
Teacher: Yianni Papamanolis

Messy Madness



MY FEET crunched and slipped through the snow, as I walked towards the front steps of Maggie's house, my heart beating. I reached for the gold knocker on the matte black door. A wreath hung from it, sparkling red and green. I knocked three times on the door. I was very nervous. What if she didn't like me any more?

The door opened in a flash, and there stood

my beautiful girlfriend. Her strawberry blonde hair curled down in ringlets over her shoulders, and her blue eyes sparkled in the winter sun. Freckles were dotted over her nose and forehead, but she wore bags under her eyes and her shoulders slumped. She smiled, then immediately rushed back to her room.

As I followed her in, I looked around. Two grey couches sat opposite each other with

vintage pillows and blankets set on them. An oak coffee table was placed exactly in between the couches and a large fireplace burned behind it. Above the fireplace was a mirror lined with black, and indoor plants were spotted about the place.

I finally reached her bedroom where everything was completely messy. This was so unlike her! There were so many clothes on the floor that the carpet was not visible, and her bed wasn't even made. Sheets of paper covered her desk and Maggie was hunched over her computer, typing. This was the opposite of how her room usually was. I had expected to see her bed made, without a wrinkle on the surface. Her clothes should be in her dresser, lined up in rows. Her sheets of research paper should be sorted into categories in neat piles and her pencils should be all lined up in a row on her desk. Maggie should be sitting up straight and already typing on her tenth page with seven thousand words. Her computer read: page 2/2, one hundred words. What was wrong with Maggie?

By **Georgia Gray**
Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls
GORDON – NSW
Teacher: Sharon Shapiro

Homecoming

ADALYN leant her head against the cold, dirt-streaked, glass window of the deserted bus. She shouldn't have run away. She would be in so much trouble if her Aunt Beth found out where she planned on going. Pensively, Adalyn studied her reflection staring back at her in the bus window. She saw wide, hazel eyes and long lashes; wavy, chestnut-brown, shoulder-length hair; a small nose and plump, cupid's bow lips. She knew from her aunt's perpetually pained expression, each time she caught her gaze, that she was the spitting image of her dead mother.

As the beautiful young woman glanced out the window, she studied her surroundings, searching for anything that looked even vaguely familiar.

Ten years ago, her mother, Lily, died from pancreatic cancer. Adalyn was sent away to live with her Aunt Beth – she was only seven years old at the time. After the funeral, Adalyn's Aunt never mentioned Lily again. For ten long years, Adalyn had dreamed of visiting her mother's home again, but Beth would never let her for the fear that she would hit a downward spiral. After her mother's death, Adalyn lost her appetite and began to waste away. She ate next to nothing for months until her desperate Aunt sought medical advice and Adalyn was admitted to a clinic for eating disorders. It took four years for Adalyn to beat her inner demons and, although she ate well now, her Aunt lived in constant fear that she would relapse.

Adalyn perked up as the bus rounded the next corner and the scenery around her became increasingly familiar. Memories of running barefoot through the sand with her mother flooded back as the bus stopped next to a tantalising, glittering beach. Adalyn ejected herself from the bus, too overwhelmed to thank the driver. She took off in a sprint through the soft, white sand of the beach, her clothes whipping around in the wind. She came to a halt, struggling to regain her breath, as she searched for the right house. Butterflies fluttered around her stomach. Sweat began to form on her upper lip. A thousand thoughts were running through her head. Will it feel the same? Will it look the same? And more importantly, will it finally bring her closure?



Her heart in her mouth, Adalyn scanned the houses before her, looking for the only teal coloured house on the beach. There! Finally, after all these years dreaming of revisiting her home, she was standing just twenty metres away. She was finally going to get the closure she'd hoped for. Then, as if pulled by an invisible thread, she neared closer and closer to her old home. She took in a deep breath as she stepped up to the house. Absently, she noticed the big, open windows and balcony on the second floor that overlooked the stunning beach below, a pair of sliding glass doors and a dark, wooden outdoor seating area. This was her childhood home. It even had the homemade swing still tied to the big palm tree out the front. Unable to hold herself back any longer, Adalyn ran up to the front door and knocked gently three times before she could change her mind.

The door swung open to reveal a grey-brown haired, middle-aged man with green eyes and a dusting of stubble.

"Can I help you?" he demanded haughtily as he stared down at Adalyn, his eyes coldly assessing her messy hair and rumpled clothes.

"I, um, used to live here when I was younger, but my mum passed away and I haven't seen her house in ten years and I was wondering if I could just come in and see her room?" Adalyn rushed out. Silence. He studied her face, deciding whether or not she was serious.

His features softened as he realised who she was. "Look, kid, I'm sorry about your mum

and all but I can't let you in. It may have been your house once, but now it's mine", he said as he looked at her sympathetically. "Sorry", he said as he swung the door shut. His message was clear. Adalyn suddenly felt nauseous. Her chest tightened and her stomach churned. Her eyes began to water and her throat tightened. She was utterly crushed. She'd waited 10 years to see her house but wasn't even allowed through the front door. It was as if her heart had been ripped from her chest. She felt the claws of her old demons returning.

Holding back tears, Adalyn forced herself to turn away and ran to a tree where she and her mum always used to sit. How could she have been so stupid? It wasn't her home any more. Why did she come back? She felt so out of place.

She fell back on the sand and squinted up into the sky then frowned. Something was glinting in the tree above her. She jumped up and dusted the sand from her clothes and tried to get a closer look. She stood on tip-toes and pulled down a silver chain with two charms. As she studied the chain, she realised what it was; a starfish and shell. Two of her mum's favourite things – an exact replica of the necklace she wore everywhere. As Adalyn stared at the necklace a memory came to the forefront of her mind. It was of her mum smiling at her in the mirror whilst putting the necklace around Adalyn's neck, the same one dangling around hers. That was the best gift she remembered receiving.

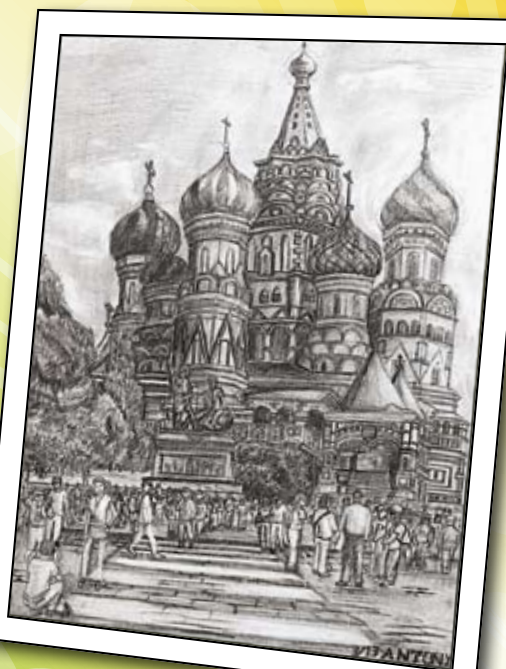
Adalyn clipped her mum's necklace around her neck and let it hang beside her own. Overwhelmed with a rush of emotions, she laughed as tears of joy slid down her face and fell into the sand below. With that, it was like a huge weight had been lifted from her shoulders. She felt light. She felt content. The gaping wound in her heart had finally healed. Adalyn suddenly understood. It was never about her old house. It was about her mum. Her mum made their house feel like a home. Her mother's love wasn't something that could be bought or sold. It was always with her in beautiful memories and in her heart.

By Kayla Kingston

*Year 12, Saint Mary's Catholic College
CAIRNS – QLD.*

2019

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



By Anthony Qin

DRAWING



By Manna Tsuchiya

COMPUTER ART



By Kai Kaulder

PHOTOGRAPHY



By Matthew Ropeyam

PAINTING

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.

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.

Farrow

FARROW ran with the water's edge. Wherever its winding river twisted, her echoing footsteps sounded against the forest floor. The forest's canopy of gnarling tree branches shifted slowly apart giving her the unobstructed pathway needed and swiftly she moved across and through the tree tops with enormous leaps of enthusiasm. A playful ambiance was in the air. The slightest seconds as Farrow's feet met the earth exuded a forest floor of bubbling excitement.

From the corner of her eye Farrow could see the approaching form of Elfra. The wolf's short pale brown pelt standing out against the lush greens of the woods. Thinking fast the spirit focused her energy onto the water mass ahead. In a quick movement Farrow twisted her wrist sending a short burst of water onto Elfra. Elfra released a wolf-like chuff and the

pair skidded to a halt as laughter escaped them. The wolf nipped at her ankles before pausing to step back and suddenly transform. In the small wolf's place stood a girl with long curled ringlets of brown hair and bright blue eyes.

"Not fair!" she complained, shrugging her shoulders as she put on the clothes she had hanging around her neck. "I never said you could use your spirit-chant and use the river!" Farrow giggled matter-of-factly shaking her finger at her friend.

"But you never said I couldn't!" Elfra rolled her eyes, nudging Farrow's arm. The girls paused for a moment, as they read one another's thoughts... "Now what?" they stared at each other before bursting into laughter. "Come on", Farrow said wisely, glancing at the slow setting sun through the thick trees, "Mother will throw a fit if we aren't back before dark".

The two girls began the short walk back to town crossing the stream first, and continued steadily walking barefoot, over the fallen leaves. Farrow felt at peace inevitably, she would as the water spirit of the woods. Dirt and grass curled around her toes as tree branches whispered words lost to the wind. She dragged her hand over the bark of a tree, feeling the rough edges pull against her pale skin and she felt new life running through her. Looking behind them as the river slowly became further away she could still feel the pull of energy from the depths of the water.

Farrow longed to submerge herself under the smooth ripples of water, but she also liked the warm comforting blanket of earth surrounding her. The world felt electrifying, and just as Farrow could feel the earth around her Elfra's body shook in anticipation. She could barely contain



her excitement finishing her steps with leaping bounds.

Elfra felt alert. Instinctively the scent of Pine, the faint smell of rain approaching, and the presence of wild animals filled Elfra senses. It excited her the way her words echoed as she chatted to her friend and how the wind changed the direction of the forest scents in the air. Elfra knew where her family was, and where her wolf pack were settled. Abruptly Elfra knew when danger was approaching. Elfra's steps faltered, and Farrow stopped beside her. The danger was too far away for Farrow to feel it in the ground, but Elfra could feel the shift in the wind. A low growl escaped her, and Farrow watched her friend's eye flash a strange gold.

"W-what is that?" she stuttered, her soft voice quiet in contrast to the stirring night creatures in the forest.

"I don't know", Elfra admitted, averting her gaze around the woods, "but it's coming... fast".

Not wasting another second, Farrow grabbed her friend's arm and began to run. They would be home in another twenty minutes, but as their pace quickened, so did the creature's. It only took one glance ahead for Farrow to stumble to a sudden stop of disbelief. Shadows appeared blocking the path. Incredulity shadows overtook everything in sight. Plants shrivelled, branches twisted in on themselves, the land grew dark and a coldness in the air replaced the warm forest air. Farrow's stomach twisted painfully. The earth that she was so connected to, caused her pain in its destruction. She whimpered, but Elfra could only offer her friend a short shoulder squeeze before they dragged each other onwards away from harm. Elfra led that time, ducking a disorientated Farrow through and under branches.

Farrow's insides felt cold, her connection with the earth slowly depleting as the woods fell. "Farrow come on!" Elfra cried, feeling her friend's distress just as much as Farrow felt it.

"W-we can't – we don't have time to stop!" Farrow snapped back to reality. "The cliff", she rasped, trying to catch her breath, "We can jump!"

I can... the water." Elfra nodded, her eyes widening in realisation. The cliff was a long

drop off which landed in the mouth of the river. Elfra knew all about the abilities her spirit friend possessed yet still a knot formed in her throat. Farrow had already been weakened by the destroyed earth, it's possible the added manipulation of water would only hurt her further. The two paused over the edge. Any other day, the two would be baffled by the beauty of the creek. Lush forests surrounding pristine waters in the daytime and murky, hidden waters flooding through creaking trees in the night. Instead of the bright sunlight reflecting off the cool water, the moon left its eerie glow and formed shadows that seemed to watch.

The usual chirping and sounds of the forest were shut down in the quiet stillness of the windy night and the woods were void of sounds besides the approaching creature. Not wasting another second, Farrow grabbed Elfra's hand, giving her a reassuring squeeze. Silently consoling each other the girls jumped. A high pitched scream left Elfra's mouth, but Farrow breathed deeply to concentrate on the water.

"Three seconds, ticking down. Two seconds, a falling crown. One second, finally, we won't drown", Farrow chanted. Water buried the girls, their bodies sinking into the ascending depths. Panic gripped Farrow, but she kept her tight hold on Elfra's hand. For a moment, the spirit flailed, the light clothes seemingly added more weight dragging them down further into the depth of darkness. Hastily, she regained control, and spun her hand around the water. Elfra was pulled closer to her, and Farrow closed her hand into a fist.

Within a second, an air bubble formed around the girls' heads, and they sighed out in relief. "D-do you think it's g-gone?" Elfra sputtered, her limbs already feeling a faint ache from having to wade strenuously in the water. Farrow spat out a cough, pausing to rub her eyes.

"I'm not sure." The pair glanced upwards catching a faint shadow standing atop of the cliff they had jumped from, before moving off. Farrow breathed a sigh of relief, the sounds echoing in the small opening. As her stress simmered, her pain increased. The ache in her body was more apparent, the evening's toll of running, jumping and remaining under water made her whimper softly with the overuse of her powers.

Elfra noticed the pained look on her friend's face. "We have to go, we have to move", Elfra reminded her softly.

"This will only cause you more pain, but we'll be able to get you home", Farrow grimaced.

"What if it's still out there? I won't be able to use my powers." Elfra mustered a smirk. She flashed her friend a glimpse of her white wolf-like teeth and said, "I'm still a werewolf, you know". Farrow nodded tiredly.

Holding each other, the girls kicked against the river's rushing water, the air bubble bursting as they moved against its restraints. Building up energy, they crashed above the surface. Farrow's breath was laboured as she hastily tugged herself to the banks of the river letting her body calm down when, the silence of the woods remained unbroken. Elfra followed closely behind hauling herself upwards. Not pausing, Farrow shakily stood, grimacing as her legs shook and her knees threatened to buckle. She pulled Elfra up beside her, their cold bodies stumbling through the dense woods. Faintly, voices called out and Elfra called back weakly.

"Here Mother!" Elfra cried at the sight of lanterns approaching, her friend blinking in and out of consciousness. Farrow's feet trailed over the floor. "We are here", Elfra breathed, relief coating her voice. "We're here." Warm arms wrapped around Farrow, and a quick whisk of hands removed the water from her clothes. A palm rested on her cheek, and a blurry face moved in front of her eyes. She faintly recognised her mother's relieved face and she blinked.

Upon awakening hours later, Farrow's body felt more energised, her usual spiritual powers flowing through her blood. She lay on her bed, but she couldn't remember how or when she got there. The girl turned her head towards the opening of her room. "Farrow, what have you heard about the creature from the forest?"

By Kelsea Thomson

Year 9, Mackay Northern Beaches State

High School

MACKAY – QLD.

Teacher: Mrs Sian Burrows

BOOK REVIEWS

Meet our book reviewers
Aurelia, Gabriel, Trinity,
Nicole, Ena and Miles from
Tucker Road, Bentleigh
Primary School, in Victoria.

Reviews Coordinators: Robyn Donoghue
and Meredith Costain



Gorski's Bitemare

by Robert Favretto, illustrated by Danny Willis (Ford Street Publishing)

Gorski's Bitemare is a fast-paced action book. It is about a boy vampire called Gorski who goes to a night school called Belfry Academy. After something frightening happens, Gorski must figure out why his fangs are shrinking. Can he stop this before it's too late?

This is an amazing book filled with silly puns and funny jokes. Robert Favretto



made me laugh out loud. It's also very funny, with lots of action and great illustrations. I just wish it was longer because it finished too soon.

I would recommend it for ages 8 to 12 because it isn't too scary.

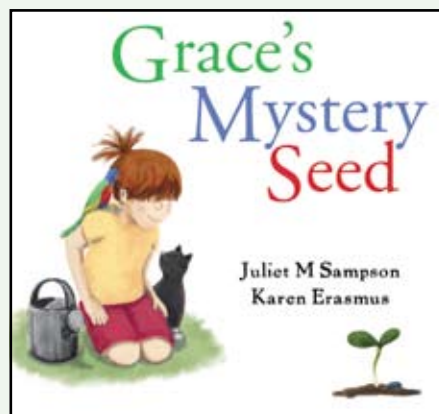
Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [9/10]

— Gabriel, Year 6

Grace's Mystery Seed

by Juliet M Sampson, illustrated by Karen Erasmus (Ford Street Publishing)

Grace's Mystery Seed is about a young girl called Grace. Her favourite neighbour in the street is Mrs Marino because of her wonderful garden. One day Mrs Marino shows Grace a mysterious seed and they



decide to plant it. They wait and wait and wait and wait a bit more until, at last, Grace discovers the extraordinary truth about her mystery seed.

I enjoyed reading this book because it had great illustrations packed with detail and description.

This book would suit lovers of picture books and little kids will love trying to solve the mystery of the seed.

I recommend this book to readers aged 4 to 9.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [7/10]

— Trinity, Year 6

Liars: No Survivors

by Jack Heath (Scholastic Australia)

Liars: No Survivors is about a boy named Jarli, his best friend Bess, and Doug, a boy from his school. Jarli is involved in a plane crash in his home town, Kelton. He runs into the house, looking for survivors, and barely escapes with his life. He believes the crime boss known as Viper is responsible.

I enjoyed this book because I never knew what was going to happen and I really liked the fast paced action and mystery. I would



recommend it to lovers of quick-thinking books. It sucked me into the world of Jack Heath. I was on the edge of my seat the whole time I was reading it.

This book would suit readers aged from 10 to 16.

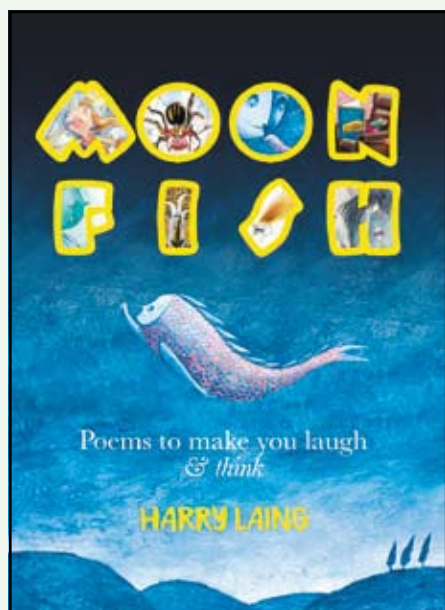
Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [9/10]

— Miles, Year 6

Moon Fish : Poems To Make You Laugh & Think

by Harry Laing, featuring art by some of Australia's best known illustrators (Ford Street Publishing)

Moon Fish is a fun collection of poems ranging in variety – from concrete and rap



to rhyming. They are sure to put a smile on your face. The poems are written so that you want to say them out loud, especially 'Cheese Rap'.

One of my favourites is 'I'm the Pencil Bird' which is about a bird who can't sing but prefers to write poems, so it encourages you to try as well. The accompanying illustration for this was done by Shaun Tan – and is beautiful.

The illustrations in this book are from various Australian artists and they are all astonishing. They come to life with each turn of the page. All have a different style and inspiration! My favourite was for 'The Mega Night Snail', again by Shaun Tan. The garden on the top bursts with life and is astounding!

The whole book is amazing and suited to readers aged 8 to 12.

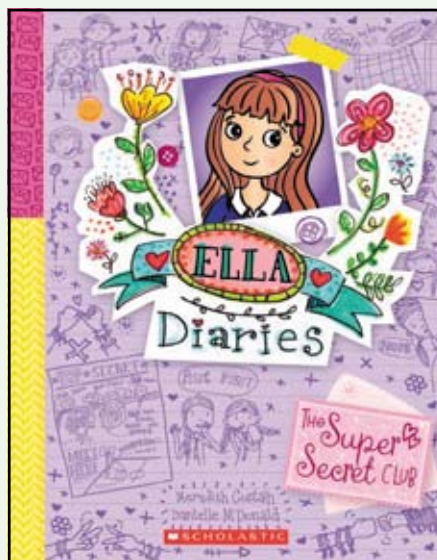
Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [8/10]

— Aurelia, Year 6

Ella Diaries #15: The Super Secret Club

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

The Super Secret Club is a great book about a secret association formed by Ella's friends. During the story, Ella and her best friend Zoe notice a lot of whispering and exclusion going on in their classroom. They soon find out that all the odd behaviour is because of a secret club called S.O.A.P. (which stands for Secret Organisation of Amazing People). Ella is excited to finally



find a glittery pink envelope on her desk with an invitation to join S.O.A.P.

Read about the troubles that Ella goes through as another part of her school year goes by. If you like the Ella Diaries series, then you will love this book. Recommended for readers aged 7 to 10.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [8/10]

— Nicole, Year 6

Cowboy and Birdbrain

by Adam Wallace, illustrated by James Hart (Scholastic Australia)

Ten stars for comedy! I laughed a lot reading this book.

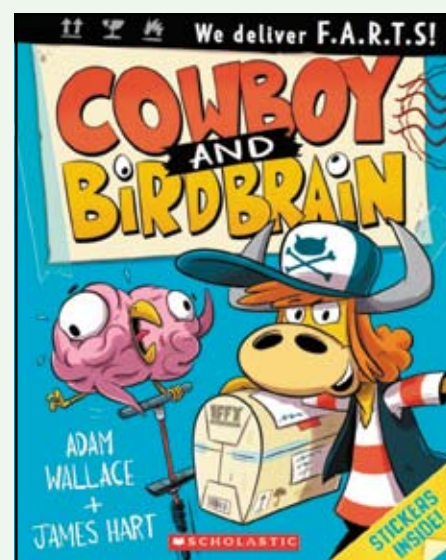
Cowboy and Birdbrain is a magnificent book. It is very funny and entertaining. Cowboy and Birdbrain have to deliver an extremely important package to a ship in the middle of the ocean... without getting it wet. They have a boat, but it sinks in shark-infested waters. Their enemies, the 'Evil' twins Sam and Samantha, want to steal the package and deliver it themselves.

And let's just say that everything goes according to plan and they deliver the package, without saying the 'P' word. Or does it? Guess you'll have to find out!

I recommend this book for readers aged 7 to 10.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ [8/10]

— Ena, Year 6



I TOOK a long breath and closed my eyes. My hand pressed against the dusty, cold dark door. I opened my eyes slowly and pushed the large door open. Inside was what no one would expect. A jet-black frame stood in the middle of the cold, dark room. I stood in the middle of the large brick building not knowing what to do. In front of me stood a portal. There was a long period of silence. Then I heard a noise and a flash of light shone behind me. "Ahh!" I screamed in horror as I swung around to see who was behind me. I could not be caught in the middle of the night sneaking into a tomb. I would be in massive trouble. I stepped backwards and suddenly tripped into the portal.

My heart raced faster and faster as I was whipped through the vortex. Blinding light surrounded me, so I was forced to close my eyes. When I opened my eyes, I was in the air! Could it be? Could I fly? Unfortunately, after a while, I realised I was not flying. I was falling! My back thumped onto the ground. I grasped my back and screamed. It felt like I broke a bone.

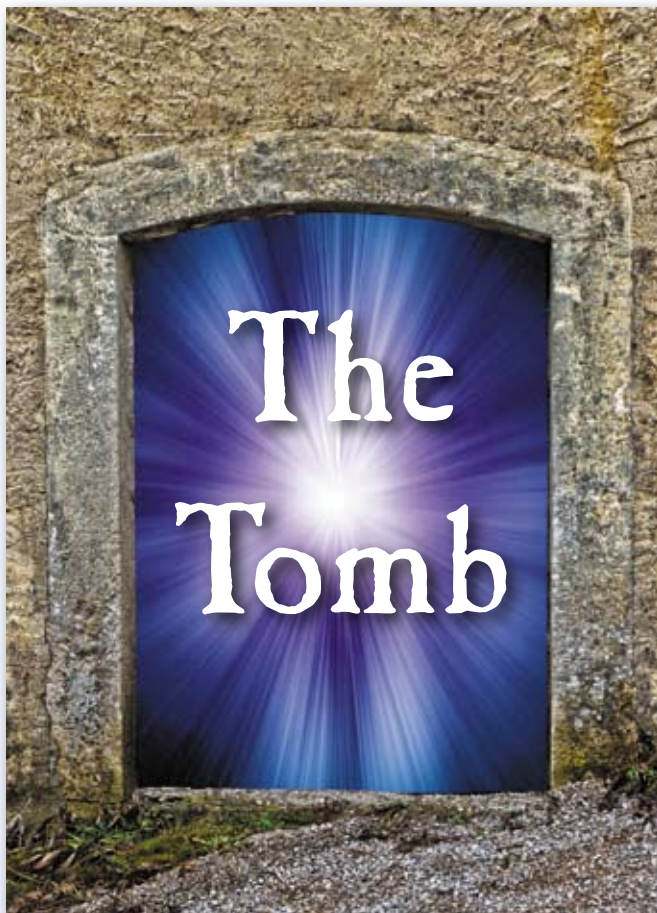
"Searching, searching. Pain found. Injured muscle near spine." That was the first voice I heard when I woke up from that dramatic fall. It had a robotic voice. Then, a metal finger poked me on the back. "Awoooo!" I howled in pain. My eyes shot open and peering on top of me was an unfamiliar, white, robotic head. "You have finally woken up. I sense you want to ask me something. Welcome to the year 3001."

I jumped onto the ground and peered around. I was in a hospital from the distance 100 future. Suddenly, an idea popped up in my head. "You're a robot, right? So, you can tell me how to get back to year 2018?"

The robot nodded slowly. "MC thousand at your service. "You just need some cat fur", MC spoke.

Easy, I thought. After all, cats are very common.

"But there is only one cat in the world. All



the others are extinct", MC spoke.

I sighed. Maybe this isn't a piece of cake after all. We quickly rushed out of the hospital and searched everywhere for a cat.

"It's impossible!" I screamed as I thumped onto the ground.

"According to my calculation, you have twenty percent chance of finding the feline. The last sighting was here in two thousand and eighty-five."

I thought and thought but this time nothing came up in my head. I kept on staring on a poster reading free smart chocolates, they really work. I knew it was just advertising, chocolates can't make you smart. I thought out loud.

"In fact, they do. Go on. Take it."

Unsure if it would work, I reached my hand out at the poster. My hand got closer and closer until it shot straight right through! I snatched the red, rectangular bar of chocolate and ripped the silky wrapper off the chocolate. I quickly took a bite and felt a zap of energy shoot through my body.

"That's it!" I shouted and threw the bar

of chocolate across the white, marble floor. "Since you only need a glue stick to go back to the year two thousand and eighty-five, we will go back there and catch the cat."

MC and I rushed to the local stationery store and bought a glue stick. MC carefully placed it in a special cabinet in his leg and said some magic words.

When I opened my eyes, everything was the same. I spun around. Suddenly I saw a flash of ginger coloured fur near the bushes. I slowly crept towards it and made a giant leap. The furry feline screeched trying to get free. He whacked his tail on my face as I was holding it tightly. Finally, he kicked his hind legs on my face. I lost grip and the rare cat escaped.

MC peeled a strip of fur off my arm and placed it in the same cabinet. "I hope we meet again", MC spoke. My eyes widened.

"You're not coming?" I questioned. MC nodded and then smiled softly.

"I can't", MC said slowly.

Then a flash of purple light whipped around me and grabbed me. It spun me around and around. MC slowly disappeared out of sight the further I was whipped away from the fascinating world that I would never dream of entering.

I opened my eyes. I was back in the tomb where I started. The cold dusty air blew at my hair through the cracks in the door. The tall, grey, ancient walls stood beside me and the short passageway to the exit seemed like a maze. The large, framed portal that was there when I first set foot on this ground had vanished. Where had I just been? Have I just done the impossible? Travel to another dimension? "What if it's just a dream? Oh well it probably was." I thought, still a bit dazed from what I have just done. But then I thought again. "What if it wasn't?!"

By Yannis Ho
Year 5, Carlingford Public School
CARLINGFORD – NSW
Teacher: Miss Lisa Pires

DEPRESSION IS A SONG

Depression is a song
Not a pleasant one
Or a pretty one
But a song that is always there
Even when some other noise comes
You can never quite drown out
Its music

Depression is a movement
But never a consistent movement
When you feel fast it needs to go slow
When you need to relax
It cannot do anything but go
This movement takes energy
That I don't always have

Depression is the wind
Sometimes subtle
Sometimes prominent
Seemingly changing as frequently as you do
This wind pushes fragrances, particles and shivers
Through to you
It is progressive, fluid
And despite its reluctance
A real nuisance

Depression is an itch
One you just can't seem to reach
Like you're under a cloth
Can't move your hands
But your skin wriggles and wriggles
Until you just can't stand it any more
But then it stops
Until it feels like wriggling
Again

Depression is a mirror
One that distorts your view
Not too much that it seems obvious
But just enough to confuse you
By reflecting not quite
What you see

Depression is like a sponge
Absorbent, consuming, clever
Truly a concoction of its environment
Surely it will always be that sponge
But sometimes this sponge is fuller
Or wetter or heavier than other times
But it is still a sponge
And it is always there
Even if you try to hide it under the sink

Depression is a nickname
But not one you like
Invented by someone in primary school
Just to get under your nerves
It's familiar
And you respond to its call
But you wish you didn't
But you are trained to

Depression is a cup of tea
Sometimes warm, familiar, inviting
Only to be lured into a burnt tongue
This cup of tea is never quite right
Too soon and a sore mouth
Too late and unpalatable
You're not likely to ever win
With this cup of tea

Depression is a slow internet connection
It can never fully stop you from doing anything
But darn will it try
Until maybe just maybe
You fulfil its wish
And give up before you can even start

Depression is a long lost sibling
Something you always felt was there
But lacked a certain proof
Something always feels missing
And sometimes even new
And the moment you know
About this gone away brother
It seems they have been there all along

Depression is everything it isn't too

*By Isabelle Orosz
Year 11, Homeschooled
ESSENDON WEST – VIC.*



CREAK! A sudden noise woke her up. Lyra sat upright in bed, startled. She gingerly trod as lightly as she could to her bedroom window. She always kept her window blinds up at night so that the soft, silvery moonbeams could fill her bedroom, splashing against the walls and illuminating the room.

Lyra found darkness strange. Living in the heart of a meadow, she was always surrounded by the bright, silver glow of moon. But on some days, darkness surrounded her and so did a thick blanket of fear. The type of fear she couldn't shake off until first light.

CREAK! The noise was soft this time. It came from the front gate. The curious Lyra slipped her head out a bit more and turned it to the direction of the creaking. Her



heart skipped a beat. A man was making his way down the front porch and towards her tall house. She told her head to move back inside but her head felt like lead and her eyes were fixed on the intruder. The

man walked up to the front door and took a key out of his pocket. He drew the key softly into the hole.

CLINK! The door slowly opened. He strode in. Lyra's head finally moved inside. She quickly dashed into bed and pulled the covers over her trembling head. She could hear light boot steps heading up the stairs and towards her bedroom. Now her whole body was trembling like cold jelly. Lyra closed her eyes and gritted her teeth. She could hear her door handle rattling. Her door swayed open. The man stepped towards her bed.

"Lyra, I'm home", whispered a familiar voice. The intruder was only her dad late from work.

By Farha Mohamed Fahim
Year 7, Werribee Secondary College
WERRIBEE – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Attard



Ben the Daydreamer

ONCE there was a boy named Ben who disliked nearly everything. One day things changed, Ben saw something out of his mind, an electric scooter. He knew his mum would never let him buy it, but on the other hand he really wanted that miraculous scooter. He'd beg his mum day and night but all that she said was "no, no, no". Then one day he got an idea, he thought that if he saved money he'd have a good chance of getting the scooter but every time he thought about the price he was certain that he would never get that scooter.

Every day Ben would daydream about the scooter, everywhere he went including school; at class, playtime, break time and even the activities he loved the most. That night he thought about getting a high mark in his report card at school but every time he tried to listen to the teacher he always got distracted by either someone making him talk or laugh. The teacher got fed up

with Ben and every time he tried to explain to the teacher it wasn't him and it was the person next to him the teacher would just ignore him and give him a horrible detention.

The next day, Ben went to school and when everyone arrived the teacher reminded the class that tomorrow was report card day. Ben had totally forgotten about report card day then the teacher said "Remember that it only counts today and tomorrow so try your hardest everyone". So when class started Ben tried his absolute hardest not to talk or laugh.

When Ben got to school early the next day, the teacher handed out the report cards, Ben was buzzing with excitement and couldn't believe his eyes: an A in maths, science, English, geography, and history. He couldn't wait until his mum saw this.

After school Ben sprinted to his house and showed the piece of paper to his mum. When she saw the A on the five subjects she said he could get anything he wanted as a reward so Ben said "I want an electric scooter" and his mum said "All right then, but only on one condition you have to make yourself a better and happier person". "Definitely" agreed Ben.

When they reached the store they couldn't find any electric scooters. They went to

three other stores but they still couldn't find any. When all hope seemed lost something else caught Ben's eye, a Lego ningen set and so he asked his mum if he could have it and she said yes.

When they got to the Lego set, they took it off the shelf and paid for it. When Ben got back home, he immediately opened the box, it was so cool. Ben built the Lego set so fast then played with it all day until night. He finally packed up the Lego at around 8pm and went to bed but he couldn't sleep, only because he really wanted to play with his Lego again. So Ben went downstairs, got his Lego and played with it non-stop. All of a sudden he heard footsteps coming downstairs, it was his mum. She yelled at him and told him he was grounded from the Lego for a week. Ben then started crying. After he packed it up he slowly went to bed and cried himself to sleep.

The next day, Ben really wanted to play with his Lego set and begged his mum to give him one more chance. She finally agreed and Ben said "I love you mum, you're the best mum in the world".

"I love you too Ben" she replied.

By Abdrhman Hugaz
Year 3, Greenslopes State School
GREENSLOPES – QLD.
Teacher: Mr McCallum

Chocolate Strawberry

A PICNIC blanket sprawled across the moss green grass. The perfect chocolate strawberry is placed in mum's hands. She gives it to me and the taste was heaven. We walk home hand in hand. Little did I know this feeling would never last.

Five long years have past. Mum is insane. Ever since dad left she has not been healthy. I tell her this but it doesn't help. She just slaps me across the cheek. I don't cry. Boys don't cry. I knew this would be her reaction.

Dad was the perfect man, the light in mum's life. But dad has to ruin that and everything in his path. Vases were smashed and hearts were broken then. I will never forgive him. He has ruined Mum's and my life.

Boys can deal with whatever they face, but this is just too much. I'm weak and dumb. Mum can't afford schooling. Our house is not much to be honest, I would rather live in a box. My ruby red cheek is killing more than ever. Suddenly the door

slams. A million thoughts race in one ear and out the other. A scream of pain meets my eardrums. I rush downstairs and Molly (the woman who lives in the flat under us) is sprawled across the floor gobsmacked. I pull her up with all my might and take her inside. The smell of lavender fills the air. Molly explains how mum pushed her against the wall. I pluck up the courage to walk back up to the flat. I know mum will come back... she has to. I step lightly into her room. I find a diary sprawled across the bed. I open it and it says:

*This is the only way
It has to be
I can't live any longer.
I love my son and he
is the only thing
I'll miss
Goodbye
diary,
Stacy*

No! Where could she be? I have to find her. Where do I go? A mix of frustration

and adrenaline rush through me like a stampede.

Somehow I find my feet scraping along the pavement. The voice of pain screaming in my head. SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

Then something catches my eye. Those look like mum's clothes right against the water's edge. For the first time ever a tear forms in my eye. The perfect shiny pearl rolls down my face.

I slowly approach mum's clothes, plain and lifeless.

The perfect chocolate strawberry is placed on top of the clothes.

This must be mum's goodbye.



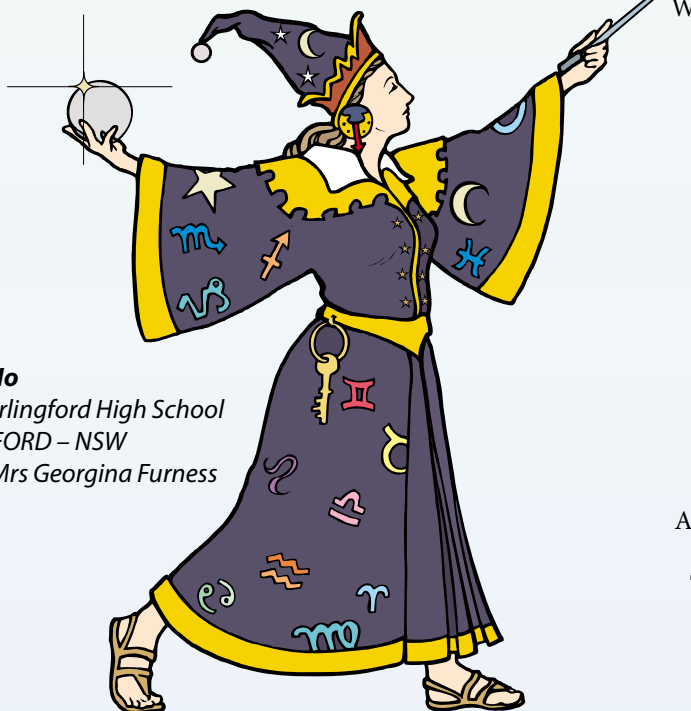
By **Ella Anderson**

Year 6, St Anne's Primary School

PARK ORCHARDS – VIC.

Teacher: Mr Mooney

The Sorcerer



By **Paco Ho**

Year 7, Carlingford High School

CARLINGFORD – NSW

Teacher: Mrs Georgina Furness

Smoke began to rise in the air,
Five hundred hummingbirds came to stare.
A strange, elderly man, seventy at least,
Watch a pot filled with apricots then poured in some yeast.

As I watched in fascination,
He issued a quick calculation,
Then tossed in three matches with fast gestation.
Swoosh!

The birds swirled around him like a tornado,
While the old man dumped in a potato.

He seemed inhuman, that's for sure
For it's a green liquid he then poured
It's not cordial and the juice isn't lime
Because he said "I'm off in the right time".

As I watched in amazing shock,
The sorcerer peered at his old dusty clock.
And out of the clock, flew a cot, that dropped into the pot.
The pot grew wings and ten rings,
Then the wizard caused a blizzard and held onto a ring.

I looked away from the stinging blizzard,
And when I looked back, there was no wizard.
I knew it wasn't a dream, for I felt the wind blows,
Where had the sorcerer gone? Who knows?



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Daisy Daddy



I LOVED visiting father. When I walked through his front garden along the uneven cobble stone path, I could feel the warmth and love radiating from the front door. His personality matched his garden perfectly. Various types of colourful overgrown flowers lay scattered around the messy garden. His house stood out compared to the small grey cottages on either side. His was red brick with a sea blue door. I couldn't resist. I bolted up the steps and pressed the doorbell waiting while the familiar 'ding dong' rang. The door swung open and a tall figure would stand on the threshold.

"Howdy, kiddo", sang a deep voice. I looked up to see the smiling, brown eyes. Father

wore a green polo shirt and navy trousers. His tanned arms were holding each side of the doorway and his brown hair stuck out at slightly odd angles, like it hadn't been brushed.

"Daddy", I squealed. He pulled me in and held me tightly. He smelt of caffeine and cow manure.

"I missed ya kiddo", he whispered. He led me through to the living room where the fire was blazing. I saw his book on gardening lying on the coffee table and a blanket thrown on the floor. He continued walking to the kitchen. His giant legs taking long strides. I had to jog to keep up

with him. As he walked into the kitchen, he grabbed four apples out of the fridge and began carelessly chopping them and throwing them into the bowl without a second glance.

"So, Midget", he asked, "What have you been up to?". I told him about my school soccer team and maths test. He smiled proudly. He was like his garden, beautiful, unique, exciting and perfect.

By Isabella Mason

Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls

GORDON – NSW

Teacher: Sharon Shapiro

Fly, Little Dove



Down below is a place of fear,
What exactly is down there, has never been clear.
Even further down is an unspoken land,
Way down below the dirt and sand.
The darkest of depths and the tightest space,
Yes, down there you have no place.
This is why I urge you with all my heart,
Try your best as soon as you start.
Never look down, only above,
And fly free and steady, my sweet little dove.

By Vaishnav Vengilat

Year 10, Dandenong High School

DANDENONG – VIC.

Teacher: Maria Papazoglou

The First Blush of Spring

The sun comes out
dancing on clouds
unearthing the Rosebud Cherry
as it blooms
peach coloured flowers flourish
an essence of mystery, sophistication,
the sun vanishes
and grey clouds appear
preparing for the wintertime.

As their pastel flowers
prepare for the winter solstice,
their petals turn golden and bronze
showing off their beauty.

When winter clouds appear
their picturesque florets, vanish
as graceful as a bird on the wing
and with withering petals
and paper-like skin
the flowers fall like tears from heaven.

When springtime comes
new buds appear
the colour of cherries,
awaiting the rays of sunlight
to flaunt their pale pink blossoms.

By Jennifer Ngo

Year 7, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

Species

TRAVIS was anxious, lost in the woods, he had no idea how to get back home. When out of nowhere he heard a rattle in the bush right behind him, he took a deep breath and walked towards the bush to find some sort of species he had never seen or even come across. It almost looked like a cat, but it couldn't be, it had horns like a bull, and had no paws, it looked like some run over cat that got combined with a bull.

Travis slowly took a step backwards and another, he kept on taking steps backwards, and then he tripped over a rock and fell to the ground. Two days later, Travis was on the ground in a dark cave, he saw the species looking into his eyes in a deep way that made Travis jump up and make a run for his life. All he could think about was, this is a good subordinate character for

one of my stories. He looked to see if that weird species was chasing him, boom, he hit his head on a tree trunk and became unconscious.

"Nah, maybe a bear", two hunters were entering the forest looking to catch an animal of any sort. "Ben, is that a person over there!" said Jack.

"Jack, I'm not falling for your dumb old lame tricks again", Ben replied.

Then Ben turned his head and said "OMG, it is a person!" Ben ran over to the person and the first thing he did was check his pulse.

"Jack, call the ambulance!" Ben screamed.

Five days later... Travis woke up in a hospital bed (he didn't even know how he got there) but one thing he did know was that there is some sort of species out there that could cause danger. Travis tried to tell the nurses and his parents but all they

said was "You were unconscious, a lot of weird things happened", or "Get some rest". Travis gave up, it didn't matter, they thought he was going crazy.

Five years later... "HELPPP! There is some weird animal here, HELPPP!" screamed Noah. "I think it wants to eat me, HELPPP!"

By Taylah Marchetta

Year 6, St Luke's Primary School, Lalor

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Mrs Lina Poalini





www.chrissybyers.com

DIGITAL technology is a constant discussion topic for parents and educators alike. But what are parents really telling their children when they aren't saying a word?

With digital technology exploding around us, this current generation of children live in a unique period. Today's parent has no idea what it feels like to be a child competing for attention with a cellular device. *Playground Circus* published by Ford St, addresses this issue. Written with the dual-purpose to encourage imaginative play as well as reflect on the impact technology has on family dynamics, this book is entering libraries at a very poignant and confusing moment in history.

Our young heroine visits her local park accompanied by her mother and baby brother and creates a spectacular make-believe circus extravaganza. She is fearless in her quest for fun and despite her mother's, and occasionally her brother's lack of engagement, she is unrelenting in her desire to experience all the playground has to offer. And she never gives up her invitation for others to join in her antics.

However, is this scenario really unprecedented? Haven't parents often snatched a few minutes of composure in the park to read a newspaper or novel while the children play? This is undeniably the case, although unlike a device, a newspaper or novel doesn't buzz every waking hour with work emails, phone calls and social notifications demanding parents to disconnect from home life.

A Note from the Author:

My name is Chrissy Byers and I am best known for writing and illustrating children's books which inspire imaginative play. As a child I wrote and illustrated my own little children's books and it is now a dream fulfilled to be a published author. Do you have a big dream you are working towards?

When children read *Playground Circus* I believe they will identify strongly with our heroine. Their attention will be drawn to the creative games she plays, and in turn, it is my desire that these will inspire their own imaginative adventures. A parent distracted by a smart phone is not an unusual occurrence and will not be perceived as shocking by a child. It simply won't be as interesting as what the young characters in this book are involved in. I believe how our strong female character reacts towards her mother is important. Her resilience, determination and loving demeanour do not waver, making her an ideal role model for young children. Which character from the story do you connect with?

When adults read *Playground Circus* they may feel confronted by the mother's actions. While it is not my intention for parents to feel condemned, I do hope this book provides an insight into our children's world through their eyes. Even the most devoted parents are not immune to the impact technology has on family life. The world is changing and this is something we cannot control. We can, however, choose how we wish to live in it.

A Note from the Illustrator:

I am Simon O'Carrigan and *Playground Circus* is the first picture book I have illustrated, though far from my first major creative project. I graduated from art school around ten years ago and have been regularly holding exhibitions of work, but a book is a completely unique challenge.

When I was called by the publisher and invited to illustrate a story they had, I was sent the manuscript (that's just the words without any instructions), and then also some concepts the author and publisher had about how the story might work. I worked very closely with my editor. She is a bit like a referee, being an impartial judge on what are good or bad ideas for the book, so that it easy for author, illustrator

and publisher to all agree on the best way to make it work.

My job, as an illustrator, is to bring the story to life, but also to add layers to it so that younger and older siblings and their parents can each get something out of the book and have characters to relate to. Often, when you are learning to read you might have the book read to you many times, but then by yourself go back through it and see if you can still read the words.

I tried to make sure there were many interesting visual things on every page so keep the reader's interest, but also, I tried to make up a few extra stories that weren't even in the words — the kids always pick up on these before the adults do, and I think that's great, because kids are so smart.

The book is in part about when your friends or your parents are distracted on their phones, something I see a lot at my local school when I help out there as a school crossing supervisor. But, while the phone technology is new, I don't think the problem really is. So, I wanted the book to be about how all of us can sometimes be in the same space but in our own little worlds. This can be good, because using your imagination is a wonderful thing, but it's much better if you share it.

One of my favourite things about working on this book was having my wife, Ali, come to the park with me all the time – because I modelled the mum on her! She helps me decide whether what I have drawn is good or not all the time and so letting her share in the imagination made a lot of sense for this particular project. I also liked making the illustrations nice and messy, loosely cut up and stuck together, and comparing the flat digital colour with the rougher, textured watercolour. Can you look through the book and guess why I might have used that variety of styles?

Identity

Dedication to my past self and all the struggles I've overcome.

AS I WALK with my canteen tray, known as the biggest over-dose of junk eaten daily in the school, I get the everyday judgemental looks. Looks combined with the legendary combos; despair, embarrassment, prejudice, bias, and worst of all sympathy. As a year 8 I should acquire looks of pride, compassion, leadership, admiration and inspiration. But even the year 7s look at me and laugh.

I've always been the unique one. I was born that way with my rich black skin, and my thick shaved "to the head" hair. Ever since I decided to shave it off, to prove a point that wasn't even to be proven, I've always been looked at in a kind of way only idiotic people do.

I'm famous for being 'that girl'.

Though to society I've always been known as an overweight, dead quiet, lonely, unpopular, bald and unattractive black weirdo, my home identity is so much more. I am a painter, a potterer and an artist. I am a collector of retro music; the gatherer of all things beautiful. I am a passionate reader and rom-com binge watcher. I am a creative baker and chef; always intrigued to discover what makes the world's taste-buds tingle. I am an animal lover, devoted to making the world a better place for more species than one.

Though I'm so much more confident in myself at home then at school, the only

people I trust enough to give them a part in my life is my younger sister Keira, my Mamma and Daddy and UGLY; a broken kitten I found on the streets searching continuously for love. Luckily she found me, someone who was searching for the exact same thing.

As well as my two best friends at school, who have also been rejected from the glamour of society. The first true friend I ever discovered was Marni; a moody, thirteen-year-old, Korean and transgender; always afraid of what everyone else thinks about her ever since she did the swap 3 years ago. She's known for being the mouth of the trio.

"Madyascar, come over here, sit with us!" she screams loud enough for the whole world to hear.

Like I've got a choice to sit anywhere else, I think as I roll my eyes and sit down in my usual spot, right across from her, and next to Silvy.

Though my real name is Madagascar, or as I'm referred to as Maddy, ever since I first met her in the middle of year 7, she could never properly pronounce my name, always saying 'Madyascar' instead of Madagascar. After half a year of name failure, on the last day of year 7 I plucked up the courage to correct her, and once I told her about her error she began laughing and crying tears of hysteria at realising her own mistake.

From then on, the failed pronunciation just stuck.

Our table we call the Weirdo Trio Burrow (of course it isn't a real burrow but we just call it that because it rhymes), is one of the last tables you can see in the long and white school cafeteria.

Our table has the most awesome setting in the school cafeteria, it's placed in the furthest corner right next to the only two sets of windows in the room. It overlooks the beautiful view of the school scene; the two plastic green ovals in the middle, the three modern but abandoned playgrounds on the right side of the ovals and the sixteen sets of classrooms on the left side



of the school. Though we love our location the one issue with our placement is that we have to walk past every friendship group just to sit down. For me and Marni, it drives us crazy having to cop everyone's judgemental looks two times a day, snack and lunch, for four more years to come.

But for Silvy, it just doesn't matter; she just smiles at them politely and gently shrugs it off with a little bit of a laugh. As a lesbian and quiet Muslim, she has a gift of ignoring unwanted looks from nearby people. Though she barely says a word at the table daily, her presence is always recognised as a feeling of wisdom instead of nothingness. As the oldest of the trio, Marni being 13 and 4 months, me 14 and 3 months and Silvy being 14 and 7 months since the start of the year, we always look to her for advice and she always provides it.

As I sit down across from Marni and next to Silvy, Marni pays me the worst compliment she could possibly think of.

"Maddy, looking good love! Must have lost a few kilos over the weekend!", smiling only with her mouth, eyes as sorry as can be.

Of-course she says that! I mean a classic Marni move, I think infuriated as I take a large bite out of my double cheese burger. Marni was as wrong with this remark as she was with the pronunciation of my name. I didn't lose anything over the weekend, if anything I've been gaining much more.

Ever since I transferred here to Garden Ridge Grammar, I've been stress-eating more than ever. At the age of 12, just beginning Year 7, I came to GRG as the only black person in the school, and was automatically given a reputation for a sassy, 'out-there' kind of person with beautiful thick and fluffy hair. But when the popular girls realised that I wasn't quite the person that I was thought to be, they started either following me everywhere telling me what to do or what not to do and if I did anything wrong, they would completely ignore me for the rest of the week.

This is how the Legendary Looks began as they always do – with the populars.

As the glares got worse and worse, doubling in numbers each day, I began to get sick of it. Not only had I lost confidence in who I was, I was even considering moving back to my old school G.R. College, where I was

also constantly bullied for colour of my skin. So in anger, humiliation and justice for who I was I decided to completely go the other way and show them that I wasn't the 'pretty girl' that they were trying to turn me into.

As soon as I got home, I immediately shaved off all of my beautiful fluffy midnight black-hair, tears of anger and despair poured out of my deep hazel eyes. Though I didn't mind what I looked like without hair, as soon as my Mamma saw me she screamed and started to cry her eyes out and her tears joined the remains of my hair on the white tiled bathroom floor.

Afterwards she got me, Daddy and herself to have a huge talk about life and how insane I was to do what I did. But as usual I was just silent, didn't say anything and went to bed full in the stomach but starving in the heart.

The day I went back to school was the traumatic day of my life; laughter, gasps of disgust and sympathy – more than the average white person would have in a lifetime. With the overload of embarrassment and humiliation, I began to load myself with junk food; stress eating and devouring three times more food than I had ever eaten in my life. This ended up with the Legendary Looks as well as fails of ignorance from the people trying to be better and look away, without even realising that it makes it even worse.

Although the start of Year 7 to the very end was the worst year of my life, this hell of a life has become my norm, with my saviours being Marni, Silvy, my family and beautiful UGLY; the only other thing that really knows how it feels to be ignored. I stare back at Marni, her sorry expression waiting for a response, and I see my past life flash before my eyes; how these people have masked me as a person, stole my identity and changed my health out of humiliation.

I realise I can't do this any more.

I can't live in the shadows of other people's successes that could have been my own. I can't live as two different people; able to be my true self at home but forcing myself to be the invisible and voiceless at school. And I can't live as a lost person any more with nothing to grasp onto.

Though Marni meant well when saying this remark, these kinds of comments would never have been said if I hadn't moved to GRG in the first place. All this time I have been hiding myself in this school. Hiding my true identity from the students and teachers around me. As I look at the only two people who have loved me at this school, the only two people who have looked out for me, I smile at them and they stare back in confusion.

For the past few years I have been wishing for a chance to show my true self, to show my home identity; the person I would be and the person I want to be. To have the strength, courage and self-love to let my home identity shine through the cracks that have created my soul.

It has taken me so long, too long of a time to realise that no matter who my audience is; that not everyone in the crowd will love me and that there will forever be people looking at me with the Legendary Looks.

As I watch my friends stare into my eyes; the eyes that have let tears of release scrape down my face, they look back at each other and smile in pride. They know that I will never have to chose between my home identity and my school one again, that I finally love myself enough to let my true self excel through my doubts. We hold each other in support and all begin to howl in tears of liberty, every single friendship group looking over in our way with most fierce and judgemental Legendary Looks we have ever acquired, but for the first time in our lives we don't care. I finally don't care!

Though this is a small start to a new beginning my love of myself and life, it's still a start.

A start I am willing to make to finally embrace my only identity.

*By Sabrina Horne
Year 7, The Geelong College
GEELONG – VIC.
Teacher: Michael Panckridge*



Equals

Pham Le Hoang, Age 25
Saigon, Vietnam

Looking around,
Seeing unwelcoming faces,
Fear strikes over me,
As I start to remember my home,
I remember all the welcoming people there,
Who had now been affected by the war,
There was nowhere to hide
But there was hope,
I always believed there was,
I talk to them,
They look at me if I were to be some sort of animal,
I run and lay behind a rock in fear,
I see a person,
I flinch as he reaches his arms out to me and offers to help me up,
I realised his act of kindness and thank him,
He smiles at me,
I smile back,
He asked me something I could understand,
Why did you come here to this small little village in South East Africa,
I tell him about the sufferings I had gone through because of the war,
I see sorrow in his eyes as he realises what I went through,
I tell him my traditions I have,
He does the same,
We realise that we are all the same,
Equals I say as I draw a picture from sand,
Equals from another land.

Abioye Barak Akachi, Age 18
Zimbabwe

A stranger approaches
From another land,
We watch,
His pale yellow skin standing out among the rest,
We speak of him,
We question him,
As he walks through the crowd he speaks,
This weird mumbled up thing,
Everyone sees an outcast,
But I see a friend,
Which I could learn from and teach,
I wonder why he came here to a place that struggles for existence,
I approach him from behind the rock,
He flinches thinking I was going to attack him,
Instead I comfort him,
Assuring him he was safe,
People start to accept him,
He thanks me,
He talks to me about the traditions he has,
I do the same,
I ask why he came here to a place that struggles for existence,
He explains that the place he came from was dangerous and filled with war and hate,
And came here to get a better life,
We realise we are not so different,
But all equals from different lands.



By **Shanan Thayaparan**
Year 6, St Luke's Primary School
LALOR – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Lina Paolini



The Sweet Scent of Memory

Ah, the sweet scent of memory.
 Oh, how the voices follow me
 down the blackened alleyway
 and up the sun-kissed lane.
 Faces stare out at me through
 rainbow-washed window panes,
 each moment,
 pure, dear.
 The fingers grasp –
 draw naught but fear,
 despair cries as it fades
 long lost in the bright of day.

Present chases past
 while future plays its games,
 calling, singing to me.
 Promises, empty,
 this is what I became,
 alas, it haunts me,
 now is not the same.

Never again will I feel
 the golden warmth
 upon my back,
 hear the dancing waves,
 merry cries,
 or follow the swallows ascending
 higher, higher
 to heaven's gates.

Never shall we be again
 who we were before,
 that girl yesterday, she isn't me.
 What, we are the same?
 How?
 She knows me not.

But I know her,
 feel her call me back,
 back to a place
 I shall never find,
 an Atlantis far below,
 her hollow voice
 falls deeper.

I know where I must go...

Darling Mulberry

It stands alone,
 masses of green
 against the ambers of Australian summers,
 secrets drape its leaves
 whispers for youthful ears.

Pompous violets fade into luminous greens,
 flavoured beads
 trickle down orchid-stained lips
 tinting summer's apparel,
 leaving aubergine-stained branches
 beckoning children's hands and ears
 to sing its mysteries.

Luscious fruit swings from every branch
 waiting for licked lips and wishful eyes
 to clamber up its limbs,
 immobile in its arms,
 safe from what lies below.

But far aloft the world we know,
 grounded by the aromas of mulberry,
 lavender and summer's reminiscence,
 daring as it caresses children's cheeks,
 a safe haven,
 a swathing mother's arms,
 a midsummer's day well spent.

By **Willow Rann**
 Year 7, Saint Dominic's Priory College
 NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
 Teacher: Shelda Rathmann

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



Piekarz (The Baker)

THE SMELL of crisp, sweet, bread wafts through Wladyslaw Piechowski's nostrils as he swings the door open to his father's bakery, the high-pitched 'ding' of the bell proclaiming his entrance into the small, sunlight flooded room. All day Wladyslaw works his fingers and hands to the bone kneading pounds of soft, thick dough to transform into dozens of little, plump, yeasty rolls. At only 18 Wladyslaw works six days a week, alongside his father at the town's most popular bakery, Chleb Dzisiaj.

He walks home like any other night, the dimly-lit street lamps emitting less light than the multi-colored sky above. He shortly arrives at his neighbourhood, a cluster of old townhouses that sit near the Gliwice train station. But before Wladyslaw can unlock his front door, he hears the loud, coarse sounds of an unfamiliar language that boom from the upstairs of his home down to the pavement below.

Wladyslaw bursts through the door, leaping up the stairs as if he were a pole vaulter. He

enters the lounge room, trembling as he watches a group of snarling Nazis, ordering the family valuables to be handed over. His white skin crumples on his forehead and around his eyes, beads of sweat appearing in the many crevices of his flesh. Suddenly, he hears the bang of a gunshot, followed by piercing screams. It is his sister Clara, who now begins intensely crying, caressing the once lively and beautiful face belonging to Kazimierz, his younger brother. Wladyslaw stands mortified, shaking with horror. He tries to blink away his tears, but instead sobs convulsively.

Filled with numbness and extreme grief, the Piechowski family are moved into a crowded train carriage. The train ride agonisingly lasts for hours. When it finally stops, the huge mass of humans are forced to walk kilometres, to a nearby concentration camp surrounded by dozens of Nazis.

As Wladyslaw observes the setting in front of him, he sees hundreds of Jewish people just like himself, except they are howling like dogs, some crouching on the

floor, others being harassed by Nazis. He walks closer to the central section of the camp and sees the people in closer view, their skin is wet with sweat that drips slowly off the lines and wrinkles of their damaged, fearful faces. Blood, crimson red like wine pours out of the deep gashes on wounded limbs. Vibrant blue and purple bruises cover large patches of skin and dark shadows encircle their eyes. Their withered and torn clothing shows that they have been here a very long time. Waiting.

The Piechowski family hug each other tightly, their arms woven and heads close together. The warmth of their breaths against the wintry air create a cloud around them. Abruptly, their embrace is stopped by a Nazi that forces them into lines according to gender. Wladyslaw never sees his sister or mother again.

The men are put to work straight away digging a long, horizontal pit in the ground. They are like worker ants, but covered in stripes of yellowed white and faded black. The dirty uniform distinguishes them from the Nazi soldiers, dressed in clean

green, embellished with silvery buttons, no creases or stains in sight. Once they are done, these soldiers line them up in front of the pit. Gunshots boom, taking out every fourth man in the line. A soldier next walks up to a tall and old, rugged man. Like Wladyslaw, his hands are rough, yet skilled, with the ability to delicately work soft dough into pastries. A thunderous crack sounds, and Wladyslaw's father is dead.

Overcome with grief, Wladyslaw struggles to eat or sleep.

Wladyslaw, you have to eat something... the soldiers will think you are weak and will kill you off next!" says Rufeisen, an old school mate.

"Rufeisen?" softly exclaims Wladyslaw, recognizing the familiar face.

"Yes, it is me. I thought it was you yesterday... I saw you lost your father, my condolences..."

Wladyslaw can only present a weak smile to show his thankfulness.

The old friends continue small talk, until Rufeisen reveals the whereabouts of a secret tunnel currently under construction by rebel camp prisoners.

Days pass without contact from Rufeisen, and the camp is too crowded to easily find him. But then one night as Wladyslaw lays cold on the dirt floor, he is without warning awoken by Rufeisen who leads him out into the black of night. They slither around the camp sneakily like snakes, trying not to jeopardise this opportunity for freedom by making a sound. They soon make it to the tunnel and are the first to go through. Darkness engulfs the hole, so much that he can barely see. Minutes pass, and eventually blue specks of light appear in the distance. The pair crawl as fast as they can, but before they reach the tunnel's exit, roars in German begin bouncing off the dirt walls, echoing out into the night. A gun shot whizzes past Wladyslaw, hitting Rufeisen beside him. Still, Wladyslaw perseveres, because survival is the only thing that consumes his mind.

The wind outside lightly kisses his face as freedom courses through his veins like blood. He feels dizzy with jubilation, yet

cannot suppress the guilt he feels about his sister and mother who may still be alive, trapped within the camp. But the German cries persevere, and Wladyslaw must run. He does for a while, continuing his journey of kilometres and kilometres well into the next day.

He passes Chleb Dziaj, soon making it to a cluster of old townhouses that sit near the Gliwice train station... home.

However, his home now consists of only crumbling walls and sunken ceilings and broken trinkets and shattered photo frames. Although devastated, Wladyslaw does not think about tomorrow, but succumbs to tiredness. Stillness and silence fill his surroundings, where only the distant sound of bombs and throat-tearing yells momentarily disturb his serenity. In his mind he revisits memories of working at the bakery with his father, and as he drifts to sleep, he finds peace at last.

By Mackenzie Smith

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

PROSPECT – SA

Teacher: Ms. Rathmann



THE DOOR swung open. Grace's bedroom was a mess. It was like an atom bomb had gone off inside. Fashion magazines were strewn all over the floor and half-finished designs were being swept up like small white swans by the ceiling fan. Stepping cautiously among the items of clothing carelessly thrown on the floor so that it could barely be seen, she hovered uncertainly by the doorway, like an unwanted shadow. Then there Grace

was, at her desk, her slim, rosy-cheeked face illuminated by the light of a single candle that was flickering its last.

"What are you doing here?" Grace demanded angrily, turning around, her auburn hair bristling out of its bun as she spoke. "You know that my room is out of bounds for all household staff."

"Yes ma'am, sorry ma'am", muttered the maid, red creeping into her cheeks.

But soon her curiosity overcame her embarrassment and she asked, "But what are you doing with all this paper?"

Grace didn't reply but instead gestured to her ancient, oak desk where a single sheet of paper lay, surrounded by coloured pencils. It was as if all the pencils were pointing at it, forcing the maid to look at what Grace had drawn. The maid drew in a gasp. It was a women's outfit all right but without a restricting dress in sight! It was a flowing skirt of the finest white silk with a sky blue shirt to match.

"It's good, isn't it?" exclaimed Grace, her green eyes flashing with excitement and passion.

The maid was lost for words and looked up at the other girl's face. It was then that she realised what Grace had first reminded her of. It was a small, green grasshopper, jumping from one blade of grass to the next with nimble leaps.

By Abigail Percy

Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls

GORDON – NSW

Teacher: Sharon Shapiro

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SERENITY. The Como's magnificent indoor swimming pool granted me well-deserved serenity. The warm blue water flowed gently through the crevices of my fingers and toes, transforming them into miniature rippled waves. I lay on my back and surrendered control over my body, granting the buoyancy of the water permission to carry me wherever it wished. My ears were submerged, muffling the sound of jubilation and laughter emanating from my beady-eyed cousins. All I could hear was the melodious swishing of the pool. My eyes fixated on the spectacular architectural design of the ceiling above; I was mesmerised by the way that each angular glass piece blended seamlessly into another, creating a unique combination of French Baroque patterns that I had only ever encountered in history textbooks. The glimmering starry night peered through the ceiling's towering clear panels, creating a perfect parade of dancing light beams. The weariness of my eyes and slowly fading vision accentuated the sensational moment by sending me into a haze of icy colours and tingling liquid kisses.

The blinding fluorescent lights stung my eyes, I blinked, and found myself seated on a flimsy magenta chair beneath an unrelenting air conditioner that covered my shivering body in goosebumps the size of mountains. After my aching legs hauled me up, I took a deep breath of the polluted air and began frantically coughing to expel the disinfectant that trickled down my trachea. Stumbling down the narrow hallway, I felt like a convict in an Australian penal colony whose calloused limbs carried the weight of iron chains, making each step closer to her room excruciating. Seeing the hospital staff grit their teeth to fabricate a smile caused my stomach to churn with apprehension, leaving behind the sour taste of fear lingering inside my mouth.

At the doorway I was greeted by my sorrowful aunt, who squeezed my body so tight that I thought we would morph into one another. As soon as I was released from her clutching arms, the putrid scent of urine and fresh tears invaded my nasal cavities, damaging them beyond repair. From the corner of my eye, I observed my grandmother become possessed, knowing there was absolutely nothing I could do to stop it. A devil with long grimy claws and a wicked smirk seized the control centre of her brain as its wings swatted away the cells that fought back. Similar to a broken

A Sea of Lost Thoughts



radio, she churned out nonsensical phrases such as "I don't, I don't, leave me, leave me" on an endless ear-splitting loop. The bed underneath her quivered as her emaciated limbs relentlessly rocked to the beat of her own voice. In spite of this dreadful and devastating sight, my family and I were left with no choice but to patiently wait until Satan had exploited every ounce of energy that remained in her frail body.

In the face of pandemonium, the doctor continued to spew out senseless jargon like "she's tachycardic and septic, we may need to intubate" to my grieving relatives who just nodded in response. In the meantime, the nurses tried to convince Grandma to swallow her medicine, sporadically pausing to mutter their disapproval to one another. The volume of misery compressed in that congested room was drowning me. However, no one noticed the surging waves that buried my head underwater, or the gasping for air, and hastily kicking legs struggling to stay afloat. Not a single person responded to my desperate rescue plea. To them, I was nothing more than a child shoved into a corner.

Surprisingly, the adults decided their children needed a distraction from the horror they had just witnessed. My cousins and I were ushered back into the safe dimly lit waiting room and provided with snacks from the nearby Maccas. In between munching on stale hot chips and slurping tasteless frozen cokes, we discussed whether the doctor was right about Grandma not being healthy enough to make it through the night. The boys pretended to be objective, but their rosy cheeks and stuttered speech revealed they were consumed with fear. The girls could not hear anything, they were too busy swimming in their own pessimism. I reminded them that Grandma had recovered from the brink of death several times this year without being able to say her name, "Maybe she'll survive again", I protested.

Before we left the hospital, all six of us grandchildren calmly approached her bed in a neat line to say our final goodbyes. I brushed away her thin grey hair to lightly kiss her forehead. I remembered happier times. Grandma and I were cuddled up together and she was telling me a story about how a student of hers had submitted their homework in appalling handwriting. She tore the pages out of the book and tossed them into the bin in front of the entire class! We exploded into an uncontrollable laughter that pierced the bedroom walls, echoing throughout the entire house. After my mother scolded us for being too loud, Grandma changed the conversation topic to her visit to the ancient Archway of Ctesiphon in 1965. Her eyes glimmered and a rush of youthful adrenaline shot down her spine as she described the appearance of the magnificent mud structure; as well as the taste of the mouth-watering baklava that she devoured on the ride back to Baghdad. I pretended to listen attentively to her adventurous tale; secretly, I prayed that her impressively sharp memory would never fade away. God had other plans. Suddenly, I was back to glaring at the old woman whose depleting mind was so consumed by dementia that she had not remembered our names or recognised our faces in over a decade.

After leaving the hospital, I looked up and saw Grandma's benevolent spirit scattered amongst the stars. I felt her tender essence emerge from each passing light beam and gently caress my trembling body. The night sky encompassed her ebullient soul and unconditional love, serving as my beacon of tranquillity in the midst of disheartening chaos.

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

Alice's Discovery

On the eve of Christmas day, a little girl named Alice Splat was born. She loathed her last name because everyone teased her by singing, 'Alice goes SPLAT on the wall. Alice goes SPLAT on the floor. Alice goes SPLAT on the door. Alice goes SPLAT, SPLAT, SPLAT, SPLAT, SPLAT!'. One day, this changed. Alice and her family moved into a new house. It was perfect. There were paintings by famous artists, a grand piano and even their own library! But the best thing of all was that nobody teased her. She kept her last name a secret....

Alice enjoyed herself in her new school. She told everyone her last name was Smith, rather than Splat. A parent meeting is coming up on Friday and Alice was a tiny bit worried because her teacher, Miss Dawn might call her parents Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Alice NEEDED a plan urgently. Maybe she could explain to the principal, Mr. Tran about her last name. No, she couldn't do that. She might get into big trouble or worst still, be expelled from school! The only thing she could think of now is to escape. If she went missing, her parents will be so worried they might not even COME to the meeting. Yes, that's right. Her plan was to run away.

While her parents were asleep, Alice quietly packed her bag with food, water, clothing and her favourite toys. She then slipped out of the window. It was FREEZING COLD! Alice had no choice but to withstand it. She dare not make the slightest sound. She crept like a tiger into the deep, dark forest. After a long time, Alice was worn out so she sat beside a tree and rested.

When Alice awoke, she found herself in a warm, candy-smelling cottage. Where am I? she wondered. Then an old man said, 'Hello, my name is Tom. I found you and carried you here. I'm making breakfast now. If you want, you can read one of my books'. Just as she was going to grab a book, Tom remembered, 'Oh, read this book. It is very interesting'. He passed her a book called 'THE HISTORY OF THE 1800s'. Alice sighed. She didn't like reading about history, but she also didn't want to upset Tom.

Suddenly, a title called, 'The History of Splat & Stalp' catches her

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

This is To Certify That

Weighing _____ She _____ at was born on the _____ day of _____

was born to

Mother

and

Father

attention, so she reads on. '20,000 Stalp families were killed... one man named Greg Stalp changed his name to Greg Splat'. To Alice's astonishment, Greg was actually her great-great-great grandfather! Alice finally understood what it was all about and felt grateful to Greg.

'Sorry Tom, but I need to go', Alice said. She looked at the clock on the wall. It read 4:17am. She needed to hurry before her parents awoke. She flew out the door like a gust of wind.

From that day onward, Alice never felt uneasy about her last name.

By **Licia Ang**

Year 3, Sunnybank Hills State School
SUNNYBANK HILLS – QLD.

Teacher: Mrs Maharaj

Jacaranda trees line the streets,
their lilac petals fall with the wind

floating

fluttering

onto freshly mown lawn.

As generations walk past
they see purple petals,
but over time,
they turn golden brown
and drift away
into the heavens.

When springtime comes
the sunset is an orange pink sky
on the horizon,
and the flowers flourish,
their pods sprouting a majestic mauve
lining the streets
in a new season.

Shades of Purple

By **Jennifer Ngo**

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

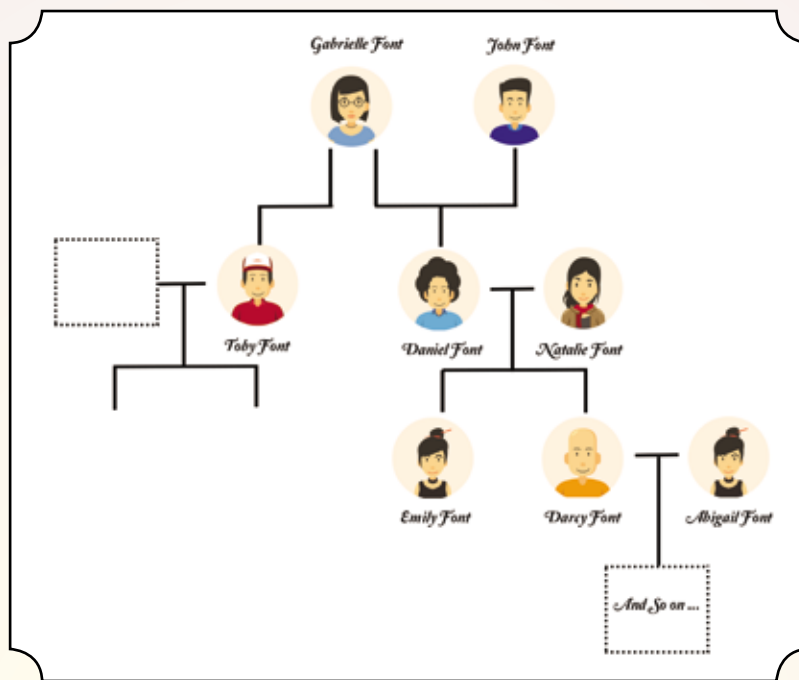
GHOST

I screamed. I peeked out the window again, and screamed again. Nobody came to rescue me, of course not! I was home ALONE. I leaned against the brick wall, to support myself. I breathed heavily, and peeked outside the window, again.

Outside, on the footpath, was a ghost. It was a girl. She was wearing a lacy old-fashioned night dress, and was barefoot. She moved swiftly, like the wind. She had curls of hair going down to just above her waist, and on her neck was a chain. I looked down, on my chest, was a chain, but not any chain, it was the girl's chain, on my neck.

The girl looked at me. She kept on staring. Something told me, that I shouldn't draw the curtains, and I didn't. The girl kept on coming, towards our house, this time I didn't scream. The girl was right below my window, I was glad I had a two storey house. The girl looked up, I looked down. I could actually HEAR her breathing. Every breath was a slow, rattling, deliberate breath. This time, I

ran. I ran, and skidded on the slippery floorboards. I came to a halt, right in front of the book stand, I ran my fingers across the old leather books, until I found what I was looking for, 'THE FONT FAMILY'S BOOK'. I slowly opened it and the smell of mould hit me. I opened the page to the family tree:



and realised that she looked EXACTLY the same as the ghost I had seen. I looked down, and saw that she was not married, and had no children. The picture looked like she was only twelve! I decided that I seriously needed to figure out more about this. I closed the book and put it back in the book case. I suddenly saw a bit of paper on the floor. It must have fallen out from the book. I took one look at it and froze. On the piece of paper, was written 'Emily Font's death certificate' Emily Font sadly died on December the 20th, 1921. She was choked, by a man later found to be her uncle, as he was jealous. Emily Font's Uncle was jailed. I gaped a little, my Great Aunty was choked. The front door creaked open, and Emily, the Great Aunty of mine, stepped into my house.

By **Elizabeth Graham-Higgs**

Year 6, Beaumont Road
Public School
KILLARA – NSW
Teacher: Miss Fischer



The World and Me

TODAY I sit and marvel at the world, and think about how much it's changed.

But what if Adam and Eve never ate the forbidden fruit, would the dinosaurs have been as cute?

Would the pyramids in Egypt be as tall, or even standing there at all?

Would the Wright brothers have learnt to fly so all us humans could take to the sky?

And without Isaac Newton's three laws of

motion, would we know the moon controls the ocean?

Would the Dodo and Tassie Devil still be roaming free for all to see?

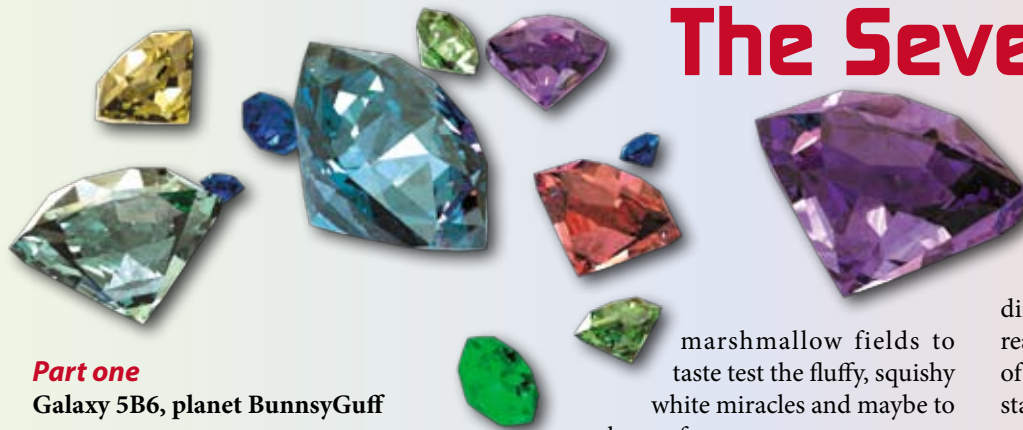
And with no Alexander Bell, would we be left with just paper and pen to do the tell?

Would Vikings have ruled all the rivers and the sea, and what will tomorrow look like for you and me?

By **Marlo Johnson**

Grade 6, Greenhills Primary School
GREENSBOROUGH – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Dunne

The Seven Crystals



Part one

Galaxy 5B6, planet BunnsyGuff

A galaxy far beyond our knowledge, out of the Milky Way known as 5B6, there is a sun named Sylisity.

In the solar system surrounding her, the 6th planet is known as BunnsyGuff. Filled with many astounding creatures, there is only one human girl named Gufran. And that's where I come in, I'm Gufran and this is my story of the seven crystals.

I wake up on a sunny BunnsyGuff morning and cherish the smell of freshly cooked waffles topped with warm chocolate sauce and fresh raspberries. I scramble out of my spring flowered bed and bolt down the steep staircase, only to discover the mouth-watering taste of waffles.

After swallowing the last glorious gulp of my breakfast, I decided to head off and explore the wondrous planet of BunnsyGuff. I stroll over to the traditional

marshmallow fields to taste test the fluffy, squishy white miracles and maybe to snack on a few.

When the marshmallow fields are in sight I start to think "I should probably eat all of the marshmallows, I don't want the bunnies and the other animals to get sick and gain weight. Yes, their health matters more than mine". I raced over to the fields, as I chuck my basket away and gobble five immense marshmallows then I blanked out...

I wake up a second later and I take one look at the fields and realise what has happened. At first I think "Oh no! What if the bunnies ate all the marshmallows before me?". Then I feel the sickening urge to puke.

I finally make my way to my castle after what seemed like hours and knocked on the big gates and waited patiently for an answer. My stomach was stuffed with the gooey substances and the pain was becoming unbearable, until finally

someone answered the door. I bolted into the living room, clutching my stomach and grabbed the nearest bucket and soon fall asleep. I wake up to the shining booming light shining directly into my eyes and squint before realising the huge rock in the sky. I leap out of my bed and carelessly jump down the stairs. I go outside and see what is going on and my heart literally jumps when I see a huge meteor heading right for me. Chef Bunnykins and butler bunny bun bunny are by my side as my other bunnies rush out of the target. I watch in horror as the meteor engulfed with flames collides with the unlucky castle. Mr Fluffybottom leaps onto my shoulder and weeps sadly...

Soon the entire castle burned to ashes and the flames disappeared. I ordered all the other animals to flee and find a new home and within a few minutes it was only I and Mr Fluffybottom near the ruins. Through the tears in my sore eyes I saw the most gorgeous shiny crystals in my life. The Seven Crystals.

To be continued....

By Gufran Hugaz and Fenella Heath

Year 6, Greenslopes State School

GREENSLOPES – QLD.

Teacher: Mr Castle

The Afternoon in the Pool

THE POOL glistens as the afternoon sun reflects off it. Splashing and giggling echoes around the pool fence. Bouncing basket balls, children screaming with laughter and dogs squeaking their toys can be heard around the neighbourhood.

Ruby loves spending long afternoons swimming with her older brother Ben. Ruby doggy-paddles frantically down towards the end of the pool, taking gasps of air every time she lifted her tiny head. She was wearing a bright pink swimming costume covered in fairies and sparkles, and her blonde ponytail wrapped around her back.

She turned around excitedly and shouted, "Marco...".

Ben was extremely patient with Ruby as he was five years older; he treated her like a daughter instead of a sister. "Polo...", Ben shouted in reply.

Ruby immediately started paddling towards Ben when all of a sudden, she stopped paddling and quickly sank to the bottom of the pool...

By Mia Russell

Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls

GORDON – NSW

Teacher: Sharon Shapiro



Ambassadors



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



Stages of School

SCHOOL was once an enjoyable thing for me. I remember the excitement I felt before school. The nerves that rushed through me shook my body to the core. The attempts of calming myself down were never delivered as the thought of learning something new always left me feeling eager to stay at school. But ever since Confidence left, school started to become one of the hardest things to endure. It became an obstacle that I couldn't overcome no matter how hard I tried. The feeling of excitement soon morphed into fear and anxiety gnawing at the butterflies in my stomach. Everyone has experienced the three stages of Assurance, Embarrassment, Vulnerability. But what happens after these stages? Here is my story of how I went through a fourth stage called Strength.

It all started when Confidence made herself known at the age of 10. I was in Year 5 at that time and I had been extremely nervous. I was never the student who put herself out there and made herself known to the world. I never raised my hand during class and only spoke when I was asked to. But that day, I remember doing something that was so foreign to me. I raised my hand when the teacher asked, "Would anyone like to share what they did on the weekend?"

Assurance. I felt a surge of self-assurance go through me as I wanted to share my thrilling story with the class. My friend gave me a thumbs up with a cheerful expression which at the time, screamed "YOU'LL DO GREAT". I suddenly felt more confident and started to raise my arm higher, higher than I'd ever reached before. The thoughts of 'don't pick me' did a complete 180 and instead, I was thinking 'please pick me'. My heart was racing so fast that I felt the resonant rhythmic pumping through my chest and the booming thud-thump in my ears. Confidence was encouraging me, almost as if she was pulling me out of my seat. "Kellie! Come forward and tell us about your day." I enthusiastically got up from my seat and walked towards the front of the class. My footsteps soon came to a sudden halt like the deafening stomp of soldiers coming to a stop after vigorously marching. My eyes flittered across the class and I noticed that another student got up from her seat.

Embarrassment. "Kellie return to your seat, I called Kaylee, not you." A chorus of high-pitched laughter rang all around the classroom which echoed and started to ring in my ears. It was louder, especially at the back. I turned around and saw a group of students putting their index finger and thumb up in front of their forehead to create an L shape. I hastily walked back to my seat with humiliation and saw that Confidence had hidden in a corner. The class suddenly seemed tedious and I no longer paid attention to the teacher, but more so the second hand of the clock that tick-tocked steadily.

Vulnerability. It was recess. I felt multiple pairs of eyes staring at me as I was grabbing recess from my bag. I turned around and saw my friend standing with the group of people who made fun of me. To the people around them, their laughter sounded like chiming bells but all I could hear was their evil cackling. "HA HA! SHE'S SUCH A LOSER" they taunted me. I wanted to speak back but vulnerability was engulfing my body as Confidence was nowhere to be seen. I trudged across the grassy field where it was most isolated from students whilst keeping my head down in the hope of avoiding contact. I felt so alienated and lost to the point where it felt like walking through a huge rainforest with no hope of finding a way out. As I reached the secluded empty bench, I sat down and began to eat my recess.

Strength. "May I sit here?" My eyes widened as if I made the revelation of the century. It was a student who had always been extremely quiet and kept to herself in class. "Sure. But why do you want to sit next to me?" I hesitantly questioned. The terse and harsh edge to my voice did nothing to shy her away as she replied with a smile, "Because you're lonely".

Looking back on it, I now ask myself, 'How can I use this experience to

help others who are vulnerable like I was?'. The actions of one student influenced others to make fun of me which resulted in the demise of our friendship. This led me to realise how one action can cause a domino effect, whether it be a positive or a negative outcome. I now understand that some days, Confidence is by my side, but other days, she can be hidden away in the shadows. Despite this, it has given me the mental strength to speak up for those without a voice, because two supportive individuals with a resilient mindset are stronger than a group of people with a weaker mentality.

By Kellie Cao

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Shelda Rathmann



The Miracle



I WAS in my cardboard bed curled beneath my tattered, filthy blanket laying on the street. My head sunk into my uncomfortable pillow, my body was ridged trying to relax. Exhausted, I fell into a deep sleep despite the noise of the traffic rushing past. The sound of cars faded as the chirping of birds filled my ears.

The mountains appear to be different in my dreams. They were covered in fluffy, white snow. The trees were all shades of green, light and dark. The birds flew across the sky gliding into the clouds above. The

vibrantly coloured birds flew in different directions as if they were putting on their own air show.

The lake at the base of the tall mountains glistened with the sun's beautiful rays. Although the lake was murky underneath it was pleasant to watch it shimmer from above. The grass was delicate and green. No patches of yellow, burnt grass in sight. I felt the grass tickle my toes as the cool breeze blew gently, as I gazed up to the sky.

Suddenly the trembling beneath my feet caught my attention. My heart was beating like a wild animal trying to escape my chest. I had no idea what was going on, it was all happening too fast.

The mountains started to crumble like a biscuit. The trees were collapsing, I could feel it. My mysterious dream had become reality. I scurried in despair trying to spare a few items as tears rolled down my cheeks. I was in shock. I hesitated to look at my surroundings as I was gripped in fear.

Will I survive this? I thought to myself. I ran as fast as a cheetah trying to catch up with the crowd of people running for their lives. As I was running, constantly tripping over the crowd, while everyone was already way ahead.

I gradually got back to my feet even though I was limping. Dragging my foot across the hard concrete floor, the streets were being flooded by the ocean waves. The water started to rise through the wide concrete cracks wiping out the city.

Days later I found myself drifting off on the tranquil waters. It made me think was I lucky to be the sole survivor?

By **Valeriy Rodrigues**

Year 6, St Luke's Primary School

LALOR – VIC.

Teacher: Lina Paolini

It Came To Me Suddenly

It came to me suddenly
The feeling undoubtedly
A cupid's arrow struck my heart
And joined up my missing part

Of what I saw in the blackened night
Were the eyes that glimmered with light
And observing this ethereal sight
made the hollow darkness bright

It came to me suddenly
The feeling of love undoubtedly
The field of roses bloomed with life
Among them lay a man with a blood red knife

My swollen heart got shattered
And my mind was left battered
My eyes moist with crystals
And now I am brittle



It came to me suddenly
The feeling of horror undoubtedly
The darkness returned back
and again made the night black

But I shall remember him
His frail and ethereal presence
That has a rare essence
Of that I shall never forget

It came to me suddenly
The feeling of love undoubtedly
And remembering his ethereal sight
Again made the hollow darkness bright

By **Ashvika Thevanesan**

Year 10, Avila College

MOUNT WAVERLEY – VIC.



THE ME IN YOU

HELLO, my dear. I know you can hear me. I'm here. I'm the one who whispers pretty little secrets into your ears. I'm the one who shows you what life is really like. I'm the one who makes your life miserable, you just don't know it yet. I've been here for a while... for as long as you can remember, anyway. Sometimes, I like to say your name just to watch you look around and search through crowds of unfamiliar faces – lost and confused. And what about that time you heard an ear-piercing shriek that no one else seemed to notice? Can you guess who that was?

You must be wondering who I am. That's only natural. I'm sure you already have an inkling of who I am.

I'm you. I'm the real you. I'm the one who existed even before you were born, or even before your parents. I chose you, because I know you were the child who looked the wrong way, asked the wrong questions, thought the wrong things... I know, because I was the same. We are one.

You may have forgotten me, but I'm still here. I've always been here. I will always be here. We've grown together, and it's time...

I'm going to get out.

Wake up, darling. I'm ready for you. Are you ready? Come on, get up. I need you to get up for me. Good boy, that's right. I know your eyes are plastered with last night's tears, I know how hard it must be for you to open them. Your nightmares would not stop, would they? Don't worry – they're all in your head... they're not

real. Or are they? Tick. Tock. Look at the clock, what time is it? The clock face reads eight in the morning. Outside the frame of your small bedroom window, the sky is dark, unusually dark. It seems the sun has not risen at all. The sky is grey and bleak, scattered with wisps of cotton streaking the horizon.

Oh sweet little Johnny, I know you're not innocent. Far from it, even. I know what you've done. I know what you think. And I know, that you know it's wrong. Of course, you would be one to betray your religion, and you would go against the Seven Deadly Sins. I'm not surprised, to be honest. You, who lusted after that woman, that woman who was committed to a man, lawfully wedded under the blessing of the church. You, who envies what others have and you do not – resenting those above you, and looking down on those below. You, who dares not to feed any mouth but your own, watching those suffer while you indulge in gluttony. You, who is vain, your pride higher than a mountain summit, fooling yourself into thinking you are the source of your own greatness. You, who does not believe that patience is virtue, allowing your wrath and anger to manifest instead of opting to love. You, with an inordinate love and desire for earthly possessions, are full of greed. You, who is lazy, who never has the intention or desire of making a sacrifice or doing something for others. You, who deserves to be punished.

As you make your way towards the bathroom, you can feel yourself go cold as you walk past your mirror. You shrug it off, but you most definitely shouldn't have. Slowly undressing yourself for a shower, you begin to feel as if ants are crawling

beneath your skin. This time, you know something is wrong, a panic setting inside you. You feel the dread, and in the back of your mind you know exactly who is behind all of this. It's me. Who else would it be? What else would it be? I'm coming for you, Johnny. You thought that the ants were a figment of your imagination, didn't you? Well, watch. Watch them as they begin to emerge from every crevice and opening of your unholy body. Look in the mirror, watch as they crawl from your eyes, from your ears, from your mouth and from every pore of your skin.

Does it tickle? Is it exciting you as much as it's exciting me? All of a sudden, your body is covered from head to toe, paralysed with fear. The swarming black mass leaves no skin exposed. I know you want to drown them out in the shower. Go on, do it. You step into the shower cautiously, reaching for the hot water. You turn the knob. With a slip of a hand, and an uncontrollable urge, you grip the knob with an immense strength, turning it so far it shatters and drops to the floor. Your eyes follow the knob as it reaches the floor in slow motion and the clatter that follows is deafening and echoes throughout. The water cleanses away the ants, and in the process, the streams of water feel like boiling oil rolling off your body, scorching and blistering your skin. Immediately, your first instinct is to jump out of the shower. Your lips part a fraction, letting out a slow exhalation. That is until your eyes meet the floor, drops of deep scarlet tarnishing the tiles, which were once pristine white. The reflection in the mirror looks back at you, but it is unrecognisable.

It's time, Johnny. It's my turn. I'm in control now. As if you thought I wasn't in control all along. Your hand raises against your own will, your fingers tracing the delicate skin of your wrist. Sharply, your nails begin to dig at your veins. The thick, red substance begins to trickle down your arm. Your nails turn into claws, burrowing even deeper into your tender flesh, your blood now flowing at an unstoppable rate. A stabbing pain in your chest forces you to look down, as if your heart is about to explode. I'm coming. I told you.

I'm going to get out.

By Nhung Tong

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



AS I looked out at the vast sea, my eyes squinted to cope with the light bouncing off the crystal azure water. I was lamenting about the predicament I was in. Maybe one day there would be some sort of miracle hopefully, one day.

The images of the collision are fresh in my mind like it happened yesterday. Lightning struck the ship as the sound of hundreds

of people shrieking filled my ears. We had to evacuate to the nearest island on rafts which led us here to this lush untouched Island. I looked back at the ship as it slowly crumbled into the ocean. The Captain said we would name this place Australia, but the inhabitants thought otherwise. They would rampage through the lush greenery of the forests and would attack us with spears. They did have all the rights to do so as it was their land which we were trespassing.

I was hunting through the woods as night fell upon us in the blink of an eye. The bushes started to rustle as a spear darted past me. Everything became black. I woke up to see the inhabitants of the land (I referred to them as the others) gazing at me. They were terrified of me more than I was terrified of them. My spine tingled, I didn't have a good feeling about what was about to occur. Somehow the 'others' had captured my pal Rick, he'd assured me it was all going to be OK and that I was safe here.

It'd been a while since I'd been captured, so now I help the others and have encountered a new species. It was a species of huge rodents with a tail that could jump quite high. Little did I know that a whole new era was about to occur a few years later.

By Shanan Thayaparan
Year 6, St Luke's Primary School
LALOR – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Lina Paolini

THE LONE SOLDIER

HE LAY there in strife, just waiting, hours on end. Sometimes he had to talk himself out of doing it.

Then it happened... he ran shooting. He didn't know where the bullets were spearing. If it wasn't for the field of poppies, he would be completely lost.

They guided him away from the Germans, that would spell certain death for the lone soldier.

Belting at full pace the lone soldier was running for his life but then... Bang! He fell to the agonising pain of a gunshot wound to the back of his knee. He lay there in the unbearable state of despair.

But thanks to his quick thinking, he ripped off a strip of dirty bloody clothing and quickly tied it into a knot and staggered to his feet. He limped like his life depended on it, because it did.

He thought he had lost the Germans but just to be on the safe side he didn't let his thoughts get the better of him. He could feel his wound getting worse but he still soldiered on.

And now he had to face Mackenberg, the

fourth highest hill in Germany and reach the little town on the other side. Even though it had taken over by the Germans, it was his best shot at staying alive.

The lone soldier set off to attempt the magnificent climb but with the pain in his knee shooting in every direction it made it hard to hike the great ranges.

But then shooting started again.

Duck, duck, yelled an unbelievably familiar voice. He ducked so fast it was like a bee once it had found the perfect flower.

Once the shooting was over, he waited a

few minutes to listen, so he could figure out if the Germans were really gone. Every agonising minute he couldn't stop thinking about his family.

Hang on a minute, his family, that familiar voice, it was the voice of his son.

He couldn't wait any longer, he got up and ran. He couldn't stop thinking about his family and his home and most of all his son!!

By Max Godden
Year 6, Plenty Valley Christian College
DOREEN – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Naccari



Star Signs

ARIES

Acrimonious Aries
you bite your tongue,
draw your fists to your cheeks.
But there is no fight to be won,
and the hand which held you
withdrawn, curled and scarred.

Caustic and bitter, your flames
lick and lash in a hate-fuelled frenzy.
You burn, and burn, and burn.
The bridges are nought but ash,
the Doves have been massacred,
and the oceans, the rivers, run dry.

TAURUS

Tourmaline Taurus,
eyes of algae green
regard me past papery lids.
Knotted, gnarled roots
twist and turn organically,
deep beneath the Earth's skin.

She is Gravity and Warmth,
Mother of the Sun – of God!
Gaia incarnate with rosy cheeks.
Her embrace draws to my eyes
a sweet moistness, and to my ears
the tenebrous song of love.

GEMINI

Germanic Gemini,
from Black Woods betides
the song of the Twins.
One soul, four crimson palms,
four milky-black almond eyes
collude in secret.

They are fair and lithe,
with hair of spun Golden thread,
divine daughters of the Dioscuri.
Upon white horses they ride,
with palms and eyes
turned toward an onyx sky.

CANCER

Cavernous Cancer,
Atlas's rival, you bear the brunt
of a thousand sorrows.
Sweet, tenacious child,
lay down softly, gently,
let the sun kiss you.

Cornflower Cancer,
the rain beats heavy
upon your spine.
Fear not, cara mia!
She heralds the spring
in her wake.

LEO

Latent Leo,
when she speaks, she sings;
a humid deep-south song.
O greedy throat
of molten gold,
call me to your jungle home.

I ask to see her face,
but am shown only the sun,
melting languidly
over the last moments of day.
Dipping below a watery horizon,
she begins the song of night.

VIRGO

Virulent Virgo
may no dominion
triumph thine own.
May your pupils adore you
and your success,
in beautiful, cloying devotion.

May your self-wrought halo
hang over your head
as it does your neck.
Solid gold baby,
your worth outshines
even the Most Divine.

LIBRA

Lavender Libra,
flowers bloom by your feet.
I seek you in daylight,
seek the meadows by the shore,
kissed with sun,
salt-sweet and melodic.

I seek the warm breeze
of your caress, my love,
the swirl of its current,
like the fish and the bee
to your sunlit hands,
calloused and perfect.

SCORPIO

Sanguine Scorpio,
you take no prisoners,
and spare no blood.
I want you to want me;
your venom is sweet
when it lies on my tongue.

Your rough hands fumble,
they squeeze and claw,
and yet I slip between your fingers
like a bruised-plum angelfish.
I weep for your fate, my love,
as I weep for my escape.

SAGITTARIUS

Sorghum Sagittarius
red quicksand; I melt into you,
to your skin-searing core.
A hard knoll of ruthless optimism,
he is saffron and sienna in colour,
glowing with kinetic energy.

Melting and reforming at will,
he undulates in my palm,
murmuring and spluttering.
Brought to my ear, he speaks as Chiron,
scalding my cheek, whispering
secrets of healing.

CAPRICORN

Capricious Capricorn,
the storms that ravage the oceans
envy your turn of favour.
Oh, old stickler for tradition,
have your fire-borne cousins
taught you naught?

Let us love you a little more,
as from your palm
emerges a soft, pink lily.
Let us nourish her with
patience and compassion,
let us love you a little more.

AQUARIUS

Alabaster Aquarius,
anonymity becomes you.
You writhe in stoic agony,
prying at your latest skin
as you morph once again,
and I ask, who are you?

Your words snap and hiss
as the wind whips over the sea.
I am, as I am not,
perfection is home within me.
Irresolute and malleable,
I am whoever you wish to see.

PISCES

Periwinkle Pisces,
dawn breaks over your brow
in seafoam and peach.
Still in the bay,
watery fingers
pull me outward.

I feel your heart
of coral and moonstone,
beating through the ocean floor.
Here I lay, drifting
into wilful consumption,
wrapped in seaweed and sleep.

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



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