

OZ KIDS IN PRINT



Issue 2, 2021

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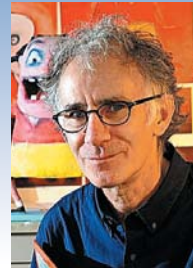
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For a full list of our authors and illustrators check out our website at www.creativenetspeakers.com

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'Orange Turtle in Water'

Front cover image by

Dyneeka Jones

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We never thought we would still be going through lock-downs and home schooling. Entries have picked up over the last month. Which shows us that students are able to spend more time writing stories. Rather than trying to get assignments done and now half year exams are on.

History is written by students like yourselves. Writing stories about what is happening around you. Never stop keeping records. As you are saving history by writing your stories for future generations.

— Carol



**KEEP ON WRITING
(TYPING)!**

Carol Dick
Managing Editor

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Find us on 

Leaf and the Wind

It's interesting
How a leaf soaring through the sky,
can quietly fall,
in a deep dark forest.
Finding nothing but
shadows and broken branches
with prickly thorns,
as it slowly crumbles,
piece by piece.
Hiding its scars with bright yellow pigmented smiles
But underneath all of that,
There are hints of gloomy shades.

The leaf is paralyzed, it has no motive to move.
However, a soft rhythm whispers into its ears.
Invisible hands slowly sliding under the fragile golden heart,
Lifting it into a luminous light.
The pain still holds the leaf back,
So, the wind starts to sing, and it starts to follow.

And suddenly, whoosh, off the leaf goes
Beautiful notes are created as the air inhales, and exhales,
The voice gets louder,
Gathering more leaves
Sucking them into a ring,
as if consumed into a black hole.
They start spinning, twirling, losing control
Like a free-spirited soul.
Listening to the delightful screaming
Getting lost in harmony along with the melody,
Dancing.
Going around and round and round

The sound of a soft song catches the leaf's attention,
It follows the call,
Drifting away from the whirlwind,
Heading in a different direction
Descending steadily,
Flowing down, down, down
Sinking into the earthy bed,
Resting,
But this time,
peacefully.
As it realizes it always has been surrounded by colour,
And it can finally smile with pleasure.



By **Charlize Caingles**
Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Aurora Reid

Oz Kids in Print

The Treachery At Dawn

THE FADING sunlight illuminated the meadow, sending splashes of pink, purple, and orange in all directions, igniting shadows that danced with the grass. Wisps of vibrant clouds dusted the majestic sky like chalk on a chalkboard and the sun hung magnificently above the horizon. Robins swooped low on unfortunate crickets that had come to begin their evening choir, consisting of a repertoire of chirps. All the while, small creatures scurried to their homes as a response to the coming of the night.

My soft paws stroked the nutrient-rich soil as I crept through the lofty sedge, all my senses vigilant. I stood for a moment and listened silently, my tail twitching impatiently. It was all quiet, except for the tweeting of the birds and the chirping of the crickets. SNAP! My ears jerked up as a twig snapped in the distance, towards my left. I could almost hear his silent gasp as he realised his mistake. I took this as a chance to seize victory and sprinted in the direction of the sound. I could pick the faint rustle of grass up ahead as he dashed to find a new hiding spot. My paws slowed down to a trot as I lost track of my victim. It had happened again! I just stood there, dazed, trying to focus my senses on my surroundings.

"Gotcha!" He exclaimed as he leapt from behind, pinning me to the moist soil.

"Asher! I was supposed to do that!" I remarked, trying to get out of my brother's strong grip.

"Well, you weren't aware of your surroundings...again," he teased as he released me.

Darkness had spread its wings across the sky, sparking the minuscule stars which erupted their light over the dark blanket. Owls watchfully perched on the pines, waiting for vulnerable prey to pass. Asher and I strolled back into the forest, towards our pack. We passed the scattered scouts and trotted into the cave. I could hear my rhythmic breathing as my body relaxed into a deep slumber.

PIT! PAT! My ears twitched at the sound of soft footsteps moving out of the cave. My drowsy eyes flapped open to reveal the

retreating form of Asher. I crept behind, staying in the shadows as the Sun's rays had streaked over the horizon. He eventually came to a rocky ledge that overlooked the meadow and steadily sat down so that he was facing away.

"Asher? You all right?" I whispered as I sat next to him.

There was a long, awkward pause.

"I'm leaving," he sternly stated.

"Wait...what?!"

"I'm leaving the pack."

"No! Why?"

"I'm tired of following Titus's orders all the time!" He growled.

I was taken aback by his unusual behaviour. "Asher, what happened to you?! You're the next Alpha. You can't leave!" I urged.

"Go away, Rae! I don't feel like talking to you!" He snarled as he hopped off the ledge and sprinted through the meadow.

"Asher, no!" I darted after him.

There was a slight rustle towards our left. My senses detected that something was wrong and Asher didn't seem to notice. BANG! At that moment, the world around me transformed into the lens of a camera, with only Asher in focus. A familiar scene lingered in the back of my head. Asher was thrown to the dirt where he struggled to wrestle the beast that was shot into him.

"Asher!" I screamed as I ran towards him.

His beautiful coat of dark chocolate was soaked in blood and he lay there, tired. I nuzzled my head against his. "I'll go get help!"

The man with jet-black hair aimed at me, barely missing my ear, making me retreat into the forest to warn Titus.

Titus and the rest of the pack sprinted behind me as I led them to where Asher was. I briefly paused, perplexed at the scene before me. Where Asher's body was, was



replaced by a pool of blood.

"Where's Asher?" Titus demanded.

"He w-was right here, I don't think he had the strength to move." I worriedly replied.

Titus's ears perked up and his nose twitched as he inspected for danger. His gaze scanned me for evidence until it landed on my face. Half of the pearl coat on my face was soaked in Asher's blood.

"You ate him, didn't you?" Titus questioned.

The others all agreed.

"N-no I wouldn't do that, father!" I whimpered.

"Rae, it's all right... just tell us the tr—"

Tears were uncontrollably spilling out of my eyes as I ran deeper into the meadow.

"Rae, get back here at once!" Titus boomed.

It was disrespectful to run away when the alpha was speaking but I just couldn't control myself. Asher... why did you do this? After all we'd been through together. I made my way into the other forest, opposite where I'd lived, and curled up under a tree, letting my emotions overcome me. Today's unexpected turn of events had sparked a devastating event in the past. Why? Why does everyone have to leave me? SNAP! My ears perked up in the direction of the sound. I could just make out a limping figure in the distance, through my teary vision, heading towards me. As he neared, I could glimpse the dazzling emerald eyes and the dark chocolate-brown coat that was so familiar.

By Farha Mohamed Fahim
Year 9, Werribee Secondary College
WERRIBEE – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Breedveld

Songs of Australia

I WAS on a school camp. We'd just finished hiking and were now spread out in a dim clearing. All one could hear was the murmur of boys and the crunch of gum leaves under foot. I was sitting on a dead tree, sandwiched between three or four others talking excitedly. Usually I'd be the one to crack a 'witty' gag. But I was silent; across the clearing someone was laughing, and I looked over.

I'd been walking with him for most of the camp, and now he was talking with two or three others. His chin scrunched into his neck, he was giggling. I could hear it, the unashamedly boyish laughter pouring out of him. I watched him closely: how his eyes welled with tears; how his skin pinched at the corners of his eyes as his smile grew wider; how his skin seemed almost to beam. His hands were snug in his pockets, a beanie pulled down over his head. A strand or two of hair fell out of the beanie and across his eyes, and his nose was tinged red from the cold. He was a friend, but I wanted inexplicably to be closer with him. I had no idea why he was so – what was the word? – so interesting to me. I was normal, wasn't I? Not one of those sissies we joked about. But why did he feel different to other friends? Why was he so interesting? Amid my worries, someone nudged me, and out of habit I looked down. And once I stopped thinking

(for a moment) about him, I threw myself back into the chatter around me. We talked about how much we loved footy and cricket and the boys and how hot girls were, am I right? And the laughter I forced out of myself, a refrain of my masculinity, was almost greater than his.

I don't like him, I thought, I've never liked boys before – I couldn't now, could I? No, no, that couldn't possibly be the case because I was your typical Aussie lad and I talked about cricket and footy and girls and I'd never liked boys before and I didn't want to be this because I just wanted to be normal and I wanted to like girls and this boy certainly was not a girl – did this mean I was one of them, one of those faggots?

I felt the fiery spite of that word as if someone had spat it in my face. I almost felt on the verge of tears, but I stopped myself. That was what sissies did, wasn't it. What those faggots did. Crying over another boy. I stared at the dead gum leaves on the ground, listening to the sounds of the boys around me. I'd always aspired to be as tough and masculine as my mates, but now they felt strange and grotesque and foreign, almost as foreign as my feelings for this boy.

While my head was down, he'd walked over to me from the other side of the clearing.

My breath grew short. He sat down on the log beside me, rubbing his hands together vigorously, his legs huddled close into him. I tried to spread myself out, to be a commanding presence, but because there were so many people on one log, I was pressed against him. I felt uncomfortable with how close we were and, at the same time, excited. For a while we chewed the fat, and even though I was glad I could momentarily push my feelings aside, I felt their presence soon after. Every emotion he showed I reciprocated. Whenever I told a joke at which he laughed I couldn't help feeling a soaring happiness; whenever he seemed sad, or whenever he wasn't smiling and laughing, I not only felt dejected but considered it my duty to make him happy again. Despite the tingle of the nerves I felt when he sat beside me, his presence was soothing. I was vulnerable with him, almost controlled by him, and though that was weak and feminine and what those fags did, I still wanted to sit with him and talk with him and laugh with him more. Something in him sung to me.

Some others started to talk to him. He was laughing with them, too, and it bothered me. I'm the one who makes him laugh, I thought. They motioned to him to follow them. He looked to me, then to them, and then back to me. He reached out his hand and placed it on the log right beside my leg. He moved closer to me. His eyes growing wider and fixing on mine, he apologised to me. His eyes were still on mine. I told him that it was okay, and even when he leant in further and raised his eyebrows sadly, searching for reassurance, I repeated that it was okay. He got up slowly and walked with the others, his eyes flicking back to me every so often. He rounded the bend and disappeared behind the gum trees, his giggle not to be heard. My body seemed to grow limp, to sag disappointment.

Though deflated, the feeling he'd spurred in me lingered. The nerves that had overcome me, the excitement with how close he'd been. Once again tears began to form in my eyes. And for a moment, I felt okay with who I was.

*By Luke O'Brien,
Year 12, Scotch College
HAWTHORN – VIC.
Teacher: Kathryn Lindquist*

Caught You!

"DINNER'S ready!" Mum called from the kitchen. Sakura ran down the stairs as her long black hair trailed behind her. Sakura is a bubbly and a curious gal who is 13 years old. "GET OUT OF THE WAY!!" Sosuke yelled. Sosuke is Sakura's annoying and hyper twin brother who has short black hair and hazel eyes just like Sakura. "Sosuke, be nice to your sister." Mum said exhaustedly. Sakura grinned and stuck her tongue out, Sosuke rolled his eyes. They all took a seat when suddenly the twins saw the food. "What is this?" Sosuke said while scooping and dropping the mysterious lump of gooey mash potatoes. "I think I lost my appetite..." Sakura said. "I think I lost mine too..." Sosuke said under his breath.

As Sakura and Sosuke were playing video games in the living room they suddenly heard... 'grumble, grumble.' "Are you hungry?" Sakura said. Sosuke nodded while focusing on the game. She got up and made her way to the kitchen but then... 'clatter, clash, plob, bang.' "Where is that noise coming from?" Sakura muttered. "Hello?" she whispered.

Instantly, the noise stopped. Sakura became more curious. She quietly tiptoed to the kitchen and saw the fridge light open. Food came flying out of the fridge.

"ARE YOU OKAY?" Sosuke yelled from the living room. Sakura got startled but didn't answer. She heard a hiss coming from the fridge.

Sakura came closer and closer to the fridge, she put her hand on the fridge and swung the fridge door open. "AHHHHHHHH!!!" Sakura screeched. "AHHHHHHH!" the creature squawked. "WHAT HAP-AHHHHHHHH!!!!!" Sosuke squealed. The creature was small, had scarlet red skin, yellow razor sharp teeth, eyes like an owl and toy-like legs. "MUUUM!" Sosuke screamed at the top of his lungs. Mum bolted down the stairs, "IT'S 12 AM IN THE MORNING!" she said angrily. "Th-the- THERE'S A FOUL CREATURE IN THE FRIDGE!" Sosuke yelled. "A what?" mum questioned. "There's a monster in the fridge..." Sosuke murmured. "Let me check", mum said disappointedly. She opened the fridge and nothing was there but food stacked neatly on the shelves of the fridge. "There's nothing there," mum sighed. "I'm going back to bed AND YOU BETTER BE QUIET." Mum said. "WAIT!" Sakura said but mum ignored her because of how tired she was. "Where'd it go?" Sakura wondered. They checked the cupboards and found the monster eating their cereal. "That was my favourite cereal." Sosuke said. "NOT ANY MORE!" Sakura said jokingly. They closed the cupboard

door and came up with a plan to get rid of it.

"So here's the plan. We will wear the thickest clothes we have, get a container big enough to catch it AND THROW THAT HORRID MONSTER OUT OF HERE!" Sosuke said.

They went to their room and looked for the thickest and sturdiest clothes they had and wore many layers of it so if the monster bites them, it wouldn't hurt them. They looked for a container and a lid that was just the right size to catch it. "OK, 3,2,1..." and they opened the cupboard door and trapped the monster. THEY MISSED. "COME BACK HERE!" they both said. After a few minutes they finally caught it! They wrapped the monster in tape so many times that it was impossible to unwrap it.

"On the count of, 3, we throw the container out the door, 1, 2, 3!" Sakura said.

"WEEEEEEE!" The monster went out the window.

"What a day!" they both said and the monster was never seen again!

By Althea Perez
Year 5, Trinity Catholic Primary
NARRE WARREN SOUTH – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Rima Darwish



GLANCING into the room I'm distracted. I'm always distracted. But it's impossible not to be when you can vision other people's thoughts. Through the window is my grandfather, on the bed. He looks weak and detached. Clenching his hand is my caring Mum, cherishing these moments. Beside her, my uncle, standing tall with a brave face. Tucked away in the corner is my grandmother with a tissue clasped in her hand. Despite the despondent room, joyous memories soar towards me.

Manoeuvring my way into my grandma's thoughts I spot the occasion. She's remembering back a long way, to just when she started dating my grandpa. Unfortunately, her Dad had passed unexpectedly, and spontaneously he'd come over with flowers and a box of tissues and everyone grieved together. They wept and laughed and mourned until night became day and night again.

Flash! Abruptly, my head is ejected out of the memory and in an instant I'm overtaken by another recollection. My mum's. Her mind has raced back to the days she was a tennis 'prodigy', or so she recalls it. It's not about her though. Before every match she's remembering the pep talks that transpired, the rev ups, the musts and the mustn'ts that her Dad would persistently pester her about. However, his support and encouragement didn't cease there; he'd continuously cheer and motivate from the sidelines, or until he'd get ordered to shut up (which seemed to have occurred a



Memories

lot). Before I can absorb further memories the pouring rain crashing down outside diverts my attention.

I'm white water rafting through thoughts that are flooding me from inside my uncle's brain. Finally, it's stopped. Everything's clear. A wooden table has worksheets laid out across it. In his quivering hand is a pencil and together they're attempting a question. Evidently grandpa's exasperated, but his gentle tone is reassuring. There seems to be all the time in the world as he elucidates the problems reassuringly. Listening and discussing they work through the questions one by one until all is understood.

A frail thought runs past me and impulsively I enter it. This time it's my

grandpa's. He's elevated at the top of the stage, alongside his closest friends, gazing down on the people beneath. A wedding. His wedding. It's silent except for the oohing and aahing as the bride is about to make her grand appearance. "What! How?" Peculiarly I've been knocked out of the memory, and although I try to vision it once more there's nothing. I realise there's no purpose in trying. The weak memory isn't there.

It's gone.

He's gone.

By Sam Steele

Year 8MA, Scotch College

HAWTHORN – VIC.

Teacher: Kathryn Lindquist

EVEN with my warmest jumper and my winter boots on I am chilled to the bone. Even with my eyes strained hard and focused I cannot see one car. Every second of silence I think I hear a voice, every second I know I cannot hear a thing. As I stare out into the dark Australian outback I feel like I am waiting for nothing. At 12:00 at night waiting for a car to arrive, a car that was most likely never going to come. Every year in the middle of winter I wait. Every year in the middle of winter on the morning of the 16th of July no one comes. This year it will be different. Gia will come and she will meet me here in front of my home. She will help me with my project because she is my older sister



The Night Whispers

and that is what older sisters do, they teach their little sisters to swim.

When I was ten I had never been to the beach. Mum said swimming wasn't important and I cannot remember what dad said because he died when I was two. Mum was busy doing other things, that's why Gia promised me I would learn to

swim one day. Twelve years later all alone in front of my house while mum is still asleep, my sister's car appears. I take the biggest gasp of cold air that my lungs ache. After a minute of coughing and spluttering I finally see Gia in a bright green jumper and her hair in a long golden braid. My sister is finally here.

So after I asked mum, I leave for Brisbane with my sister and her fluffy (face-licking) golden retriever.

By Quetzalli Rodriguez

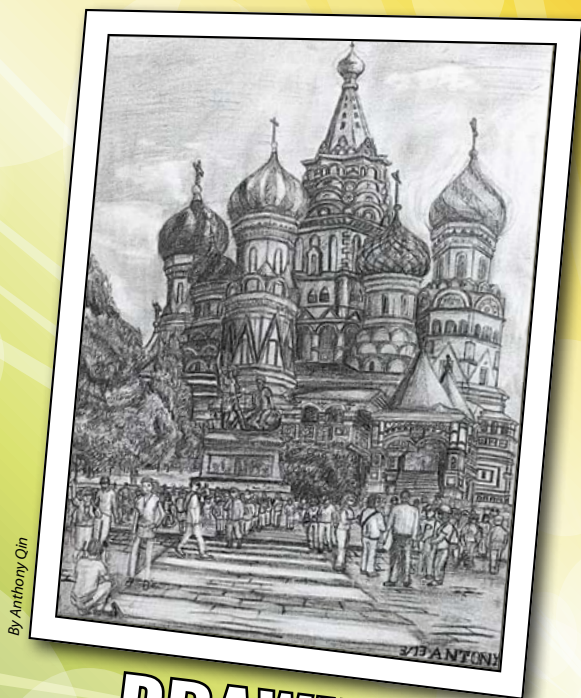
Year 6, Greenslopes State School

GREENSLOPES – QLD.

Teacher: Mr Papamanolis

2021

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ART AWARDS



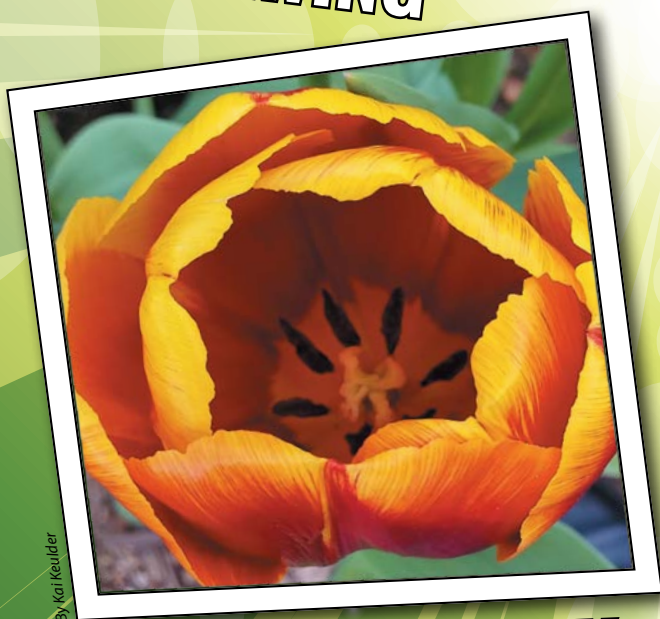
By Anthony Qin

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.

BOOK REVIEWS

Meet our book reviewers
Brahmjot, Mikayla, Michelle,
Lara, Marlin and Emily from
Years 5 and 6 at Cairnlea Park
Primary School, Victoria.

Reviews coordinators: Lyndal Haynes
and Meredith Costain

Salih

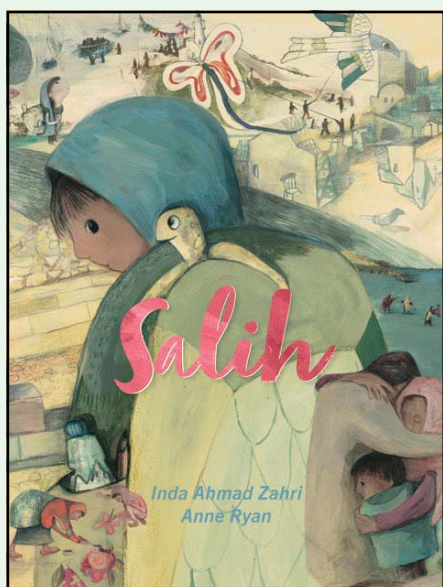
By Inda Ahmad Zahri & Anne Ryan (Ford
Street Publishing)

This is a magnificent book about a little boy named Salih and many others who have lost their homes. The group cross arid land and the raging sea in search of a new home. To pass the time, they paint pictures of happy memories. Salih sits with his friend, Ayshe, who sings when she is sad. Salih remembers the ice-cream that he used to eat and the warm milk before bedtime. He tries to forget the deafening blasts and the screams in the darkness. Will they all find a new home?

Salih is a very interesting and descriptive story that made me wonder about how the characters lost their homes. It is suitable for readers aged 8+ who enjoy sad stories.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [7/10]

— Brahmjot Sandhu, Year 5



The Red Wind

By Isobelle Carmody (Penguin)

The Red Wind is a really entertaining story about two foxes named Bily and Zluty. As the sky turns red, Zluty goes to the northern forest to gather food like he does every single autumn. Bily thinks the red sky is a mist and Zluty will be safe, but will he? Will Zluty ever return? How will he survive? And is the sky really a mist?

Isobelle Carmody provides deep description in this book to help readers clearly picture the characters and the scenery. Read *The Red Wind* to see for yourself.

Readers aged 9+ will enjoy this book.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [8/10]

— Mikayla Botlero, Year 5

Abyssinia

By Ursula Dubosarsky (Penguin)

Mary and Grace were siblings, best friends, together forever... or so they thought. They

loved each other and had an unbreakable bond, but after Mary's passing, Grace has to cope in the dark, grey world without her sister.

Abyssinia is a beautifully-crafted story about young children being hypnotised by dolls. The story flows smoothly, like a river, creating grooves in your mind and stirring up your emotions. Abruptly stopping, this masterpiece ends in a cliff hanger.

Ursula Dubosarsky is a fantastic writer, having written many books over the years. She will certainly become your favourite author as she is one of mine now. This book will entice readers aged 9 years and above.

Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆ [8/10]

— Michelle Nguyen, Year 5

Thunderwith

By Libby Hathorn (Hachette Australia)

Lara Richie is a 14-year-old girl who has lost her mother. She lives on Willy Nilly Farm with her divorced dad, an awful and

cruel stepmother, and her four siblings. While the big mean bully, Gowd Gadrey, is determined to get his hands on her mother's precious coin collection, Lara finds the magical dog, Thunderwith. Will Lara ever find happiness?

Libby Hathorn uses great descriptive language, which makes it really easy to visualize what's going on and feel like you're actually there. Thunderwith will continually leave you wondering what's going to happen next – you won't be able to put it down.

Readers aged 10+ will enjoy reading this book as it is very interesting and the dialogue is awesome!

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Lara Pedis, Year

The Amazing Case of Dr Ward

By Jackie Kerin and Tull Suwannakit (Ford Street Publishing)

This book is an historical narrative about Dr Ward's life and fascination for plants. It explains how he developed the idea to invent the Wardian case, allowing plants to be shipped overseas with minimal watering. The colourful and carefully-drawn illustrations add to the story, and show humour through the characters' amusing facial expressions.

I enjoyed reading this book very much and I was eager to flip to the next page to find out more about Dr Ward's adventures with plants. It was very interesting to learn about where some of our introduced plants came from. Readers aged 9+ who like historical narratives will enjoy reading this book.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★☆ [9/10]

— Marlin Ha, Year 6

The Peacock Detectives

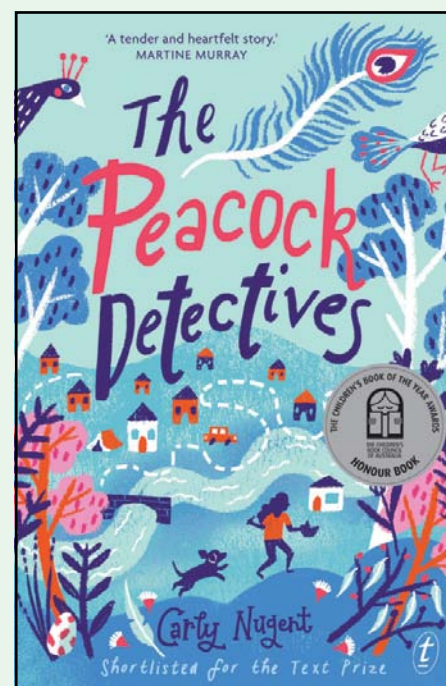
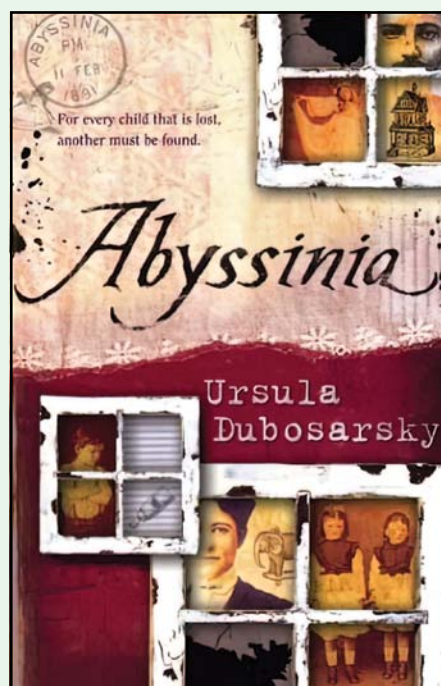
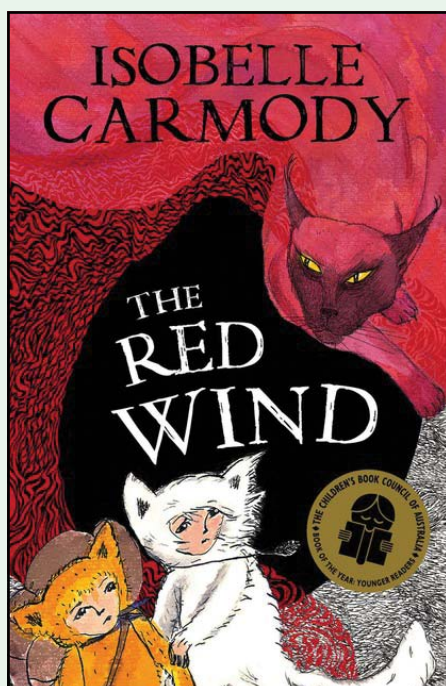
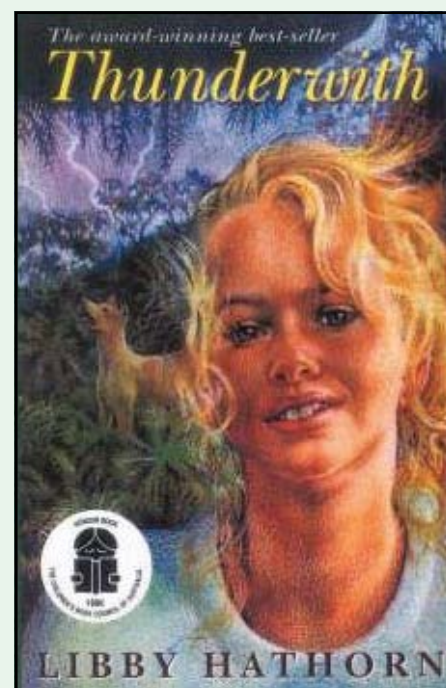
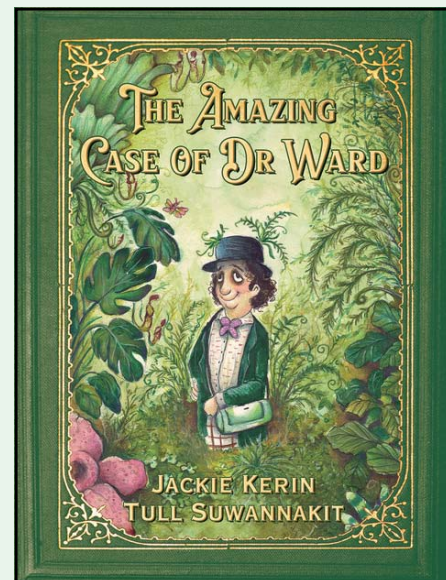
By Carly Nugent, cover illustrated by Sophie Beer (Text Publishing)

The Peacock Detectives is a mystery novel revolving around the main character, Cassie. She tries to find her neighbours, two peacocks named William Shakespeare and Virginia. While searching for the peacocks, Cassie also finds herself investigating a puzzling mystery about her family. Her mum gets a new job at a restaurant and moves to be closer to work. This leaves Cassie, her sister Diana and her dad at home, where things start to go wrong.

I really didn't want to finish this book as I was enjoying it so much. There were a lot of ups and downs throughout the story, but I like the way it was resolved in the end. I would recommend it to readers aged 10+ who enjoy mystery novels.

Rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ [10/10]

— Emily Spiteri, Year 6





SLOWLY degrading from the putrid earth Agnes, Azures mother whispered to her “The next prince you encounter will be your wedded husband”. Moments later Agnes stopped breathing, closing her eyes, Azure knew fate was knocking at her doorstep.

Days would pass, Azure would dig bit by bit on the dirt making a human sized hole to put her mother in. Days later she finished her goal and slowly put her mother’s body in. Setting all the dirt back to bury her mother to bury her mother a lady walks by and glares at Azure and thinks how hardworking she is and asks her, “Do you want to stay at my cottage?” and in an act of desperation she trusts her and accepts the offer. But soon did she realise one mistake can affect a lifetime.

Treating her like a monarch she thought she made the most magnificent choice.

Days had passed and the stepmother seemed off. Azure noticed in the past few days she had become more violent. Making any mistake, the mother would get irritated but would brush it off. An evening the step-mother told Azure to pick all the cabbage from the garden. She politely accepted and went off to go get it.

Near midnight, the sky was darker than the impurest of hearts. The cold wind breeze bites her chin as she accepts defeat. She knew she was lured out here left for demise.

She couldn’t survive. Despair washed over her, but she forced herself to continue wandering around she stumbled across a tree who reminded her of something but she couldn’t tell. A sense of delight washed over her for a moment. “CRACK!”. She looked in the distance and saw a tall black entity so she dashed. Running through

the bushes, she could hear the pine leaves crunching below her followed by her heavy breathing, she sprinted like never before. As her feet kept shuffling through the debris which slowed her down. The tired Azure couldn’t run any more, the cold wind gave her frostbite as she stood there and blacked out.

The sound of doves chirped, waterfall splashing and the people talking woke Azure up. The prince of Castle Cain had found her last night and took her to the palace and they lived happily ever after...

Or did they? Soon got word to the step-mother that her own step-daughter was going to become a queen. So she rushed over to the castle and demanded that Azure shall be killed and the king accepted. He sent a talented hunter to her room and what he saw disturbed him. Azures body, lungs, pancreas, heart and both intestines were smeared across the room.

So the horrified hunter came back to the king with the news. What the step-mother didn’t know was to request a death you have to pay with your own life. So the king requested the mother to step into a room with the hunter and moments later the hunter came out with the decapitated step-mother’s head.

The End

By Hoang Nguyen

Year 6, Cairnlea Park Primary School

ST ALBANS – VIC.

Teacher: John Stojcevski

What Art Means to Me



Art is a new world,
It’s a time where nothing can go wrong.
I feel free as a bird when I paint.

Painting is a time to reflect.
When I paint I have a bubble around me
Protecting me from all harm.
When I paint I let myself drift off into the sea,
I feel safe, when I paint

I can get lost when I paint,
In a world of color.
I’d like to stay there.
It’s an angel to my eyes,
Painting is the light I see.
I love Art.

By Anastasia Khvorostin

Year 5, Trinity Catholic Primary

NARRE WARREN SOUTH – VIC.

Teacher: Rima Darwish

A SUDDEN ATTACK

ONE CRISP morning, Queen Frog Isla strolled to the pristine lake to drink some water. While she was striding to the water, a puff of colourful smoke greeted her. The magical fairy was back! Frazzled, the curious creature had a message for Isla.

"The evil fairy has arrived! She's going to fight you on that bridge!" announced the fairy.

Scoffing, the frog didn't believe the fairy, so she continued forward. When Isla came to the lake, she stuck her tongue out to drink the refreshing water.

All of a sudden, a malevolent shadow emerged in front of her.

"Ahh!!!" shouted the Queen Frog.

"Mwa hah ha!" cackled the sinister fairy.

Mortified, Isla tried to leap to the other side of the bridge, but the evil fairy stopped her, a boulder in a stream.

Like hot oil, Isla leapt as high as she could, but she still couldn't get across. Malicious,

the evil fairy smiled a nasty grin, showing her broken, yellowing teeth.

"I challenge you to fight me!" announced the wicked fairy.

Although Isla fought as hard as she could, it still wasn't enough. What was she going to do? Silence was deafening as the sinful monster took her time, torturing the awaiting victim. Tipping the frog's head back, the sinister fairy poured poisonous potion into Isla's open mouth. Like a stone, the frog plummeted to the ground.

Cruelly, the immoral fairy cackled, grinning at the unmoving animal before her. Luckily, the benevolent fairy had spotted what was happening. Swiftly, she placed a spell on the unsuspecting Isla, bringing her back to life. Emerging from her hiding spot, the kind-hearted fairy stood up to the unassembled beast. Swiftly flicking her magical wand, the malevolent creature howled in pain as it burst into

scorching flames, banished, never to be seen in Isla's garden again.

As the frog recovered, she was surprised to see her magical friend. Grateful, she hopped away with the fascinating fairy trailing behind her through the grand doors of a towering castle.

*By Isla Huang
Year 3, Pymble Ladies College
Pymble – NSW
Teacher: Mr James Lister*



Waters

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP. The girl turned over, eyes shut and brain foggy with sleep. She stiffly continued to turn off the alarm leaving her rather chaotic room alone decorated with strings of fairy lights strung carefully around her room. This girl although seeming normal was actually not; she had a thrilling power. She could control water. This wasn't easy for her though. It bubbled with life. Calling her, entrancing her. Everything from puddles to a measly water bottle. It all breathed life and called her.

One day, something changed. She meet a boy she couldn't put her finger on it but something was different. Strangely, she could not feel anything that breathed water she had never felt anything like it. His eyes pierced back at her. Brown but almost strangely red.

With such an intensity that she looked away and walked quickly back down the path breaking his surly gaze on her.

The next day she saw him again at the large oval that was clearly not maintained unlike the protests of the council said it was. He gradually made his way towards her. Black leather shoes crunching n the

chocolate brown grass that was so dried up it crumbled in the wind.

As he came close to her he spoke to her in his mellow chocolatey voice "You're different to the others," he said glancing over his shoulder to a group of girls around her age doing cartwheels on the lawn. "How?" she inquired, worried he had found out her secret. "I feel no fire in you."

She gasped, eyes widening. Ice blue darts slowly escaping her irises as she said "I feel no water in you" she barely squeezing the words out as she realised he could control fire.

*By Zara Natoli
Year 6, Greenslopes State School
GREENSLOPES – QLD.
Teacher: Mr Papamanolis*





Habitable

I WAS darting, darting to get to the lander. My suit was loosely tied around my waist and my helmet jumped around in my arms, the shining white lander flashed through my sleepy vision. I didn't want to be here, I wanted to be safely buckled in my seat. I wanted to get off earth. 'I don't think I'm ready for this', 'why did I agree to this?', 'I hope we make it' this all sprinted through my mind as I walked clumsily into the elevator.

The Earth was falling uncontrollably from climate change. The ice was melting quickly, the ocean vast and deep was evaporating before our disbelieving eyes, the mountains were slowly crumbling like biscuit crumbs falling through your fragile hands. The glittering sunlit lander peacefully waited for me. The smooth leather seats were ice cold and the suits felt like warm inviting hugs.

I was buckled in my seat with the rest of the group I was with. The only people I knew was Penny from the old sweet shop, Alex from school and my mum and dad. The countdown started my stomach flipped

and I began to curl up into a little ball. The comforting hand of my mother placed down on my shoulder I started to shake. I nearly fainted as the lander zoomed into the sky. The windows were covered up with fire as we blasted out the atmosphere.

I was up, floating around in the dark soundless world of space. We were heading to Plantorus, it's newly discovered but had everything Earth had. The name signified that it was completely full of plants and water the lander was designed to go through anything. It had four layers of the strongest metal, air conditioning and enough food to last twenty years.

'Why did Earth have to end like this', 'Why didn't we keep it clean?', 'We're going to have to rebuild everything', 'At least we're safe', this all sprinted through my mind as we entered Zero Gravity. Suddenly all the alarms went off like a ferocious, blood thirsty lion. The lander spun, we were off course. All I felt was my heart jumping out of my chest. We couldn't move we were lying down on the cracked, dusty floor.

'Why now we can literally see Plantorus', the smell of dehydrated food was spinning around the room. We received the note that we were in a black hole, straight after I started to slowly float straight up into the cold, crisp air. My head was beaming bright red and I felt like I was going to vomit. The ship became as dark as burnt coal. The lights coming into the ship hurt my eyes and the ship started to pirouette.

Finally we stopped, I hoped that if I looked up I would see some sort of planet. All of a sudden I heard an ear-piercing tremendous thump. I rushed out of the lander. Forgetting my suit to find the exact place we left. All I could see was my reflection in the glass, I looked up and to my surprise I was at the space station and I then realised that I could breathe. We were on a perfect habitable planet.

The End

By **Grace Edwards**
Year 6, Greenslopes State School
GREENSLOPES – QLD.
Teacher: Mr. Papamanolis

AS I run, my loud footsteps echo through the empty tunnel, I hear laboured breathing following close behind. I can't run forever; they'll catch up eventually. Quickly, I sneak around the corner, my back pressed against the wall: shrouded in darkness, I pray not to be seen. I hold my breath in fear, watching them sprint past, guns in hand.

Slowly, I creep towards a distant old shed, approaching the building, I open the heavy metal door – it screeches like old car brakes. My shaking hands fumble in search of the flashlight buried deep in my coat pocket – flicking it on – the whole room lights up. With a sigh, I sit down on the dirty floor, legs aching from running. Confused and alone, my eyes well up with tears as I reminisce over the past few hours, the worst hours of my life. Lying huddled on the dusty concrete, I wipe the tears from my face. Resting my eyes, I drift into sleep: exhausted. Despite having no source of time, I know that I have over-slept: sounds of the night fill my ears.

I sit up, bleary eyed, squinting through the darkness – murmurs outside alarm

THE EMPTY TUNNEL



me, adrenaline rushes through my body! Hurriedly barricading the door in panic – an old desk, a mouldy chair and a beaten-up filing cabinet was all that was separating me and my killers. The yelling and banging deafens me as they begin to bash in the door. I'm crouching defenceless in the corner, looking for a way out. There are no windows, no back doors – no escape. My cloaked attackers' approach; there's nothing I can do.

A piercing pain slams into my chest, cracking my ribs into a million pieces. I gave a sudden cry, as the bullet burns a hole, embedding itself in my flesh. On the face of my killers, a horrible, evil smirk. The men scatter, I gasp for air and sink down onto my knees, the last hint of life being sucked from me. A cloud of darkness envelops me.

By **Erin Mellowes**

Year 9, Nambour Christian College
NAMBOUR – QLD.

Autumn's Beauty

Hush is the Autumn breeze,
Tame is the rippling rivers
Among the evening tide, larks made their
journeys of return through dappled clouds.
Dots of black across rosy-bush
Brushes the heavens, sailing upon
Streaks of jagged gold.

Star-kissed diamonds arouse,
Song-birds concealed behind russet leaves
Bidding their farewell to the distant sun
Underneath the puzzles of colours.
Nature greets sweet midnight melodies,
Upon the whispering trees and gushy streams,
A familiar rhythm hums on for centuries.

By **Kha Doanh (Vanessa) Phung**
Year 9, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Every Year Autumn

Autumn looks as messy as, My Brother's Bedroom
Autumn smells like the smoke from a blazing chimney
Autumn sounds as breezy as a fan on its maximum speed

Autumn tastes like warm, scrumptious food going down your throat
Orange autumn feathers falling down from its trees
Autumn sounds like leaves crunching under your feet.

Autumn feels like a humid, hot shower, every night before we go to sleep.
Autumn's bright orange leaves are like butterflies.

By **Aditya Dashora**
Year 4, Rostrata Primary School
WILLETTON – WA
Teacher: Mrs Alexandra Scott

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

My Stars



Swallowed by the velvet film of nightfall,
I watch as amber windows fade to ink,
The quiet murr of movement gently dulled,
As glowing midnight lights begin to blink.

I used to come to watch the city rest.
To hear the soft hoots lightly filter by,
To hear the crickets, find their voice again,
Yet now, the world is silent where I lie.

As bitter wind whips by in frostbite air,
I hear the call of cowboys waft away,
Echoes of a simpler lifestyle fading
And stifled in a sea of boundless grey.

No more dazzling whiteness in the heavens,
My brilliant stars have fallen from the sky,

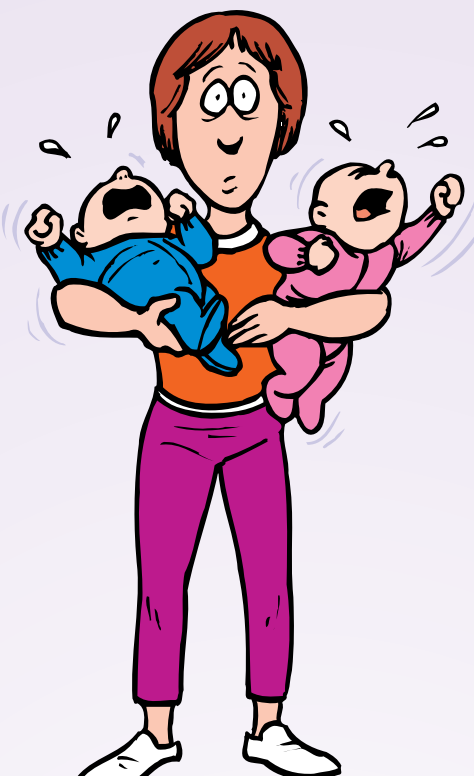
As mottled shards of moonlight blotch the ground
A gloomy scent of burning brushes by.

The slightest acrid whisper of the times,
Now settles fitfully upon my tongue,
Colouring the darkness shades of anguish,
Lamenting stolen light from times of young.

Alone, above, I grieve a dying sight,
The splendour of my effervescent stars,
Now whittled down to mournful lifeless points,
That feebly heed the twilight from afar.

*By Joshua Munday
Year 11, Scotch College
HAWTHORN – VIC.
Teacher: Kathryn Lindquist*

Little but Strong



THIS IS for my cute baby cousin Calvin and any other kids who feel small too. And to my Mum thank you for being strong even in the hard times.

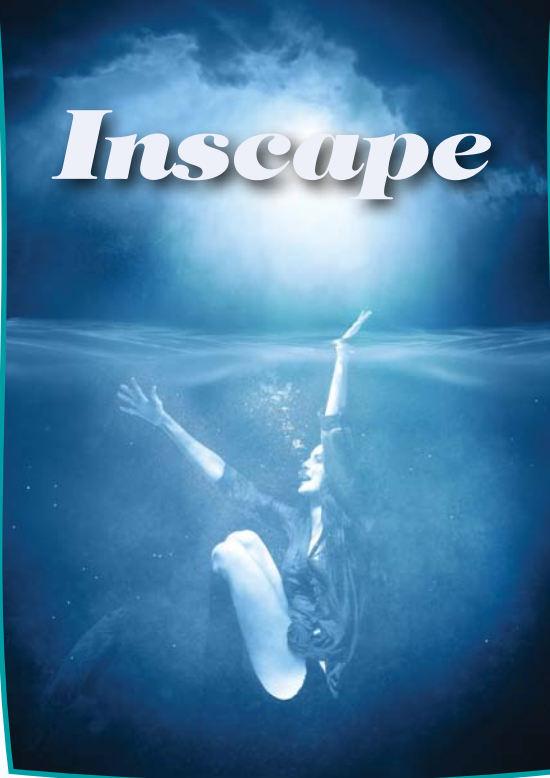
One day two little twins were born and brought much joy to their family, their names were Eleni and Mihaila Xanthos.

They were very cute and kind but one thing was much unexpected they were so very brave and strong. They were so close and kind. For a bit they lived in Sydney but after a while there Mama and Baba were saying that their relationship was not going anywhere so Mama took the two little babies and moved in with Papou and Yiayia's home and lived there for two years and when Mama finally got money she moved to Greenslopes in a crumbly

little home but it was all she could afford then she got them to a nice school where they made friends they were Nathan Little, Bent Degreve and Poppy Lin Trohear finally Joshua Hooke. A few years later two friends came Felix Meland and Payton Mobbs a few years later mama got a nice home and met a really nice man named Rob Mihaila and Eleni met Rob's family and met his pregnant sister who had a cute baby boy called Archie. But mama, Eleni, Mihaila and Rob now had to move to a new house and even though new tough things come our way we inside are still little but strong.

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

Inscape



THE WATER flows over her body. Dark, tormented currents of grief slyly encapsulate her in a hazy mirage of reflected light that pools over her concave shape. Her flesh is sallow and pinched with wrinkles that form crevices in her skin. Droplets merge and roll over her forming small ravines across the barren horizon of her torso. Rivulets extend through the valleys of her flesh forming a watershed that empties into the pools of her curves. They snake around her neck like a noose, but she is a prisoner unaware. She revels in it, in the way the water fills the spaces of her fractured body. It pools into the gaping, empty cavities of her limbs. It drowns out the hollow ache she feels in the voids of her skin. It cradles and engulfs her in a cunning embrace, creating surging currents that spin wildly under the surface. Rivers running over her figure become diversions, smoothing and numbing the banks of her curves. A temporary fix. A momentary distraction. Evanescent denial. But as the water flows relentlessly into every chasm of her figure, she hears the persistent whispers in the merging currents.

The wrinkles on her skin begin as shallow gullies, but the water is an incessant carver. She ignores it at first, convinced that the water filling the cracks make her whole. But the illusion is eroded by the building ferocity of the water. It becomes unbridled as the currents flowing through her gather power and speed. Wild and untamed they crash aggressively against the shores of her flesh. The morbid lakes pooling in the gulfs of her curves become pregnant with swollen bellies of violent water that give way to rivers which continue to carve gorges across her. The currents ravage their way toward the abyss of her mouth threatening to cascade into its depths, inundating and drowning her under their tireless flow. The valley of her chest rises and falls rapidly, sending waves crashing through the landscape. She is silenced, powerless in the face of the angry wrath consuming her, born from the dew of her grief.

The smell of turgid water permeates her breath. Desperation saturates the land the water has devastated. The manic

quakes of her breathing which once sent violent shocks through the valleys of her chest have become small tremors. Now, despairing shudders feebly shake the flooded wetlands of her figure. The land has been drenched but the green foliage full of vitality poised to burst from the ground is remiss. The rivers of her curves remain flooded and the landscape seems to whisper prayers for relief, an escape from the grief. With every shaky exhale she attaches a plea for a different reality. For a sun to reveal itself and scoop the water away from her in revitalising handfuls of evaporation. She begs and prays that if the rivers that consume her remain fixed, and the lakes that vanquish her torso stay motionless, and the currents that flow over her entirety stand still, the flood will dissipate. But her prayers crumble to nothing in the wind that travels over the inundated plains of her figure. Her desperate bargaining falls on the ears of an impassive negotiator.

The land remains flooded. The edges of the gorges that used to be strong now crumble weakly into the rivers that invade them. The undulating shape of her torso is crushed by the water which rests on her with unrelenting pressure. It is like her body is collapsing on itself, as though the suffocating weight of hurt has settled over her figure in a scornful kind of dusk. The kind which mocks her because it could augur the end of a painful day but she knows that dusk only gives way to darkness. Shadows stretch over the valley of her chest and envelope her figure in an oppressive night that turns the water an

inky black. A deep, bottomless shade that spills over her and stains her. The darkness makes the water glacial. The cold compresses her, paralyses her, numbs her to everything but the currents of pain that continue to run relentlessly over her body. Gradually the violent torrents of water morph into a lethargic flow but it is invasive and unrelenting. The water spills into the void of her mouth and brings a new kind of drowning. Her entire body aches for oxygen. The icy flows invade the chasm of her throat and enter the canals of her veins.

The water that now flows within her has travelled the entire terrain of her body. It has pervaded every fractured crevice of her skin and permeated every canyon of her curves. But now beneath the flooded gorges of her torso, a surge of strength ripples through the tectonic plates of her muscles. She breathes. With each rise and fall of her chest her body responds. The cavern of her ribs open and sends waves swelling through the valley of her trunk, expelling the water in surges that rush down the slopes of her waist. As her breathing finds a steady rhythm it pulsates through the ground and she begins to move. Tentatively at first, she slowly frees herself of the fluid shackles that bound her. The flex of her muscles sends water rushing from her in anguished torrents. The stretch of her neck loosens the noose that had snaked around it bringing gushes of relief. The arch of her back sends the water that flowed through the rivers carved in her chest away from her. Dams formed in the crevices of her skin are fractured by her movement. The icy water that covered, conquered and corrupted every inch of her figure bursts from them. With every droplet disgorged a new landscape is revealed. A landscape that is scarred by the memory of the water ingrained in its terrain. The water has changed her, transformed her but as she emerges from the liquid chrysalis she sees that the landscape has adapted and so will she.

By Sofia Jensen

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Sara Nigro



MISLED

there was no stop to the endless tossing and turning in the back. Finally, they had come to a stop. But they sat there. And sat there. And waited. The growl of the garage door took Henry by shock.

The van slowly rattled down the hallway. Beep! 'Come forward' growled a new, gravelly voice. Whoosh! Clank! A door opened

behind him. 'Come 'ere, you' puffed one of Henry's captors. Ziiiip! Waves of light flooded into sight, leaving Henry stunned. After adjusting to the new-found light, multiple jail cells with kids roughly the same age as Henry came into sight. 'YOUTH INFORMANT DETENTION FACILITY' was in bold print on the wall. Henry came to the realisation that he was here because of what he had uncovered.

The day earlier, Henry was looking around on his computer. He had recently found a new video game that looks fun called Gravity Man, and he was reading up on

it. He decided to read some forums by players to decide if this was the game for him. Eventually he found a promising link and clicked on it. He must have mislicked, because a different article showed up, and the contents shocked him. 'Your life is at risk' read the title. 'Hello. Recently I have discovered something shocking. Gravitronics, a household company you all know and love, is more sinister than you think. 1 hour and 45 minutes north of our CBD, a secret factory run by are manufacturing very high-tech magnets. I mean strong enough to bring down a building. If the corresponding piece of the magnet was put in say a plane, it would be strong enough to completely manipulate its flight path. That is just one example of what horrors it could bring' A knock was at the door, 'You're coming with us' growled two large men. The nightmare had begun.

By Campbell Bates

Year 7MR, Scotch College

HAWTHORN – VIC.

Teacher: Kathryn Lindquist

SWEAT trickles down Henry's neck. Just like time, he feels the oxygen slowly depleting. Shivers run down his spine and the ball he is already in tightens. He writhes around in a futile attempt to loosen the bindings. It was impossible to see a way out of the thick, dark fabric. It seemed that hours had passed since he was last thrown into the back of the van. The muffled grunts from the two drivers were smothered by the wall separating the driver from the back. Left. Right. Right. Left. Right. Left. Left. They kept going. Turns, red lights, traffic all merged into one. It seemed like

THE GIRL who sits in the back of my class is always quiet. She never answers oral questions. When we go out for recess and lunch, she just pumps herself down to the oval and sits there looking at the sky. There is a tattered path down the hill to the oval. The grass is worn away, but we don't try to stop her. We gave up years ago. And what would you say if I told you, looked you in the eyes and told you that the girl in the lemony-yellow wheelchair could soar?

She is a slight girl but don't let that fool you. She has got strength in those thin arms. Her hair is honey blond and the curls bob every time she wants to go faster in the chair. Her eyes have the wisdom of a millennium and the colour of them, well they look like the night sky, with specks of silver scattered through them. She is fair of skin with a splatter of freckles over her nose. If you catch her eye, it is impossible to look away, the stare pierces into your very soul.

Do you believe me? I did not think so. So let me prove it to you. Would you believe me if I told you that last Tuesday I had had enough? Would you believe that I

stormed up to that girl with an aura of murk around me and hollered at her, "Why in the name of Sam Hill won't you speak?!" Libra looked up completely unfazed with a look that was almost expectant. That just



made me grow angrier. "Can you not just say ONE THING to prove that you can?!" I was starting to feel desperate and everyone was watching when she motioned to follow her back to the classroom.

Libra trundled forward at an easy pace till we reached the classroom, she then snatched the first piece of paper in sight, out of the woven basket, and grabbed a

green pencil from the pot in the middle of the table. She then wrote Meet me on the pitch on Saturday. Libra then shoved the paper into my hand and rolled out of the class. I know, I know. I should have been suspicious of why she gave this to me. But I went to meet her because well, I am ashamed to say I wanted to know why this girl would not speak. So, I came up with the appropriate cover story and left on Saturday to meet her.

She was sitting in her usual spot in the middle of the field. She had the chair's brakes on which I found odd. She was hardly ever inactive. For the first time she opened her mouth and whispered, "I never asked to be like this." Her voice cracked. The wind blew over the grass, rustling the on the trees. "I never asked to be able to fly." And with that last remark platinum white wings burst from her back and she soared into the air. She then murmured, "Now, can you see me?"

By Eleni Yates

Year 6, Ravenswood School for Girls

GORDON – NSW

Teacher: Mrs Shapiro

No Title

BEFORE we begin, you should know this story does not have a happy ending. There is no true loves kiss, no knight or dragon. There are no pumpkin carriages, nor deadlines to be home by. My name is not one you would know, but my story is. In the first few centuries of my life, I would choose a new name and face, every time I was summoned. Despite having versatility in my form, it had always been the rubbing of a golden lamp that would pull me out of a decades-long slumber. Genevieve, my first name was – a name I would not forget. Sure, a few names blurred as the years continued, but my first would never be forgotten. Something had told me that it was like the name I had when I was alive, but I had no way of confirming that. My time alive was not something I could remember.

As Genevieve, I had long, blonde hair, and it was always a pretty shade of purple that would envelope me whenever I rose. That master had been kind, as kind as men were to genies centuries ago, but he had not thought to wish for my freedom. None of them had, albeit I still found myself clinging to the hope that I would lose the tight bounds to the lamp and be free to grant my own wishes. It was a silly sentiment, I knew this, but that did not stop me hoping.

My second master had not been as kind. Tall and stocky, he made me glad that I had chosen a masculine form for my second summon. He was the type of man to take advantage of the power he held in a situation, and every one of his three wishes had been granted with a flinch. I knew I was lucky then, that I would never have to be present in a world where anything could happen. It seemed futile to expect a future in which death did not peek into every window, and yet I was able to watch the mindsets of humans change. Many longed-for peace, others for power. Most of all, however, humans longed to survive.

It was not long before I began being sought after. I could only be vaguely aware of this at times – I would come in and out of consciousness and years seemingly passed – but an increase in holders occurred and developed quickly. I knew it had felt wrong when a person's three wishes were used,

and they simply passed me to their closest companion. It was wrong, there was no way around that, but despite my ability to grant their wishes, I remained powerless. Both the invisible and golden shackles had kept me in place for as long as I was able to remember, but human barriers did not bar me from completing wishes. Eventually, I would be lost to time and the cycle would pause until another century passed. My metal would not rust, nor would my bones begin to crack. My living skin, the skin I lived in, would remain unwrinkled and a pleasant shade of whatever colour I chose.



Naturally, there were the few times I was accidentally summoned. Animals brushing alongside a discarded, golden lamp that lay abandoned in the sand, antique collectors wishing to brighten the shine that had been lost to dust overtime. I had always noted that they would be the nicest, the animals and the collectors, who

would only wish for food or happiness for their families. Once upon a time, I had longed for gentle masters, old men with few lives left. I figured that, if anyone were to set me free, it would be someone placid like that. But in no way wishing selfishly, I was never set free.

It was not a matter of not wanting to grant wishes – I could and would. Easily, I would pick up on when I was being tricked, and I had no qualms punishing humans that purposefully went against my rules. However, even this, a millennium of following rules and clicking my fingers to make humans happy, had not earned my freedom.

I remember Aladdin like it was yesterday, and I suppose in some senses, it was. He had been my last chosen master, a kind-eyed, Arabian boy with a big heart and interesting choices in clothing. Love had strengthened him, using two of his wishes to make himself into the man that he deemed his true love would choose to marry. He had been, in absence of a better term, fun to work with. I had chosen a blue, muscular form for him, with a rasped, low voice and playful demeanour. The attitude was less of an act, but all attributed to the character I wanted to play. We had sung and danced and paraded through crowded streets in hopes of drawing in the princess's attention, but regardless, had found ourselves in the bottom of the ocean.

Drowning would not affect me – I would not panic or find myself unable to breathe. I had begged him to wish his way out, to mutter the words that would let me help the young boy escape the watery death. He had not heard. The magic carpet had saved him then, and, although I could never have physically felt human emotions, I was able to release a breath and my drooping hunched shoulders. Relieved, I would later find out. After Jaffar was imprisoned into the same fate as I, something I had chosen not to comment on after knowing the horrors of the lamp, I had figured Aladdin would free me. Every action he had taken had suggested he would free me – he told me he would free me.

He did not. By the time he gave his third and final wish, I had packed a bag and created a red Hawaiian shirt that I would

wear on the Hawaiian beaches. Had I been human, I would have cried when he wished a long and happy life for him and his wife. It was not as though I did not hope for his happiness, he was a good person, and good people deserve good things. I remember hesitating before granting it, willing my face not to transform into a look of despair. I nodded a final time before becoming one once again, with the lamp.

By the time I was woken yet again, it was by a scholar. She was short, and I could not tell if she was old or young. Her first

wish was to read any language that she tried to, and she had spent several weeks finding any content she could decipher. Her second wish had been brought upon by insecurities – wanting to be beautiful. By the time, her third came she openly considered letting me free. Instead, she wished for me to be conscious during my time in the lamp. I suppose she thought she was doing me a favour and granting me a gift. She was not. An entirety of darkness faced me in the very second her third wish was granted, and an entirety of darkness would face me until I was released next.

Thus was the life of a genie – no happy endings, no ending anecdotes. Doomed to grant the wish of anybody that asked, but never myself.

Forever yours,

Genie.

By Kelsea Thomson

Year 11, Mackay Northern Beaches State

High School

RURAL VIEW – QLD.

Teacher: Mrs Sian Burrows

The First Outing

SCUFFY the dog had only been at his new house for a week, and although there were still lots more to explore in the house, he wanted to go out into the neighbourhood too. Ginger, the house cat who lived next door, whom he had made friends with, was unsure about this, in case he got lost. But, seeing that Scuffy really meant to go, she suggested that she go too, to show him around next week, because everyone would be too busy to notice.

A week later, Scuffy leapt eagerly to the front gate as soon as the children of the house had disappeared. Surprisingly, Ginger simply pounced over it.

“How do you do that?” asked Scuffy curiously.

“Practice”, replied Ginger as she unlocked the gate with her furry orange tail. “Now, quick!”

Cautiously, Scuffy stepped out. Cling! Ginger had shut the gate.

“Where are we going?” asked Scuffy.

“I’m going to take you to the park.” Ginger said. “There aren’t that many people there at this time of the day, and my friend Barker, who is a dog too, lives there, as a stray.”

“You must have a lot of friends”, Scuffy remarked as he followed Ginger down the road.

“I refer to myself as a dog, so I do have a lot of dog friends”, Ginger replied, but without looking behind.

Scuffy looked around to see if there was anything interesting happening on the street. Right in front of him, a big jolly lady was wearing a maroon hat with a blue feather. Scuffy smiled, but Ginger backed away at once. She stepped into a pile of dead vines and hissed, “Duck to the side! Duck to the side!”

Scuffy had heard of an animal called a duck, and looked around to see one. Ginger was still whispering to him. Then suddenly she shrank back. The big lady had approached them. There was a greedy smile on her face.

She bent down to look at him and laughed shrilly. “A golden retriever, I see.” She stroked his fur. “You are obviously, or else you wouldn’t be so clean. Just good enough. Just good enough to sell.”

Suddenly, Scuffy understood the urgency in Ginger’s voice. This lady intended to sell him! She picked him up, cradled him in her arms and kept on walking.

Scuffy wasn’t pleased when he was put in a dirty cage in someone else’s house. He was longing to be back at home, where everything would be all right. The lady had left the house a few minutes ago to go shopping. Scuffy had never felt so lonely and scared, not even at home.

“You didn’t expect me to abandon you, did you?” A familiar voice came from behind him.



“Ginger!” cried Scuffy as he turned around.

Ginger smiled. Flicking her tongue, she let the cage lock flick open with her tail.

“Thank you!” Scuffy burst out of the cage.

Ginger laughed and said, “That’s all right. I’ll open the window for you, and just follow me. I’ll do the rest.”

Scuffy threw himself out the window as Ginger pushed it open. She pulled it down and hopped onto the grassy area that Scuffy was standing on. Scuffy followed behind and leapt onto the pavement.

“Good”, Ginger gave him an approving look. “Now do you want to go back home, or meet my friend Barker at the park?”


“I’ve had enough excitement for one day, and I’m exhausted”, Scuffy said. “I’ll meet your friend Barker another day.”

And so, the dog followed the cat down the smooth pavement, back home.

By Nethya Wijesekera

Year 4, Gordon East Public School

GORDON – NSW



The Puddle

‘**THIS** house looks hideous.’

Leah Walker and her three younger sisters, Eleanor, Rosa and Patricia stand outside their new house – a big ugly place with huge grimy windows.

They needed somewhere new to live since Lord Solmont destroyed their house and killed their parents. Unfortunately, the only way to defeat Lord Solmont was to turn him to stone, but they were still figuring out how to do that.

‘Maybe it will look better inside,’ said Rosa. They opened the door and what they saw made them scream. Lord Solmont was sitting on the kitchen chair!!

Immediately they all turned around and ran straight for the forest. Leah had to carry Patricia in her arms because she couldn’t run fast enough, but then Eleanor tripped, making Leah, Patricia and Rosa go tumbling forward. Then Lord Solmont jumped out of nowhere, grabbed Rosa and Patricia and vanished.

Leah scrambled to her feet, took a step

forward and she too vanished. Then Eleanor stood up and the same thing happened. Then had fallen through a puddle!

Meanwhile, Lord Solmont pulled Rosa and Patricia down into an underwater city. But the city wasn’t full of fairy lights and big fancy towers. Instead it was full of daggers, skeletons, arrows and crossbones. And the two girls were tied to a pole fearing death.

Leah and Eleanor fell through the puddle and landed on top of each other on a pile of arrows and crossbows. They both grabbed one of each and set off to find their two younger siblings. Finally, they found them and gasped, Solmont was aiming an arrow at them!

With quick thinking, Leah jumped in between them and started fighting Solmont. Meanwhile, Eleanor was aiming an arrow at Solmont’s back. Finally, Eleanor let the arrow go and Solmont screamed in pain and turned to stone.

‘What?!’ Said Leah. ‘Look!’ said Eleanor, pointing to the arrow still in Leah’s hand,

‘it has a picture of a stone on it! It must turn whoever it hits into stone! We’ve done it Leah!’

Leah cut the ropes around Rosa and Patricia and hugged them close. They had defeated Lord Solmont!!!!

‘How do we get out of here?’ asked Rosa. ‘I think I might know,’ said Leah, ‘how about let’s try jumping as high as we can.’ ‘Okay!’ they all said and they did and they ended up on the forest floor dripping wet.

‘HOORAY!’ they all cheered. They walked arm and in arm back to the old house again. ‘You know what,’ said Leah looking up at the dusty windows, ‘I think I could grow to like this house after all.’

They all laughed and they ran to the house to dry off.

The End.

By **Grace Costigan**
Year 4, St Louis de Montfort’s
ASPENDALE – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Edkins



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"The only place that fear can exist is in our thoughts" – Will Smith

EVERY day she puts on 'the face' to cover up what she's feeling. If anyone looked closer, they would see the truth. It's dinner time, she's sitting at the table staring at the food that looks claggy and congealed. Greasy unpalatable chicken stew with rust-red carrots. She groans with frustration. He doesn't know how much I hate this. She picks up her fork that feels as heavy as a shovel. She sees her exasperating brother gobbling down his food ravenously like a chuffing pig. Literally disgusting. Her parents are sitting at the other end of the table blabbering about something or other. She grasps the insipid chicken as droplets of oil fall. She pushes her food around the plate. She looks up and sees her father with a grin plastered on his face. He thinks I like the food. Before she gets up, she notices the fern her mother bought. It's withering. The leaves fold in response to her touch. Someone else can water it. Dinner has finished. She climbs the steps to her room grudgingly, knowing what lies ahead. Abruptly, her brother knocks her unbalanced as he bolts to his room. What a douche. She closes the door from the clamour downstairs. The voices from below fade away, all she is left with is the screaming and shouting in her head. I can't escape it. She stands in her room, the lights off, yet she cannot escape the grotesque silhouette in the mirror. You disgust me. Her skin peels away shrivelled, while tears roll down from her red eyes.

"Brothers and sisters are as close as hands and feet" – Vietnamese Proverb

The day has finally arrived! Proper planning, caution and awareness are needed to ensure his secret plan goes smoothly. He flexes his bulky muscles in the mirror impressed by his efforts. I need to impress Chloe. His dad gently puts him in headlock thinking it's funny. I hate when he does this. He nudges him slightly to release him. His sister literally has no one to talk to. What a loser. Chicken stew with chunky carrots. I need the carbs and energy for tonight. OMG it's almost 8pm!!! He thinks as he glances at the plant. You're not the only one with a root tonight. He



Unfurled Fronds

"Either you run the day or the day runs you" – Jim Rohn

Another day. She stumbles into the kitchen after a chaotic day of work. The briefcase gets slammed down, her Filofax open as she confirms another meeting for the next day. I hate early morning starts. Her husband piles the chicken and soggy

gobbles his food down savagely. He tells himself: play it cool, dude! Don't want the parents being suspicious. He casually strolls back to his room, dodging the nightmare that is his sister's elephantine body. Okay it's time. Scope out the house. Check. Select entry point. Check. He keeps watch on the parents as they're doing all this lovey dovey nonsense. He gags. Hurry up please, I'm trying to get laid tonight. There's the tinkle of three consecutive pebbles lightly hitting the window. She's here.

"Family is not an important thing. It's everything" – Michael J. Fox

It's a perfect day. He has cooked up a storm... French-style chicken in white wine with julienne carrots. Everyone's favourite. His children look at each other, speaking the secret language only loving siblings are fluent in. My beautiful miracles. He reminisces with his wife about the times when her belly protruded as she lay on the couch. Precious memories. He glances at his daughter smiling and she smiles back. He wrestles with his son and asks him questions about his hopes and dreams. He looks at the plant and notices it has new shoots emerging from its sturdy roots. Roots are everything. One by one everyone starts to leave the dinner table leaving his wife and him alone to do the cleaning up. Finally, some alone time. As she's doing the dishes he comes up from behind and whispers flirtatiously into her ear, she smiles and leans into his embrace. He presses his lips to hers as she slowly pulls away and starts walking towards the bedroom. A coy eyebrow arches on his forehead. I see how it is. They walk past their children's bedrooms, met with silence. They're both asleep. He walks into the room to see his wife in bed. She steals one last kiss before falling asleep. Another successful day.

carrots onto the plate nattering about his busy day. As if your day has been busy. Her head throbs, she reaches for the aspirin. That plant looks ready to go to the trash. She rushes to her phone to check whether he has sent the statistics on today's report. No emails. Dinner is finished. Bed time finally! I'm too tired to do dishes. She finishes stacking up the dishes as she feels a brush against her waist. It's my husband. He whispers something dumb that she into her ear and starts to make eyes at her. He has nothing better to do. She pushes him away as she walks to her room tirelessly. I know what he wants. He's so irritating when he is like this. Unexpectedly, she hears a thump down the hallway. Did he leave a window open? She quickly jumps into bed pecking him goodnight before he can start something. I'm too tired for this.

★ ★ ★

The lights off, the house is quiet. The shrivelled fern; its leaves withered with the apathetic witlessness of this family. Little do they know that new fronds await patiently for them under the rubble of the dirt. A frond for the daughter that will unfurl to make her see the beauty in her reflection. A frond for the son as a new beginning as a man. A frond for the father to give him the insight to his children. A frond for the mother to shed her of the chaos in her life. If anyone had cared to look on the terracotta surface of the chipped and cracked pot, in a faded green font lies the last seed of wisdom: who could better speak for the sanctity of hope than an unfurled frond.

By **Olivia Tran**

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Sara Nigro

USS CYCLOPS

IT WAS March, 1918 on the USS Cyclops. Smelling asphalt in the fleeting wind, against fierce waters our ship sailed. Against currents, in wind and rain. With the cold and sickness right by our side, the USS cyclops remained afloat. Surviving through so much, sometimes I thought if enough was enough. Some days I just wanted to stop, and some days I had felt almost robotic, following the daily routine. Just enough sanity kept me afloat in a boat surrounded by fear and anxiety. Keep it together Mark I told myself, keep it together. Maybe one day I might leave, but maybe one day I might also die. Does the former come first or the latter? I had always asked myself this question, causing myself to question what it is I should be doing in life. Should I've not volunteered for the navy? I was not cut out for this job.

On the eighth day of our journey from Brazil to Barbados, and then to Baltimore. Each passing day had my worries increase little by little ever so slightly. The way the sky merely stared at me in silence while the twinkle of the horizon disappeared, it made me feel ever so alone. A little push might've pulled me over the edge and into the thrashing depths of regret and despair, of emptiness and sorrow.

Sleeping until the dead of night, all power suddenly shut off. My bunker trembled as the ship sunk without the supporting

motor against the waves. I heard the waves crashing against steel outside the ship, pounding it relentlessly in the black vast ocean. Shaking the ship from side to side, on the top of the upper floor the manganese was slowly unhinging from the deck. The ores were tossing and turning, the ship was trembling and shaking. The waves roared and the sky groaned. I had climbed to the top deck and witnessed as the ocean, wind and rain were against us. Everything screamed out danger, my heart thudded crazily and yet I remained still. At that moment, I felt calm from within the storm. I was ready. At that moment I forgot about everything and faced the towering wave that left the trail of peace and calm water behind it. An opposite to my internal strife.

I had wondered if I could experience that same calm if I survived. If only... There wasn't much hope for my dream, a dream of going home once again. The skyscraper of a wave loomed over us like death. It

seemed that way anyhow. Seeing the crew scrambling around yelling at each other how to escape, made me frozen in place. I didn't want to escape, I only wanted to accept it. To accept the fact that we were going to die. The wave roared high and smashed down onto the ship sinking it.

Maybe one day, if I hadn't volunteered I could've lived a different life. Lived a busy life of work and love. I could've had a wife, a daughter and son. I could've seen their first birthdays, their first words. Their first love and their first school. Their first friends and their first sport. I could've lived a different life but the life I had chosen right now, haunts me. It's scary. That day still haunts me and I've never told anyone about it. Not my doctor, not my friends nor my family. It will be a day that will be taken to my grave.

By **Marvin Morante**

Year 8, Lara Secondary College

LARA – VIC.

Teacher: Ms. Meg Allender



Moonlight Unicorn

By **Lara Pedis**

Year 5, Cairnlea Park Primary School

CAIRNLEA – VIC.

Teacher: Miss Davidson



Moonlight dances across Blue Lake –

A unicorn is born.

Sprinting, galloping, dashing,

Where it's going is unknown

But its heart is pure

And its quest is clear.

Glistening, shimmering, shining,

It guides the way –

For all those who yearn to sing

For those who feel unwanted

For those who have a unicorn inside.

50 YEARS TO WRITE A BOOK!

By Anna Ciddor and Tamara Lewit

ANNA: When I was ten years old I read a book about the ancient Romans and became obsessed with them, picturing men in togas feasting on peacocks, and people sitting in huge, steamy bathhouses rubbing themselves with olive oil instead of soap, and scraping it off again with funny metal tools called strigils. I decided to write a novel set in ancient Roman times. I began with a boy dressed in a knee-length tunic, running down a cobbled street. The sun was shining and his feet thumped along the hot cobblestones. And then... and then...

I realised I didn't have enough information for a whole novel – yet. I went back to playing with my two younger sisters, but the image of a Roman boy running down a cobbled street still haunted me.

Skip forward 50 years to 2019. I was now a professional writer and illustrator, with nearly 60 books under my belt. My baby sister Tamara was a Roman historian and archaeologist. (I think I might have influenced her career choice!) And that Roman boy was still in my mind. What did he want? Where was he going?

Finally, I decided I had to find out. I asked Tamara if she'd collaborate and help me finish my first novel.

TAMARA: My phone pinged and it was a text from my big sister, Anna. "We should write a book together," it said.

Was she serious?! It would be like going back to our childhood, when Anna created characters and drew their portraits, while my middle sister and I looked on in awe and carefully coloured them in.

"YES!" I hastily replied. "But what will it be about?"

"The ancient Romans, of course!"

ANNA: It was such fun having a collaborator for the first time in my writing career. We brainstormed ideas about the story, and Tamara fed my demand for every tiny detail I needed.

I peppered her with questions: How would an ancient Roman make a spell? What would school day be like in 4th century CE Gaul? What games would the children play? What medicine would a child be given for a cough? (If you want to know the answers, keep reading!)

TAMARA: Anna was trying to bring history to life, but she asked me questions that had never entered my head. She wanted to know how ancient children had actually used and experienced the objects and places I had researched. I needed to reinvent myself as a researcher, tunnelling into primary sources I had never before investigated. The quest led me to a Roman school text detailing a day in the life of a young boy (used for teaching ancient school children how to read Greek), a quick-cure medical handbook for travellers in Roman times, and ancient mosaics from walls and floors that showed images of children working and playing.

Here are the answers I found: At school in 4th century Gaul, the students – mostly boys, but probably including some girls – read aloud poetry, which was quite hard since Romans wrote with no spaces between the words. They played with knucklebones, nuts, glass marbles, wooden tops and even yo-yos! Remedies for a cough included horse saliva drunk with hot water, pigeon dung gargled with raisin wine, and ground millipedes mixed in vinegar and honey. And how would an ancient Roman make a spell? By writing "abracadabra" of course!

ANNA: I decided if we made it into a time change story there'd be all sorts of exciting plot possibilities. Maybe the modern boy could save a sick person in the past using modern medical knowledge, or...

TAMARA: We were brainstorming plot ideas, and Anna asked me what was engraved on the tombs from Roman times. Did they reveal what people died from?

"No," I answered. "On children's coffins they put their exact age – three years, two months and six days, or whatever. But they didn't say what they died of. And I don't think you'd want to use a child's coffin for your story..."

"Yes I would!" cried Anna excitedly.

ANNA: As soon as Tamara mentioned the child's coffin, the plot burst into my head.

Here's an excerpt from the first chapter:

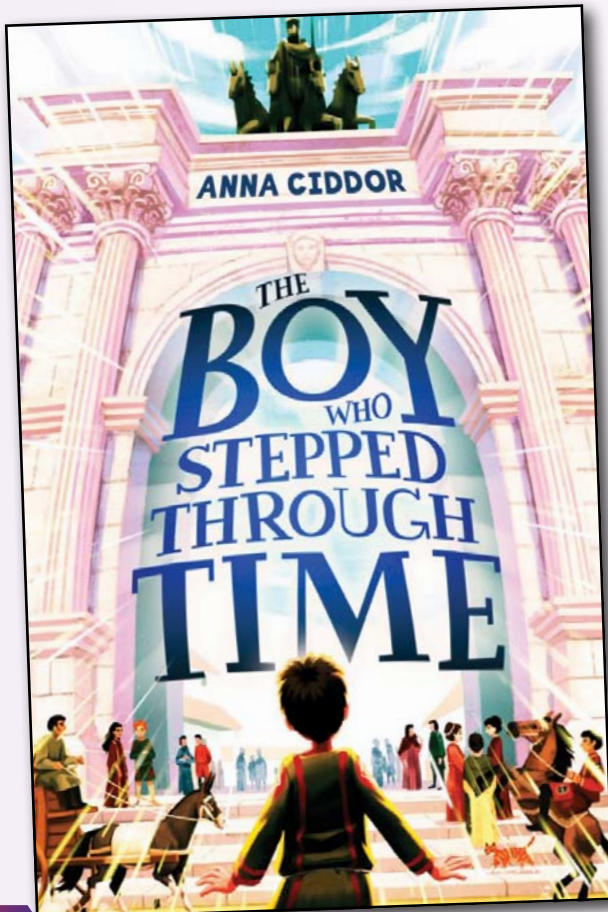
'Don't mention that museum,' groaned Melissa. 'I still can't believe you and Mum spent two hours looking at dead people.'

'It wasn't dead people. It was ancient stone coffins. From Roman times,' protested Perry.

'Same thing.'

'Well, they were interesting. I found one of a girl who died when she was exactly my age: eleven years, two months and one day old. Her name...

You see, my plot idea was to have Perry,

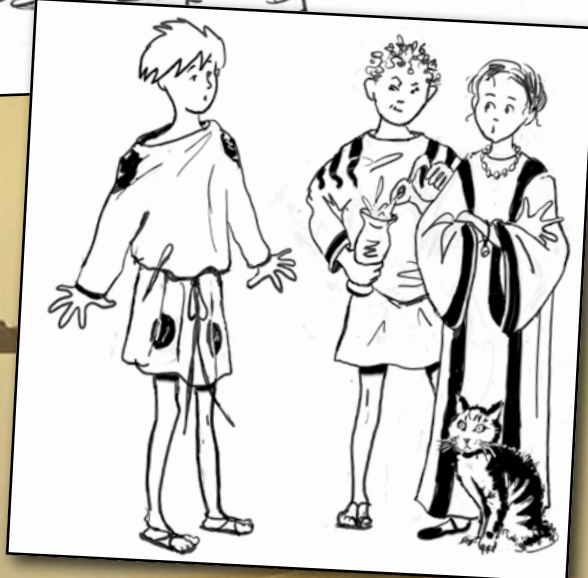


the modern boy, see a name on a coffin and then go back in time and meet a real girl with the same name! Only this girl is still alive...

Could she be the same girl? And is Perry going to see her die or is he going to save her? Is he going to get back to his own time or be stuck in the past forever? As an author I had lots of exciting choices to make. If you were the author, what would you decide?

Finally, after more than 50 years, I finished the story about the boy in the tunic. If you want to find out what happened to him – and the girl – you will have to read **THE BOY WHO STEPPED THROUGH TIME**!

The Boy Who Stepped Through Time was written and illustrated by Anna Ciddor and published by Allen and Unwin, release date 1 June 2021.



In the Depths of the Gold Mine

OH, THE light. The blissful light. Radiating from the end of the tunnel. Illuminating the charcoal-black walls and the damp stone floor. The light defines the last hope of survival within the collapsing tunnel. Yet, Tom didn't suppose he could make it. This was his last opportunity. He felt a rush of adrenaline as he darted toward the light, dropping his pickaxe on the dark, stone floor. Tom put in every ounce of energy left into his retreat. Then it happened: a cloak of greed engulfed his heart at the realisation of abandoning the gold. Tom stumbled over the small rocks which were now falling and back to the ore he had mined, grabbing a piece the size of his palm. Abruptly turning, he headed back to the light at full speed. With each step, the falling rocks grew larger. He was a few inches from the light when a boulder hit his back, restricting his escape.

It pinned him to the damp floor crushing his ribs. Tom reached out to grasp the light; nevertheless, when his hand came into contact with the light, it faded and dissolved into nothingness. Hallucination. The symptom of working endlessly, day and night, in the mine. Fear began to overcome him as he realised his fate. Tom wrestled with the boulder, trying to break free. But that concluded in piercing pain in his lungs as the broken ribs sucked the air out of him. His past flashed before his eyes: how he'd been a prisoner, forced to work in

the dark gold mine for the rest of his life. How escape wasn't simple with the high perimeter fence and the watchtowers. How he hadn't set foot outside the goldfields for almost four decades. His mind switched back to reality and his visions had started blurring. Tom still had the gold clutched within his palms. And it was the last thing he saw before the world went black.

★ ★ ★

The crisp scent of the warm, summer-air caressed the needles of the majestic pine trees which towered aloft the valley below. The little house was situated on the plain by the trees, so old and bad that it was shocking how it still stood. And yet the warm ribbon of smoke, rising from the cracked chimney, seemed alive and inviting. The walls were clearly made of the same wood and the roof had stone, so ancient it was remarkable how it hadn't collapsed yet. The front door swung open to let out a scrawny figure. He himself looked as if he'd come from another world. His ragged clothes hung loosely over his soot smeared body, his eyes were bloodshot and his beard untrimmed. Tom swung his sack of tools over his bony shoulder and staggered down the road towards the mine.

The old path twisted and bent down towards the valley where the goldfields lay and the river ran. Little streams gurgled

from the mountains and connected like wires, gushing out to meet the river. Machinery of all sorts dotted the sides of the river; most occupied with determined panners. Tom had always wished he could have the job as a panner. It was easier than mining. Weaving his way through the goldfields, he eventually came to the gaping mine entrance of which carts were wheeling through. Tom took the path to the left that was there for the miners to walk through.

★ ★ ★

The old miner knew the tunnels like the back of his wrinkled hand. Working in the mine for almost four decades had given him quite enough time to memorise the repertoire of tunnels that entwined the mine like a giant spider's web. Soon enough the floor began to dip sharply and more lanterns illuminated the walls. The sound of metal on stone was highly audible from Tom's location as he was nearing the first chamber. Half-a-dozen miners, hard at work, were chipping away the thick stone to get to the precious gold inside. He worked his way through the tunnels and chambers, watching men mine and some take breaks. Until eventually he'd arrived at his chamber which was only occupied by two other miners. No one wanted to work this deep in the mine mainly because it was dangerous. Tom set his tools down and began his work.

Tom wielded his pickaxe as he slammed it onto the cold, stone wall. The lanterns cast eerie shadows that danced off the charcoal-black walls and outlined the cavern. There was a rhythm in the way the pickaxes of Tom and his workmates clanked against the deep shelf of rock. Tom let his thoughts fly as he worked at the rock little by little. They had breaks in between the many hours of work. The tiresome hours passed and the mine-cart slowly filled with gold. After a brief break, Tom and his workmates begun working again; their hands and legs aching from the continued labour. Just as Tom was about to dig his pickaxe into the deep shelf of rock...the shaking began.

By Farha Mohamed Fahim
Year 9, Werribee Secondary College
WERRIBEE – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Breedveld



The Maple Leaf

THE PATH was hard and cold through my boots. I heard the crunching of pebbles underfoot. A sharp breeze hit my back; I stopped, anguished by my past, afraid of what was to come. I kept walking. Under ashen autumn skies and gaunt maple branches, I kept walking along the meandering path down by the water's edge. I took a seat beside the weeds – a dry, recessed bank – and tucked my chin into my chest, folded my hands around the back of my neck.

The lake had always been a place of comfort for me. A place where I could unwind after a taxing week at school, lounging beneath rosy blossoms and gazing at the rippling navy waters. Some days, I would even wait until the stars came out, watching in awe as they glided unchained through the darkening sky. I was always reminded of nature's resilience and effervescence.

In recent months, however, I had lacked the energy to travel to the lake. It had been a year of loss. Of friends. Of dreams. Of hopes. Of purpose. Since leaving school, I had struggled to find joy in each day, struggled to find the drive to keep on going. Stagnation and boredom, my constant companions. Some called it depression, others, languishing. For me, it didn't make any difference. I didn't know how I even got there. I couldn't see myself making it out.

It wasn't the same place that I remembered it to be. The blossoms were no longer, and the waters lay lifelessly still. Where there had been grass, grew pronged thistles under a smoky, grey gloom. I sat there, rocking, watching the glassy surface of the lake before me. It was dull, still, pallid. I felt lost in its hollow glare. I saw in my reflection a young, dishevelled man of nineteen – hair matted, eyes swollen, exhausted. I couldn't bear to look at myself, couldn't bear to look at someone so empty inside. I closed my eyes. I could still picture those hollow eyes, staring blankly into space.

Some time had passed when I felt an eerie cold wash over my body. It began down by my toes, then inched steadily up my spine. I shivered. Opening my eyes, I found myself chest deep in the icy waters of the lake. I caught sight of the shore a few metres to my right. I turned away. Before me, lay a greater calling. A calling from beneath the surface, a calling from a void of monotony and despair. It sickened me – yet despite it, I felt like I belonged. There I stood, motionless, in the stillness of the lake. A final departure, a powerless pirouette into oblivion.

I gazed at the emaciated branches overhead, the ominous grey of the clouds, as they closed in. From among the foliage, I caught sight of a maple leaf. I watched

as it drifted down from the heavens, swaying gently from side to side. The remnants of last light emerged from the clouds, striking the leaf in a blaze of amber and magenta. Scintillating. It spiralled gracefully downwards before settling on the water. A single leaf, amongst a lake of sorrow and stagnation. It shattered the stillness of the lake, infusing life where there was none, radiating a defiant exuberance. I watched the ripple diffuse across the surface in perfect concentric circles. Subtle, delicate, yet profound. A glimmer of new hope.

Overhead, a crimson rosella chirruped a familiar song; I felt sunlight on my skin, warmth spreading throughout my body. Autumn's soothing petrichor drew me back to shore.

By Christopher Lim
Year 9EN, Scotch College
HAWTHORN – VIC.
Teacher: Kathryn Lindquist



Azure blue mixed with white,
for the sky to make it delight.
Moss, olive and basil green for the trees.
Then I add a bit of seaweed green.

I add a valley of lavenders,
All different from the others.
Peanut, tawny and walnut brown.
Just for the pathway on the ground.

With a tiny, delicate brush,
I fix my mistakes in a rush
More shades of green
More shades of brown.
This masterpiece is finished!
Now it's all over town!

By Althea Perez
Year 5, Trinity Catholic Primary
NARRE WARREN SOUTH – VIC.
Teacher: Mrs Rima Darwish

The Artist's Garden at Giverny



Night Angels

They come at night and shine so bright.
They give us dreams of un-ending light.
Flying high into the sky and taking off with a graceful flight.
Making us dream of magical things.
The city's asleep with the dust of wings.

Dragons, fairies, all sorts of things.
They perform miracles of impossible dreams.
They say they listen to every word we think.
But the truth lies behind the talking trees.
They roam around in the magical air.
Where they sing songs of eternity share.

Nature hushes as they come along.
With their fairy dust shining along.
Nature won't say a word that they've come.
When people are awake and are roaming around.

When we awake they disappear to dust.
And any of us won't suspect a must.
So the night angels are our very own secret.
Now remember nobody must seek it.

*By Jocelyn Sidhu
Year 5, Trinity Catholic Primary
NARRE WARREN SOUTH – VIC.
Teacher: Rima Darwish*

Great Unknown

Summer rain and clouds are forming.
Fields of roses line the paths.
Flittering smiles and tender kisses
Take away my aching heart.

Lakes of sin and sweet sorrow
Encompass my broken soul.
But the love they provide me,
Enlightens me to see it all.

Swiftly darling,
Show me the light.
Let me see your scars,
And guide me through the pain.

Honey, I'd follow you into the great unknown.
Take your hand and lead me along the road.
So, let us be sinners,
In the height of our youth.

Where the pure lose the light,
But replace it with delicate memories.
Of times long ago
In which we all walked free.

Give me your love,
And entrust it with me.
I'll look after you my darling.
I promise thee.

*By Teika Collins
Year 11, St Joseph's College
MILDURA – VIC.
Teacher: Joeline Cappola*

Anew

The sun dappled
Light
a
different
light

spring had arrived reborn

anticipation

of that feeling
it
drove
her

She discovered me
The corners of her eyes
creased
smiling

In big black eyes,
the cloudless blue May sky
reflected

Even on gloomy days the light
reflected
brimmed with sunshine

The tickling of ants

Stirring in the earth
the
rain
in
the
palms

The world had waited for her arrival
bated breath

Signals rain down around

pale
tearful
quiet

By **Molly Waters**

Year 12, Queensland Academies Creative Industries
HOLLAND PARK WEST – QLD.
Teacher: Ms. Gleeson

Growing Older

As I opened my eyes,
I see my first glimpse of light.

I feel warmth,
I feel safe and loved.

As I open my eyes,
My mother holds me with affection and love.
My father looks at me,
Crying tears of joy.

I'm running across my backyard,
Playing tag with my parents.

I'm happy and loved.
My body is small,
like the height of a table.

I'm growing everyday,
with my parents helping me,
and supporting me.

My hand is writing,
on a piece of paper.

I'm much older now,
I feel responsible like an adult.

I'm almost there,
I'm almost an adult.

As I keep growing,
My parents are growing older with me.

I've grown much older now.
I close my eyes thinking about,
the great memories I've had.

I feel my soul,
drifting away from my body.
My heartbeat gets slower and slower.

Is this the end?
Has my time growing older ended?

I feel my body getting lifted up!
I see a tunnel and go down it.
I see light at the end of the tunnel,
I go walking through the light.

I see my parents.
My parents come up to me,
I hug them tightly.
Growing older...

By **Emily Kozaric**

Year 5, Trinity Catholic Primary
NARRE WARREN SOUTH – VIC.
Teacher: Rima Darwish



I Love You

C.1 – Walking

IEYED the uneven pavement up ahead, how the sunlight danced along it and the overgrown plants dotting the path. My eyes fell back at my dirty, old shoes, the sound of the dirt moving under my feet as I walked along the path. My heavy bag sinking my clothed shoulders.

“Will!” A soft voice filled the silent, cold air. I looked up, my dull eyes landing on a girl running towards me, her short, golden locks bouncing as she ran, the smile that stretched across her small face. Angelina Satoria.

“Hello Angel.” I said.

“Hi Will!” She said,

“Shall we go?” I said, signalling to my left. Her breathing hitched. “O-okay.” She said, a now fake smile on her lips.

We walked along the path together in silence. I could feel her beginning to tense up as we reached our destination, my father’s house. “You know...” I heard her say, her voice shaky, “You don’t have to go in”, she said, turning her body towards me,

“Where is this coming from?” I asked, slightly confused.

“I-it’s just.” She glanced at my wrist and her hand twitched, “never mind.” I took a step forward and turned my head to her.

“Hey,” I say, placing my rough hand on the side of her face, “My father is a great person, don’t worry.” I said, trying to convince her, and myself of this fact, her eyes were knowing, she knew to back off. She wrapped her small arms around my slim figure in a tight hug, “ok, bye Will.” She sighed, letting go and smiling, walking away.

I opened the old, rusty gate and set along the neat garden of my father’s brooding house. It was big and made of solid bricks, the finest material for our time. My breathing began to become uneven as I approached the front door. I placed my foot onto the first step, a creak echoed through the vacant wind. I slowly placed my other foot on the next one and finally

got onto the porch, I gulped and slowly made my way to the door, my breath leaving a small gust of white in the cold air. I raised my shaking arm and placed it on the door, knocking exactly four times, no more, no less. I stood back and pushed my glasses up.

C.2 – Quiet

I left my father’s house with brand new shoes. I smiled to myself, he isn’t that bad. I fixed my glasses and walked along the green garden, and off the property. Every step was ridden with unbearable pain, my arms burning and body dotted with marks. But it was worth it, my father needs this, he needs me. He just gets tired and a little over the edge, it is not his fault.

After about an hour of the torturing walk, the big school building was in sight, finally. I inhaled and exhaled, making my way there. I finally entered the class room and slowly walked to my desk, placing my leather bag behind my seat and turning to the front.

“Psst.” A low whisper came from next to me, I decided to ignore it, I knew who it was. “Oi, four eyes.” The voice said again, I was unable to concentrate on the

information being broadcasted around the class, I slowly turned my head to the source of the noise, “there he is! How was your father’s house? That old man is bonkers!” The boy said, I could feel an unwelcome feeling creeping through my body, my untamed eyebrows furrowed,

“Whatever do you mean Barclay?” I said, scanning him for any sign of hesitation, but alas nothing was found.

“Your father is mad! Rumours have been going around y’know! They say he killed your m-” He begun,

“And what makes you think you have any input? You have no shame do you? My father for your information treats me well, and that is all I need. Now please stop talking to me.” I spat, looking back at the teacher and putting my full attention on what was being said, luckily Barclay stayed quiet for the rest of the lesson.

Finally the repeated sound of the bell rang, as if we were prisoners being released from our cells, we filed out of the classroom. My stomach rumbled, the sound being drowned out by the trudge of the children’s boots and the common chatter amongst the huge group. They finally made it out of



the stuffy hallway and outside for lunch, I turned on my bruised heel and made my way to a corner to sit down.

C.3 – A Gift

“Hey Will!” A voice called, I sighed and looked up, being met by the face of Angelina.

“Good afternoon Angel.” I quietly said.

“Good afternoon Will” She stated, mocking me, “Why are you so formal all the time? And why are you sitting here all alone?” she said, clearly worried.

“I like alone time I guess.” I said quietly, looking down and fiddling with my roughed up hands. She sighed and sat down next to me, handing me a bag of homemade food, “Wh-what’s this for?” I blabbered, trying to give it back to her. She shoved it back at me and looked at me,

“I know you don’t have lunch again, Will.” She said, on the verge of tears, “Please eat. You don’t with your father.” I stopped, speechless, she stood up and smiled at me. “Please, your mother wouldn’t want to see her baby boy all bony and bruised like this.” She said, offering another smile and walking away. I gaped, I felt a warm liquid fall down my cheek as my stomach rumbled again. I looked down at the full meal she had given me, I could barely see the food through my tears, I took my glasses off and wiped my eyes.

I opened the bag and the delicious smell of Steak and Kidney pie flowed out like music, I don’t remember the last time I had a proper meal, I quickly dug in, not even bothering to use the cutlery provided, tears fell as I stuffed my face, not caring about the looks I was getting by the kids around the yard.

The long school day was finally over. Most of the students had already left the classroom, some were staying behind for detention, others still packing up and the fair few that were waiting for their friends. I quickened my pace as I heard footsteps coming towards me, and quickly closed my bag. I felt a hand on my shoulder and flinched., I turned to the owner of the hand to find Barclay. “Hello William, I have come here to formally apologise for what I said during class this morning.” He said, his eyes full of hope. I sighed, I really had nothing to hold against him.

“It is okay, I won’t hold a grudge.” I said blankly, grabbing my bag and tucking it under my armpit.

“Are you sure? I know your mother is a-” He said before stopping himself, quickly grabbing himself before hurrying out.

I pushed my chair in and walked out the classroom, I looked around the hallway, so empty and grim without the fill of casual chatter. I turned my attention to the entrance to see Angelina waving at me. “Hello again Angel.” I said, continuing to walk with her next to me, “I thank you again for the lunch, it was very generous of you and I will try to pay you back, it’s just father is busy all the time and-”

“Will! Don’t worry about it! It was a gift, there’s no need for you to repay me,” she said, as if thinking I was joking.

“Oh, my apologies.” I said, putting my arm up in defense, expecting her to hit me.

“What are you doing?” She said, furrowing her eyebrows in confusion and stopping, pushing my arm down.

“Huh? Oh. I-I made a mistake so-” I began.

“Oh...” She said under her breath, looking at me sympathetically. “Hey Will, what do you want to be when you’re older?” She asks, this question makes my eyes light up, I stop and put my bag down, pulling a resume out. I handed it to her.

“I am going to hand it in tomorrow morning.” I say looking up at the faint moon.

“Wow! You are for sure going to get in!” Angelina gasped, scanning across the words, “in fact my father works with a company similar to this, he showed me a great resume before, this is amazing!” She said handing me the resume and smiling at me. We continued to walk until we got to her house. “Thank you for walking me.” She smiled.

“My pleasure.” I stated.

“Hey Will, I noticed you were walking stiffly as if you were hurt, are you okay?” She asked, concerned about lacing her words.

“I fell.” I said blankly. She gaped, taking a step back at my blatant lie. Please Angelina,

notice my lie, help me. We stared into each other’s eyes, she was about to say something but hesitated and smiled at me.

“Ok, then. Be careful next time.” She said, “Tell me if you get into the job!”, she says, waving.

C.4 – Missing

It had been a week since William did not show up to school. Angelina and Barclay were going to his house. Barclay was still feeling guilty about his last words with William and Angelina was cross with William for not even sending her a letter. Their pace was quick as they hurried across the familiar path to William’s house.

They walked across the path and up the stairs, “I’m not knocking on this suspicious door.” Barclay stated, crossing his arms. Angelina rolled her eyes and banged on the door, no answer.

“Hello?” Angelina yelled after three minutes with no answer, “William?” She was starting to get a very bad feeling about this.

“Ugh what is that awful smell?” Barclay said, blocking his nose.

“Oh dear, I don’t know, here follow me I know a way to the back of the house.” She whispered.

They tiptoed around the house and came across a small, old, rusty gate, Barclay pushed it open. “Oh dear, the smell is stronger.” She gagged, bringing her arm to her nose in an attempt to filter the smell. They walked around the building and the smell was just unbearable, it was nothing like they had smelled before. They looked around, the smell was clearly coming from the shed.

They walked towards the shed, the smell was bad. Angelina gulped and pushed the door open, the strong smell forcing them to the ground to erupt into a coughing fit, Angelina managed to look at the shed as she coughed. She froze, eyes wide she stood up. She staggered to the shed door, letting out a blood curdling scream, looking down upon the frozen body of William Bentley.

By Anabella Murdoch
Year 8, Pedare Christian College
GOLDEN GROVE – SA
Teacher: Emil Zankov



PROGRESS – How far have we really come?

Because sometimes, what we know is right,
Isn't always seen as our given right.
We struggle to fight
the injustice inherent in this world.
We take right from wrong and whatever we end up with has to be acceptable
Even if it's such a small sliver of humanity that is left behind,
A length of string for us to unwind
and tie around our fingers to remind us never to forget
the length of our history, how far we've come.
But in reality, we're taking one small step for humankind, one giant leap for man.

So.
We ask ourselves;
Who gave him the right?
Because she certainly didn't.
Crouched on the floor of that back room,
eyes blurry but still sharp enough to be desperately,
desperately
trying to escape him,
hands swatting at his face as he violates her very soul,
screaming out into the brick wall of his fist in her mouth,
shaking her head violently as
he.
Won't.
Stop.

Who gave him the right?
Was it the constant harassment at school for not being 'man' enough?
The shows that show him what's right from wrong,
but always seem to mess it up?
His uncle, laughing, in the park,
making lewd comments and gestures at the young college girl as she walks by,
head bowed, cheeks flamed with shame?

Who gave him the right?
Was it the pushy lawyer in the court who asked her
what she'd been wearing,
if she's been alone,
how much she'd been drinking,
if she'd secretly wanted it?
The people she passed in the streets, sobbing, once she left that party,
looking at her like some sort of damaged goods,
like a crate of fruit that's been sitting under the shelves for weeks,
rotten and stepped on,
unwanted,
unclean?
Was it her parents, who took a single look and had already made up their mind that their daughter,
their daughter,
was lying to them, simply looking for attention?

And it's not just today's women who have gone through this.
Take a step back and see
how your mother, your grandmother, your ancestors have been living all this time,
silenced by their life partners, held down trying to keep everything together,
always picking up
and putting back
and fixing
and mending
so it doesn't all fall apart...
and all the while your father, grandfather, her husband sits back,
chucking pebble after pebble at the glass walls,
waiting for that tell-tale hairline fracture to show.

Remember the women who've marched these streets
Years before us
Whose efforts were heard but unrecognised by those on top
Men who only desire to keep the weak weak,
And grow the strength of the strong.
And think.

How different are our lives today, really?
These glimpses of the past that bleed through into our present,
The protests
The injustice
The failure to change.
We've seen it all before, it's nothing new.

In the fight for progress we are so close, yet so far.
Moving two steps back, one step forward-
We settle our score, but really we're just
Waltzing around the room when we should have stepped out the door years before.

So it's all well and good to ask,
Who did it? Who gave him the right?

★ ★ ★

But who gave her the right?
In 50 years from now, maybe earlier,
we'll be looking back on this moment, and that will be our question.
Who gave her the right?
And I'm hoping, god I'm hoping, that the answer is us.
That we gave her the right.

By Tamika Gunson
Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Aurora Reid

Striking the Flame

THE ATTACKERS claim their side of the court, like a flock of eagles establishing their territory. Flood lights illuminate the topcoat of the vinyl flooring, reflecting onto the sneering faces of the team. Behind them, a surging mountain of spectators rise in declaration of their allegiance. Their stares penetrate into the minds of the defenders, ensnaring them in a cruel and relentless game. An attacker tightens his grip on the volleyball in preparation for the assault. Sculpted to perfection, his chiselled abdominals stretch taut over his shirt. Firm and defined quads protrude against his shorts. His teammates give him a wide berth as his arm rears back, a loaded weapon ready to decimate at the pull of the trigger. Booming from behind him, cheers from the crowd threaten to engulf the defenders on the other side. Their conviction is palpable. With every blare of the countdown, the flaring stadium lights flood the cavernous gymnasium. Light crashes against the defenders, each surge intent on weakening their resolve. The ball, a golden flame – the only source of hope.

At the blare of the bell, crowds surge into the unending hallway. The girl's bulk fills the hall, parting the masses who give a wide berth to her alone. Stiffening, the girl suddenly becomes aware of the protrusion of her rotund belly, she seems a swollen carcass ready for circling eagles to claim her as prey. The jiggle of her beefy rolls. The defect of her cellulite ridden thighs protrude against her shorts. Silent words hurl through the hallway and penetrates into her mind. Repulsive. Ugly. Disgusting. They worm their way to the girl, seeking out an entry point to her essence. Like termites, they gnaw and burrow until they have found a new home, set deep and unmovable. It is the Voice of an inner truth she has tried to stifle with little success. Intent on weakening her resolve, it crashes and blares against her cavernous mind, assaulting and spitting abuse. Its conviction is palpable. The mountainous crowd swarms around her, threatening to engulf her whole. Their mocking stares penetrate, attacking the golden flame within.

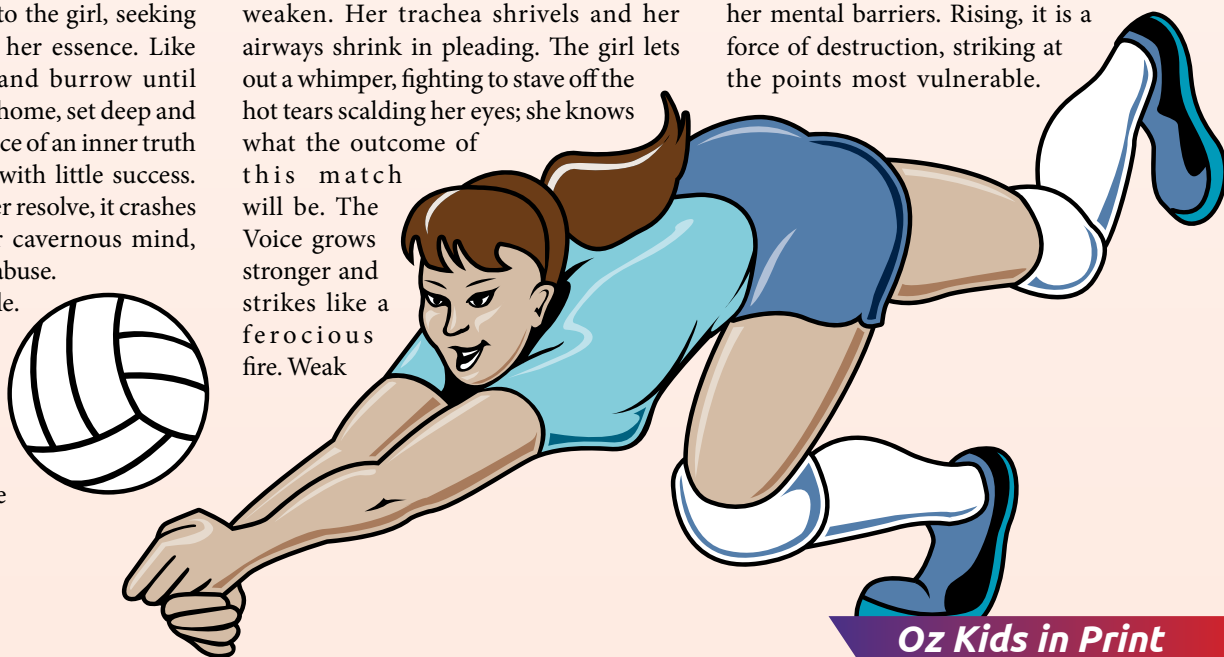
Six attacking, six defending, one aim - smash the golden orb'd ball onto the other side. At the shriek of the whistle, the ball is tossed skyward by a goal-hungry attacker who manipulates the soft leather sphere into a cannonball that whips violently over the net. Surpassing the flailing arms of the front-row, the weapon assuredly obeys the attacker's order, pummeling towards the backcourt. The defender is forced to watch as the gluttonous orb rips against the air, soaring like a cobra honing in on its prey. Her pupil's quiver and dart... left... right; she is alone and powerless against the might of the forces before her. Her trachea shrivels and her airways shrink in pleading. A withered arm lurches forward in a pathetic attempt to protect the court, but the ball, as if having travelled too far from its owner, jerks erratically. A heartbeat later, the ball strikes like a ferocious fire. Permanently marring the ground, the defender's eyes burn at its sizzling impact.

Her eyes quiver from left to right in a futile search for escape. At the shriek of the bell, she eyes the bathroom, she staggers past the door, pudgy fingers gripping the cold porcelain sink. A harsh spray of light emits from the naked bulb, tenuously dangling from the ceiling overhead, its harsh abrasive light pummels her towards the shade of a cubicle. The bloodthirsty Voice amplifies and reaches out its tendrils. Honing in on its prey, soaring like a cobra, it strikes at its target. Her pupil's quiver and dart... left... right; she is alone and powerless against the might of the forces before her. With every assault her defences weaken. Her trachea shrivels and her airways shrink in pleading. The girl lets out a whimper, fighting to stave off the hot tears scalding her eyes; she knows what the outcome of this match will be. The Voice grows stronger and strikes like a ferocious fire. Weak

and vulnerable, the golden flame jerks erratically in distress.

Anticipating their victory, the attackers' chests swell to colossal heights. Another crack of the fluorescents sends spikes of electric energy across the stadium. Game on. Spreading his falcon wings, the attacker accelerates and soars. Like a whip, he contorts his lithe frame into a steel arc, palm hardening into a solid mallet as his hand barrels towards the ball's apex. At contact, his hand rams into the ball with deadly force, striking the bomb to the defender's ground in a furious detonation. The explosion blasts seismic waves of force through the stadium. The attacker reloads at the end line, pounding the ball against the floor; it yields to its possessor, devout and unfaltering. Launching from hand, the ball spirals skywards. Submitting to command, it orbits in perfect trajectory with the attacker's arm. From its barrel, his bullet fist launches, smashing at the unforgiving ball. Forehead drenched and eyes wide, the defender cowers in silent response. Unmatched, the attackers annihilate the court.

The Voice swells to colossal heights. Defenceless against the opponent within her, the girl surrenders. The Voice flashes a vicious smile, stretches its tendrils and attacks. Game on. Infiltrating her mind, the Voice arms itself with bullets. Something roars inside her, like a wounded animal. The Voice reloads and fires the words she spirals away to avoid. But she yields to her possessor, submitting to its command. The ammunition punctures through her mental barriers. Rising, it is a force of destruction, striking at the points most vulnerable.



It thrashes within the depths of her soul, annihilating the girl. She cowers in silent response. Caustic thoughts pierce her fragile heart, setting into the rivets of her mind. The flame shudders in agony. Unmatched, the Voice annihilates her.

An arm slices through the icy air, setting up the kill.

In for the kill, the Voice lunges.

His hand collides with the merciless ball, delivering a final brutal blow.

A final brutal word - worthless.

Obliterating, the ball catapults over the mutilated net.

Weak and mutilated, the orange embers, of the flame flickers.

By **Thien An Le**

Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Sara Nigro

The Best Place on Earth

IN THE scorching, arid desert, the farm was the only sign of human activity. Away from it, the ground was cracked and dry, but closer to the buildings there was pale green grass, the only grass for kilometers around. Thin kangaroos munched hungrily on the grass. Before they could devour all of it, a weathered man banging metal cattle bells scared them off. When the man was a boy, he would have marveled at the kangaroos, but nowadays they were a nuisance. The scarce grass was needed for his starved, dwindling herd of cattle.

Water came from a river deep in the earth where the desert heat could not penetrate. It was the farm's last lifeline. Others had not been so lucky. Their farms had turned to dust as the lakes and rivers that sustained them evaporated in the burning heat. Those that survived the thirst were

engulfed quickly by raging bushfires. The smoke smothered cities hundreds of kilometers away, choking the life from them too. The old man hobbled back to the farmhouse that once was shaded by a canopy of lush, towering gums. All that remained were gnarled fingers clawing at the sky.

It was 2071. Fresh water was liquid gold. The farm had survived the thousands of bushfires caused by world-ending temperatures. The green earth the man had known had transformed into a smoking, barren rock as his youthful dreams of fame and towering skyscrapers evolved to his immediate concerns of survival. His dreams had been swept away in the polar ice-melt as seas swallowed countries. At the time, the man had only worried about school and money. He, like many others had ignored the scientists on the news

and the protesters on the streets, dismissed them all as fear mongers. By the time the public had really started to act it was already too late. It seemed like humans had been destined to destroy themselves.

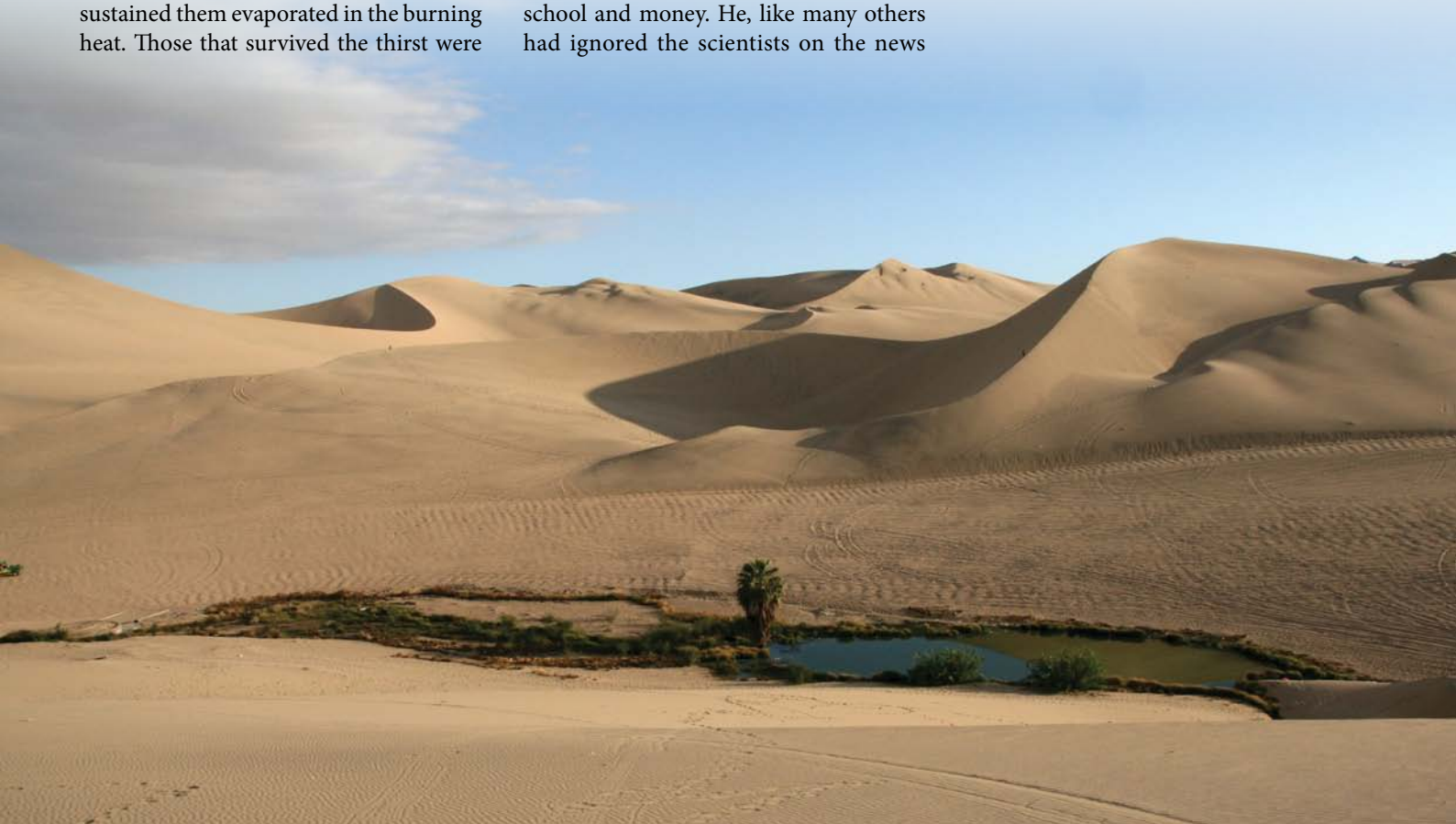
Without a doubt the farm was a haven in an ending world. Humans around the globe were starving and dying. Yet here was a place where food still grew, and water was reachable. Although the man had hated the farm in his youth for its isolation and promise of backbreaking work. He now saw his foolishness. It was the best place on Earth.

By **Jeremy Li**

Year 7, Scotch College

HAWTHORN – VIC.

Teacher: Ms Piva



My Mother's Daughter

The children of immigrants don't get to be children.
We lose our innocence watching our parents' backs bend,
break.

I am an old soul because when I was young,
I watched my parents' spirits get slaughtered,
broken.
Childhood is a luxury my family cannot afford.
Their dignity is not spared,
my innocence is ignored.

Humiliated and traumatised daily,
I've become a nurse to their trauma.

Told too much,
know too much.
So, I am wise beyond my years.
They say,
"a wall built so thick and cold,
around your inner you,
that hides your feelings, keeps your soul,
so sadly, out of view".

I exist somewhere between
amicably mysterious and irrevocably dorky.
Led by a script or a view of life.
Seen through blue-eyed, pale skinned figures—
greeted in hallways, but never invited to their beer-drenched
parties.
Never experiencing the highs and lows of high school,
but most definitely not the 'highs', the smoke hazed plumes of
highs.

I will never play Spin the Bottle.
I will never play Seven Minutes in Heaven.
My mother tells me she is protecting me from boys,
but the hidden truth is,
after I do my homework,
I'm brought back to another reality.
My parent's alternative world, so different from mine.
Sat in front of a document brought from the adult world,
she wants me to type up another family friend's
résumé or resignation letter.

At home I am a bridge,
a cultural interpreter,
a spokesperson,
a trusted ally,
an Australian who is Vietnamese too,
but too foreign for the Australians,
and too Australian for my own.
I do not have generational wealth,
but rather generational trauma.
Truly two worlds apart—
hard to come to a middle ground.

What do you do when a home crumbles,
but the house still stands?
A home is a heartbeat.
A pair of hands.
But not in this one.
So, Mother, how truly alive can I be
when I'm living with ghosts that are called family.

I am labelled a child of grief.
And I know I am strong enough
to do this life alone if I have to
because—
I'm my Mother's child.
I was born with the world on my shoulders where
love was driven by hate
and a hate also driven by love.
So, Mother, don't be afraid that I'm growing up now
because I'm more grown than you think.
I'm my Mother's daughter.

By **Megan Doan**

Year 11, St Dominic's Priory College

NORTH ADELAIDE – SA

Teacher: Sara Nigro



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.



Cherished by the Wind

DANCING between the embedded sheets of green and a texture-less sky, the clouds migrate carelessly, formations endeavouring to morph and change with every shift in the wind. Sparse, dappled sunlight spreads across the horizon in torn fragments. The wind howls a sweet lullaby, the green grass of the earth fly array for a little while, settling down as the wind passes. Caressing his face and shifting his messy strands, a wild boy. A boy that finds the wind more of a mother than any he's ever known. And his eyes gleam at the comfort of the wind, always worrying, always there. Whisking loneliness away, vanquished by an enveloped grasp, a tender hold. Always he has been, cradled by the soil of the earth and loved by the wind, embellished by affection and adorned a crown of warmth as Helios' commands. And as the wind passes, the clouds part way, and the forest's trees protest but do the same, fingers untangling, the light illuminating the dust of the earth, shedding a glow to sheltered sprouts of green. The sun pulled by a golden chariot in place, above his head irreplaceably – the warmth like honey dew, nostalgic of soft breaths and intimate phrases.

Raising his hand, fingers dusted with dirt against Helios' sun, he muses: it's nearly time. With the sun in the sky, he hears the ebony roar of a beast approaching – his eyes, spherical, irises luminescent and wide. Routine and timely, the wind grants his muttered wish; let me fly, and his heels are light, like a hummingbird he takes flight by the tips of his feet, skipping idly. Moving steadily, lured in by what feels like a necessity – the urge and thrill to seek adventure – he flies with confidence. Relishing as a cherished treasure of the

wind. For nothing can harm him, and although he soars between branches and trunks, he knows deep within his core, portrayed through the pupils of his eyes; he does not belong beneath the smooth arrows of the sun and the roots of the earth.

But as soon as he reaches the beginnings of a hill, steep and tall, he and his thoughts halt. The beckoning of the path before him charming, and flight no longer plagues his mind. The brown tarnished dirt calling, prone to his hardened soles – a path of his own – born out of frequent visits. His feet falter at the impact; fumbling but the wind catches him, tender and endearing, a soft blow to his cheek. Brushing whatever dust sticks to his skin, a torrent of jade ferns protrudes from a dirt pathway and two roars echo vivaciously in the distance. But the true sight lies beyond the tip of the hill. Far ahead, an amalgamation of boxes; conflicting in stature, eccentric in colour, in theme, in style, in – everything. Places people call home, groups of people knotted close together, warm, and never alone. A place filled to the brim with variations and decorations... And as per usual, on cue – the blackened snake-like beast slithers between the structures, taking people to enter – only to exit, making them appear somewhere else, guiding them on adventures. It whistles yet occasionally pauses before resuming its resounding song. A song which plays at frequent rates – reeling him in, and he wants more and more, to see this foreign place – to step and jump between homes – vividly bright, a splatter of red hues all the way to blue, a loom of colours. And his feverish heart beats faster as if to agree; adventure on the cusp of his lips, rooted deep and sprawled out in his mind, he yearns to go.

At times like these, the earth trembles lightly, and his curiosity teeters on the edge.

And his mind can't help but ponder the beauty of it all, encapsulating colours of dark raspberry purples to lemon pastel zest, and his heart lurches in wonder, in wonder it beats, in awe it stands. The rhythmic cello of his heart diving into a cascade of emotions unimaginable at best, the quiet solo performance has morphed into an orchestra of sensation. The throttle of his heart; bursting at the seams, his heart-strings lit and raw, like wildfire curiosity ruptures to his limbs. To the edges, to nooks and crannies, devouring, starving, and lusting to the tips of dirty fingernails. His eyes glow solemnly – glistening gold; outshining the golden-plating of chariots in the sky. Embellished gold by curiosity itself, mischief bows and lends its hand to the wild boy. Inebriated, he stands, upended by the high of opportunity.

A mutter beneath warm breath; a wish and a request. Take me to the edge of the forest. To the threshold of a different world. And although the trees and the wind hesitate, they unveil their arms, and cuff him no more. He is free to go. As he blinks his heels are light; and once again he takes flight – but slower he moves; gratitude in his bright eyes. The shadows of trees point north and ahead, uncurling and pointing – and although moved by the wind, his soles bathe in bare green a little longer than they normally would. For a little longer, he bathes in the precious light, reminiscent of precious times, of a kindness so sweet, but despite so his soles pick up speed, striding in tenacity, unwavering, a flame scintillating in his soul, and he knows it is time. Time to let go, and so he stands, undeterred and plucking the resolve at his feet, like coal fuelling a scorching furnace; he flies, and so he flies, for the last time.

Barefoot at the gate of space; green plains and a path to adventure.

Which soon unveil clusters of homes, a leaf in his palm.

A step into the unknown.

By **Luanne Huynh**
Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Sara Nigro

The Tide's Embrace



On a somnolent sea, a resilient canoe rests near the shore steadily.
The water stands speechlessly still as the light breeze blows benevolently.
A flock of statuesque seagulls sit on the wooden canoe,
Resting nonchalantly, echoing silence as they enjoy the scenic view.
Far above the high horizon, the serene sun stands,
Softly shining over an emerging tide on his joyful journey to rise in.

As the tranquil tide leisurely approaches the far shore,
He spots something he seems to adore.
The tide delicately embraces the unwavering canoe,
Gently painting the canoe's cervices a light blue.
The canoe seems to like the tide a bit too much,
She keeps silent, even though she slightly stumbles at the tide's touch.
The tide's embrace seems to be fairly rough,
But the canoe told herself she was tough.

Abruptly a darkened storm of water surrounds the canoe,
Swiftly swallowing her entirely in one chew.
The maze of swirling and spiralling waves crushes her completely through,
As the tide's corpulent weight grips tightly on the small canoe.
Unwilling to let go,
The repulsive tide clutches cohesively like a grizzly bear with salmon roe.

Painfully gasping for air,
The canoe uses all her force, barely slipping past the choking grip of this tremendous scare.
Splintered and miserable, she rests on the shore,
Purple paint envelops her surface, her body remarkably sore.
Flimsy and fragile, the canoe shiveringly sways
Even when the tide is far, far away.

By **Amanda Tran**
Year 12, St Dominic's Priory College
NORTH ADELAIDE – SA
Teacher: Sara Nigro

Jade Mountain (the adventures of Jade Winglet)

Morning!

One delightful morning Moonwatcher and all the other students in jade winglet: Winter, Qibli, Kinkajou, Umber, Turtle and Peril. Woke up and stretched their wings and dropped back to their bed, “Morning!” shouted Kinkajou happily “ugh,” growled Winter “Kinkajou if you are awake go have breakfast, don’t wake us up, please,” said Qibli tiredly “oh ok,” whispered Kinkajou and she went to the dining room to have some fruit and veggies.

Boring History

There was a loud bell and when that bell rang everyone in Jade Mountain growled...of course they all hate the dreadful History!!! But they had to do what they are told or Webs will cry his eyes out, first dragons to go to history are Jade winglet, so they got their books and went to the LAME History class “good morning class!” said Webs happily “Good morning Webs” said the students as if they would faint, they tiredly and sadly went to their

seats Moonwatcher sat next to Kinkajou and Winter and Qibli sat next to each other and Umber and Turtle sat next to each other, leaving Peril just standing there making the ground black because she has fire scales, she just stands up in every class except in her cave where she has a fireproof grass bed.

Cooking class

Now the Jade winglet are in cooking class with clay, finally they were out of history now they were in the best class in Jade Mountain (cooking!) they were making strawberry soup for Peacemaker (she LOVES strawberry’s) they made them and Clay flew over to the sand kingdom where he was staying for now...Clay got there and Peacemaker was playing in the sand “guess what I got!” said Clay “STRAWBERRIES!! YAY!!!” Screamed Peacemaker, and took it off from Clays Hand, “bye Peacemaker” said clay “bye!” said Peacemaker Happily, Clay flew back to Jade Mountain and everyone in Jade Mountain was in the Prey centre getting ready for lunch. They

had lunch. by the time they finished lunch and it was night time already, everyone in the school went to their cave and started sleeping but Moon wasn’t sleeping she was reading peoples mind (it is her power) after a while, she fell asleep, drifting off dreaming about Morowseer falling in a volcano. Then she woke up in a panic, and went to talk to Clay.

“Clay?” Moon asked

“Yes Moon” Clay replied

“I feel dizzy, can I get a drink of water?”

“Sure!” Clay said cheerfully.

Moon got some water from the cafeteria and went back to sleep she dreamed about sniffing flowers in the rainforest kingdom.

By Poppy Lin Trohear
Year 5, Greenslopes State School
GREENSLOPES – QLD.
Teacher: Mr McCallum





Be Water

So familiar to Western eyes
are the tower pricked skies
that soar above Hong Kong.
New York, London, Melbourne, Paris:
it's the same sky
after all.

All walks of life,
all hues of hair,
come together in Hong Kong.

Now the streets are pandemonium,
no longer so care-free.

Streets are still bustling,
but against a wall of police.
Eyes burning in a haze of tear gas,
ears ringing with the cackle of gun fire,
tongues curling with the bitter taste of resistance.
Be strong like ice, flow like water, gather like dew, and disperse like fog.

Police armour is cold and hard,
but fear cannot strike down those fragile umbrellas.
Like spears they hold steady,
poised and ready for an attack.
Police stand their guard,
like bulls pawing the ground.
Be strong like ice, flow like water, gather like dew, and disperse like fog.

Rubber bullets no longer hurt,
batons no longer bruise,
all shackles have lost their weight,
a fight between democracy and totalitarian hate,
a fight between freedom and a dragon state.
Be strong like ice, flow like water, gather like dew, and disperse like fog.

Tyranny is never invincible. Be water.

** **Be Water** was a phrase adapted from Bruce Lee by Hong Kong protesters to describe their tactics in the winding streets of Hong Kong.*

*By **Christopher O'Connell**
Year 10FG, Scotch College
HAWTHORN – VIC.
Teacher: Kathryn Lindquist*

On a Pitch Dark Night

IT WAS a beautiful warm day, the sky was coral blue and the water was glistening turquoise green. The ships were sailing smoothly on the calm waves that drifted by. The weather was serene and there was just a light breeze. Gradually, the weather changed. There was a bad weather forecast. The sky was covered with dark grey and black clouds. Soon there was a torrential downpour. Strong gusty winds started blowing. Then the water became so violent that the ships started bobbing up and down like toys in the water. The waves rose up to almost ten feet tall. There were different sized ships. The small ships carried fish, larger ships carried cargo and

luxury yachts carried tourists. The small ships struggled the most through such choppy rough seas. Ships were looking for help, but the only help they could receive was from the nearby lighthouse. The weather was challenging, but the ships in the end managed to rescue themselves. Soon the weather changed back to normal with the smoothest waters ever so chill and calm.

By **Ananya Anpat**

Year 5, Auburn South Primary School

GLEN IRIS – VIC.

Teacher: Jane Endersby



That Was My Home

BOOM.

A cloud of dust blooms, turning the air a rusty shade of brown. We watch as it happens, again, again, again. White trucks are sent out of the cloud, marching in their never-ending lines. Sitting in the back of our Ute as it leaves behind our dusty outback home forever, we remember when they came for the first time. We were watching from the house as the ground shook and so many of our belongings fell to the ground like ragdolls. The trucks, playing follow the leader, marching and so sinister. We had no idea what was coming next. That was our home.

My flock perches in the trees, guarding their spots. We are peaceful in the early morning light. Unaware. We are not prepared for the noise that rips through the silence, sending shockwaves through our bones. We do not count on it happening again, again, again. Our flock has fallen to only three as everyone else slowly departs to safety or to another world from which we cannot return. The three of us that are left bow our heads without even a small screech and fly. Fly to nowhere, in hope that our wings will lead us to safety. That was our home.

I am rusty. Locked in the shed at the back of the garden, my shiny bell is now brown,

although nobody can see it as I am in the shed. I have been for years. I manage to keep sane, recalling warm memories tucked away in my iron frame, turning my pedals to keep fit, in case maybe one day, one day, he will take me out to ride again. Then I feel a large shaking in the ground. Maybe it is my person, coming back. It happens again, shaking me and the shed and it seems, the world. The shed door screeches open, outlining a figure who I knew so well. "I can't leave you behind," he says. "It's too dangerous."

I wonder what happened to make him move me. That was our home.

The computer in front of me beeps. I smile as through the window before me another explosion is set off, and I program another for good measure. This quarry will be the best this company has ever dug. As another explosion send shock waves, a fellow worker comes up behind me asking. "Are you sure this is what you want to do?" Another explosion is triggered, blowing up what used to be the town hall.

I grin almost evilly. "Yes of course. Why not?" This is my future.

By **Francesca Raffles**

Year 5, Ravenswood School for Girls

Centennial Park – NSW

Teacher: Sharon Shapiro



The Three Sisters

ONCE a long time ago, there were three sisters. Oliva was the eldest was obsessed with anything gold. Emily the middle child was obsessed with gems and jewels. And Bella the youngest she was the smartest one and she didn't obsess over anything. One day thirty years ago the girls went for a walk and discovered an old dusty bridge with a huge oak tree behind it they decided to walk across it. Cautiously the girls tip-toed across. Then suddenly a huge ghost figure swept out from underneath and said

"How dare you cross my bridge it's mine as it's named after me you fools as it's called the great Mary bridge" Yelled Mary.

"But as you have crossed the bridge I will allow you to ask for one thing." The girls thought hard.

"I want pure gold" demanded Oliva.

"And I want a green gem" demanded Emily.

"Ok but you have to come back in a year

or else" Mary said. The girls nodded and walked off.

"And you little one."

"Invisible shoes please" Bella asked. Mary nodded and shoes appeared in front of her, she put them on and walked away.

A year later Mary was waiting in the oak tree for the girls but they didn't appear so Mary followed the tracks of Emily and Oliva and found them. Mary seized the two girls and brought them to the tree, she brought them to the back and opened the tree which didn't seem to have an opening there. She placed them on to a seat and left to find Bella but she had no tracks. Mary thought long and hard then remembered. Bella asked for invisible shoes she had no tracks so Mary will never find Bella ever.

"I guess she has out smarted me", Mary thought. She went back to the tree devastated.

It is rumoured that Bella has gotten away and that Emily and Oliva are still with Mary in the tree to this day.

By **Evangeline Petinakis**

Year 5, Greenslopes State School

GREENSLOPES – QLD.

Teacher: Mr McCallum



Rain, Rain, Rain!

The murky curtain pulled together
huddling close for secrets.
No one expected the heather
To be the first to get wet.
Then it spread like a contagious virus
from city to desert.
Flowing waves of jelly
soaked the long dried dirt.
Clear pebbles pattered
Lots of windows shattered
The house's overflowed
Slowly it got mowed
Things collapsed in the crumbling building
"Get out, Get out, even the mouse!"
"Dear lord Apollo", as I prayed
"please come to my service"
Streaming down the hills
Apollo raised his sunstick
Light's flooding every corner
Until everything is still

By **Hong Xie**

Year 4,

Wahroonga Preparatory School

WAHROONGA – NSW

Teacher: Mrs Bridget Vardy



THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

I lapsed into the unsettling
silence of reminiscence, recalling
Vietnam's unforgiving history,
ragged from the torments of war.

My nation burned to ashes,
the red sky shredded with gunfire,
shattering my people, my country
in nauseating despair.

Our separation, and hatred for one another poured
fuel onto the burning blaze.

Struggling to strive under political tension,
my people cried in agony, fearing
the stark reality of the voyage ahead
in watery concentration camps.

Future hopes dashed by human inhumanity.

We survivors fled desperately,
leaving behind our loving families.

We waited for an eternity; fear shrieking recklessly
in our minds, the boats floated frailly, trembling
in an unsteady motion, the ominous
ticking of time filled the emptiness
of anguish and heartbreak.
Sailing beyond the horizon,
we hung on the branches of
courage, when that too was on the
edge of drowning. The vulnerable condemned to
fate, so fragile amongst the inevitable
force of pain and loss.

Screaming grew faint, children uttering
heart-wrenching moans, the boat people
at the forefront of incomparable,
endless suffering. The sea desired
to suffocate our minds, the hostile
ocean relentlessly vented its anger,
forever shattering our faith in
the righteousness of the world.
Threats remained prominent.

The unbearable thought of the
shore we arrived on, denying our
presence, dismissing our distress,
casting away our dreams of a future.

Stories of fleeing, desperation,
resistance, hope and longing define us.
Looking back, we are drenched in the sorrow
of our country's restless battle for human rights.

Fiercely we will fight for our vision of a
thriving nation.

A place where
peace and harmony, not fear and poverty,
flourish, and justice encourages opportunities.

Where people are not imprisoned for
being truthful, and unjust systems are
overturned. Where we heal the wounds of loss,
the depth of pain that scars the hearts of
Vietnamese people.

The delicate boats symbolise
our journey to democracy.
Once there, we promise never to give up in our
fight for freedom.

By Kha Doanh (Vanessa) Phung
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