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November 2012
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Carpet Court proudly supports children’s literacy through the Storybook Challenge and Flooring Grants for Schools programs. Almost 5,000 students from more than 290 schools across Australia submitted stories about what they love about their community to win books and a reading mat as part of the Storybook Challenge.

These schools were eligible to apply for **one of four $10,000 Flooring Grants** to upgrade their classrooms and create a functional learning space. Carpet Court would like to congratulate the following schools for winning the $10,000 grants:

- Our Lady of Good Counsel School in Karrinyup (WA)
- St James’ Primary School in Muswellbrook (NSW)
- Our Lady of Lourdes School in Ingham (QLD)
- Port Melbourne Primary School (VIC)

Enjoy your brand new floors!
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Marc McBride

November 2012
The Awards have come and gone and another year is coming to an end. For those in Year 12, congratulations on completing your secondary school education and good luck in your future endeavours.

We wish everyone a happy and safe festive season and see you all in 2013 with more stories and poems than ever before.

**BOOK REVIEW**

**GREYLANDS**

by Isobelle Carmody

Ford Street Publishing

YA PB Price: AUD $18.95

ISBN: 9781921665677

Reviewer: Jenny Mounfield

It has been a week since I finished *Greylands*, but I’ve dithered over writing a review because, frankly, I fear nothing I say will do this book justice.

After the death of his mother, Jack falls into a mirror and finds himself in the greylands where colour, scent and feeling don’t exist. Even sound is a mere reflection of itself. Jack meets a girl he calls, Alice—a girl full of secrets who guards a curious bundle. Before he can learn more, the terrifying wolvers hunt them down and they must flee. According to Alice, the wolvers will always find Jack because he is filled with wanting.

Bouncing back and forth between our world and the greylands—a realm only the wounded can enter—Jack becomes increasingly concerned with how he will ever hope to stay permanently in the real world. Perhaps if he finds the source of his wanting, he’ll be able to get on with his life. Much about the greylands is alluring, but he can’t abandon his sister, Ellen, or their father, who has become a shell of his former self since his wife’s passing. Alice is on a quest to take her mysterious bundle to the grey tower. Still not knowing how to leave the greylands at will, Jack offers to escort her, not realising the role the tower has played in his own life.

First published in 1997 by Penguin, and winner of an Aurealis Award for Best Young Adult Novel, *Greylands* is a story within a story about death, fear, love, loss and all things magical. To call this seemingly simple, yet complex work a story, almost feels wrong. It’s more alive than that. More fundamental.

In her own words, Carmody explains her inspiration in the book’s Foreword:

‘I chose the subject because I was, and am, haunted by the surreal world I entered when I was a child after my father died in a car accident—the feeling that the world had been wrenched out of joint and that nothing worked the way it had before’.

Apart from the obvious, Alice Through the Looking-Glass, *Greylands* put me in mind of Pan’s Labyrinth. While the stories are vastly different, they both have a grieving child at their core. So, too, Alice’s quest for the grey tower has shades of Stephen King’s epic Dark Tower series. Rich with symbolism and emotion, *Greylands* is a treat for the soul that will never grow old.

On a final note, I must share this gem of wisdom on the subject of stories (Jack to his sister, Ellen—p. 188):

‘...stories are like mirrors. When you look in them you see yourself. It turns into your story, no matter who wrote it. And there’s lots of stories in every story.’

Jenny Mounfield is the author of three novels and a number of short stories for young people. She has been a regular reviewer for seven years, both online and in print publications. Her first novel for adults, *The Unforgetting*, is available for download from the Kindle Store.
Meets our book reviewers –
Chloe, Emma, Ava, Sylvia and Hannah,
from Gold Street Primary School
in Clifton Hill, Victoria.
Reviews Coordinator: Meredith Costain

Alice-Miranda in New York
by Jacqueline Harvey (Random House)
This book is great to read every day to entertain yourself.

Alice-Miranda travels to New York because her parents are opening a shop called Highton’s on Fifth. They are having an opening party but things are going curiously wrong. Is this why her father Hugh is so worried? And why does her new friend Lucinda seem so shy about inviting Alice Miranda home?

Only Alice-Miranda can solve these puzzles and mysteries. I really liked this book. I recommend it for ages 8+.

Rating: 10/10 ★★★★★★★★★★★
Emma Yan

Trust Me Too
edited by Paul Collins (Ford Street Publishing)

Trust Me Too is a wonderful book with heaps of fabulous short stories, poems and artwork by 53 authors and illustrators. It is full of fantasy, mystery, comedy and more. The first story, by Kerry Greenwood, is about two friends and one loves mystery and discovery. But when strange things start happening will it be the end of his life or will his best friend save him?

This book is exciting, enthralling and marvellous. If you have this book with you, you will never be bored. For ages 11+.

Rating: 8/10 ★★★★★★★★★★★
Ava and Sylvia

The Emperor’s New Clothes Horse
by Tony Wilson and Sue deGennaro (Scholastic)

The Emperor’s New Clothes Horse is about an emperor who loves to race the many race horses he can afford with the riches he makes. The emperor has won every race except for the Cristobel Cup. He orders a search for the best and fastest race horse in the entire kingdom.

A pair of professional horse trainers come to the emperor claiming to have the perfect horse to win the cup. However Frankie, a boy who lives in the kingdom, thinks their choice of horse is very odd. Will this horse that the trainers say is magical, really be as good as they say? You’ll need to read the book to see whether Frankie is right!

I enjoyed this book because it was entertaining. Recommended for readers aged seven and under.

Rating: 7.5/10 ★★★★★★★✩
Chloe Lewin-McGeorge

Elephant Alert
by Jackie French (Scholastic)

Leo, a boy who can speak to animals but has no friends apart from his guinea pig, finds himself in a difficult situation.

A gorilla turns up at his house and tells Leo that he must come with him. Leo can tell that something’s up. He notices that this is the same gorilla that takes Mozz, the top student from his school, home. Leo decides to follow. When he gets there he realises that he has a challenging task ahead. There’s a huge wave coming to Elephant Island where a group of elephants just won’t move.

Will Leo be able to convince them to go up to higher ground? Or will the deadly wave hit them! This is an excellent book for readers aged 7 to 10 with a taste for adventure.

Rating: 7/10 ★★★★★★★
By Hannah Schmeisser

November 2012
The Day My World Stopped

Yesterday my best friend died in my arms.

Jess had been my best friend ever since she walked up our driveway from the neighbouring farm to our house. That was four years ago. Since then, we have spent every spare minute together.

Every afternoon we would go exploring down by the creek in the bush. We would swim for hours and lay in the shade of the towering gum tree, watching the clouds drift by. As the sun would start to set, we would set off on the long walk home.

On Saturday I had to go into town with my mother, so Jess walked down to the road with me. After closing the farm gate, I gave Jess a big wave and jumped into the car. Mum and I had a long day in town but, finally, we headed for home. I knew that when we arrived Jess would be waiting at the road to walk up to the house with me.

Strangely, Jess was not there, so I walked up by myself.

As night fell, I realised I had to do something! If Jess couldn’t find her way home I would go and find her. I pulled on my clothes and clambered out the window into the cold, dark night. Where would I look? The first place I thought of was our swimming hole in the bush. It was a long way, so I started walking. I walked through the night, staggering around half blind in the dark. I finally was getting close; I could hear the creek bubbling close by.

As I approached I could hear a low, whimpering noise coming from the other side of the stream. That was when I saw Jess lying there, limp on the damp ground. “Oh Jess!” I screamed. She slowly turned her head towards me, her eyes filled with pain. On her leg was an oozing snake bite. I started to cry again. Her only chance of survival depended upon me getting her back to the house.

Very carefully, I picked her up and stumbled forward. “Help!” I screamed as I staggered, “Help!” I continued to carry her throughout the rest of the night, determined to save her life. Dawn broke into a beautiful sunrise. The sun peeped over the horizon lifting the mist from the paddocks. Suddenly, the whimpering ceased and Jess’s twitching body stopped moving. Then, I knew I was too late. The Jess I knew and loved had just died in my arms. I fell to my knees, unable to move.

Shortly after that my parents arrived. They gently took Jess from me and laid her on the back of the ute. Heartbroken, I climbed on and held her as we drove back to the house on that final journey.

Jess was my best friend and the best dog anyone could ever have. Jess is now buried down by the creek, under our favourite tree, where the memories of our friendship will live on.

By Eloise Haigh
Melville High School
SOUTH KEMPSEY – NSW

Just because I wear a headscarf

Just because I wear a headscarf
They think I have no choice
Because I pray five times a day
They think I have no voice

The fact that I speak Dari
Means I can never fit right in
In some ways a sin

When my father walks beside me
They glance at me in shame
Remembering 9/11
Thinking he’s the one to blame

They see my dark complexion
Amongst a crowd of white
Despite the fact I’m born here
To them, I don’t seem right

I don’t wear my scarf with anger
It’s not a burden on my head
To give it up for just a day
I’d rather be shot dead.

By Jaymie Buis
Year 12, Mount Lilydale Mercy College
LILYDALE – VIC.
As the autumn sun melts into the horizon,
A wind stirs the leaves of gold and fire,
Lifting into the air, clearing the soggy ground,
Leaving a lonely dandelion lying in the mire,
This dandelion had been there forever,
Battling every day and every night,
Now it lay in the damp and cold,
Running out of energy; no longer able to fight,
Then the wind picks up to a gale,
The dandelion parts with the ground and joins with the air,
Lifts up under the watchful eye of the moon,
Drifts between a thousand tiny flares,
The mire soon turns to lush rolling hills,
Under a sunrise of vivid orange and strawberry cream,
The very first seed falls from the dandelion,
Carried to the ground by the currents of hopes and dreams,
The dandelion flows on,
Drifting in a tranquil daze,
The clear blue sky now turns to rolling clouds of grey,
The dandelion is shrouded in a wintery haze,
Soon it is drifting by monstrous skyscrapers,
Through an atmosphere choked by tendrils of fume,
Where more seeds fall into the screeching city sounds,
Carried by the foul air that humans will consume,
The raindrops mingle with the air,
Capturing the fumes and clearing a way,
The dandelion emerges from the wrath of civilisation,
To survive just one more day,
The new day brings a chilling, curling wind,
That hurries the dandelion closer to the end,
But where the end stops; the start is just beginning,
Where the seeds have fallen; a message sent,
Over a roaring waterfall; more seeds begin descent,
As the wind begins to die,
A single seed left on the dandelion,
Carried to the ground by the tears a waterfall cries,
Under running water; a final resting place,
The dandelion shines no longer,
But under running water, blooming in its place,
A family of dandelions grow stronger,
Back between the cracks of concrete they grow,
Where humans march alongside them,
Between the skyscrapers of dull and grey,
Their life contained in a thick, vibrant stem,
Back to where the first seed fell on the hills,
Where the currents of hopes and dreams continue to flow,
A mature, bright dandelion boasts with a thick bunch of seeds,
Where a few of them are carried away wherever the wind may blow,
The original dandelion no longer has life,
Is carried by the river all the way to the sea,
But in its place is a trail of its legend,
To remind us of the brave, fighting dandelion it was destined to be.

By Adrian Harper-Gomm
Year 10, Kambrya College
BERWICK – VIC.
You have NO idea what you are doing to the earth's mighty creatures  
If they could talk they'd persuade you not to cut off their marvellous features  
If you were to ask them  
What's on their mind  
The endangered would only beg you to be kind.  
and this is what they would say –

AFRICAN ELEPHANT  
People want my rare trunk and crushing horns  
I really couldn’t ask any more  
But to please stop killing my type  
Even in the endangered afterlife.

BLUE WHALE  
You take my blubber for your oil  
Escaping you is my work and toil  
I am the biggest most gentlest whale  
By doing this you should go to Jail

SEA TURTLE  
I am concerned  
What do you want from me?  
Have my precious shell for an antique?  
Have my body as your food?  
You don’t have the right to intrude.

TIGER  
I live up to my potential  
Yet you imperil my essentials  
You destroy the creatures that I eat  
And for me that means defeat.

PANDA  
My habitat is precious to me  
I’m dying out here CAN’T YOU SEE?  
Bamboo is my vital food  
Without it I will conclude.

POLAR BEAR  
You venture into my icy hub  
Killing all my baby cubs  
You heat my world with your toxic waste  
Melting ice with your great haste.

GREAT WHITE SHARK  
You find us a threat  
Vicious and mean  
But it is YOU that is the killing machine  
We cannot swim without our fins  
We float to the bottom  
And its you that wins.

EVERYONE  
Oh stop killing he or she  
WE are endangered species, DON’T YOU SEE?  
We are not a threat to your world  
Just part of the great Earth family.  
We're no risk to you  
Whether on land or sea  
So, just STOP STOP STOP killing us  
and let us be.

By Molly Waters  
Year 3, Robertson State School  
ROBERTSON – QLD.
Life Lost, Life Gained

His hand lays motionless, cocooned in hers. The soft shreds of moonlight piercing the shadows cast a dim light over his wrinkled face. The faint sound of strained breathing echoes in time with the heart monitor that rests above his bed. His wife sits close to him. Her somnolent head resting on his chest and her hand clutching to his. Her swollen eyes flutter open revealing murky shadows beneath them. Standing, she kisses him gently on the forehead and begins to speak in an anguished whisper. "I love you forever. Till death do us part." A silent tear streams down her pale face as she slowly makes her way to the window. It takes all her might to slide it open, and the lingering smell of anaesthetic is replaced by cool night air. A zephyr blows against her sunken face, silver hair billowing behind her like wisps of smoke branching out in the wind. The man lies frozen, while his mind continues its inevitably futile fight. Subconsciously, his fingers begin to silently stroke the wedding ring that has been fixed on his fingers for almost sixty years. And as his breathing hastens, memories begin to flood his clouded mind...

Light blinds him for a moment, and impetuously short segments of memories begin to play before his eyes. The sound of cries as his red faced mother holds him in her arms. His first step, and his first day at school. Glancing down he notices his hands. Small and plump. No signs of lines or wrinkles. Lost in thought, another flash of dizzying light slices the air and he finds himself in a church. The bells reverberate through the crowded hall, vibrating faintly against the stained glass windows. Looking up he sees her, the girl from down the road stands above him clutching to his. Her swollen eyes flutter open revealing murky shadows beneath them. Standing, she kisses him gently on the forehead and begins to speak in an anguished whisper. "I love you forever. Till death do us part." A silent tear streams down her pale face as she slowly makes her way to the window. It takes all her might to slide it open, and the lingering smell of anaesthetic is replaced by cool night air. A zephyr blows against her sunken face, silver hair billowing behind her like wisps of smoke branching out in the wind. The man lies frozen, while his mind continues its inevitably futile fight. Subconsciously, his fingers begin to silently stroke the wedding ring that has been fixed on his fingers for almost sixty years. And as his breathing hastens, memories begin to flood his clouded mind...

The bellowing sounds of wedding bells evolve into the thunderous roar of gunfire and explosions. He is alone, walking warily through piles of rubble. Snapping and crunching resounding with every stride. The stench of artificial smoke and burnt petrol is inescapable. An unused gun clenched tightly in his shaking hand. He can hear yelling in the distance, where out walks a man. His clothes and face are covered in a mixture of blood, sweat and dirt. The man looks just as afraid as him; he couldn't have been much older than twenty. He didn't have a choice but to shoot at the man, before the man could shoot at him. The memory is now as clear as if it had happened yesterday. He will never forget the moment when the young soldier, so young and full of hope, looked him straight in the eye. Staring into his soul before his hand fell limp by his side.

Closing his eyes, the sound of his heartbeat pulsates through his body. Louder and louder the thumping echoes. Shuddering against his aching chest. Harder and harder breathing becomes as perplexing white light encompasses his vision. Fighting against the arresting light he forces his eyes open, a defibrillator is pressed against his chest as people rush around pushing tubes into his withered body. The girl from down the road stands above him clutching his hand, tears gushing down her face. He stares deep into her eyes, and manages to make out her last words as the white light threatens to pull him under.

"I love you forever. Till death do us part." Her last words are barely audible.

"Goodbye. My love."

He takes one last unstable breath and his heart fights to produce one final beat. The light brightens and slowly his eyelids sink. He is not afraid, but ready to say goodbye and face whatever lies ahead of him.

And as his fingers slump lifelessly from his wedding ring, muffled cries of joy and happiness resonate from a nearby room. Within, a woman holds her newborn child, crying with happiness at this new life she has brought into the world.

By Blake Lovely
Year 9, Mosman High School
MOSMAN – NSW
Want 9,542 friends worldwide?

Join the Club.

With Youth of the Year, Leos and new Lions Clubs forming every day, there’s always new people to meet at Lions.
The sun embarks on its final descent,
The night sky slowly takes hold,
I am worried, what has happened to my Little Bird Heart,
I remember the horrible stories of death I am told.

Suddenly there is a glint of hope,
My Little Bird Heart collapses into a deep rest,
He is exhausted but I know he has found another,
I carefully place him back in my chest.

The sun is high,
When we finally arrive,
At a small house with flowers,
It feels so great to be alive.

I nervously knock on the door,
My knees are so weak I can barely stand,
The door slowly opens and there stands a lady,
She looks down then slowly opens her hand.

There is the most vibrant bundle of white,
Another Little Bird Heart,
I look at the lady, she kisses me,
She is beautiful, and I know this point in my life is just the start.

By Adrian Harper-Gomm
Year 10, Kambrya College
BERWICK – VIC.
You whisper, I hear. You gossip, When I'm near, You backstab, I hurt, You treat me like dirt.

I needed some friends, You were my new mate, Until I discovered, That you were just another weight, On my shoulders you were, Playing me like a fool, But not any more, I am coming true.

Now I am strong, As strong as the sun. The sooner I realised, That better I had become, I stand on my own two feet, You can't drag me down, I have my own life, You will never make me drown.

You whisper, I hear, You gossip when I'm near, You backstab but I don't hurt, You still treat me like dirt, I don't listen any more, No I don't

You are just another waste, Of a fake friend, I will not devote. Goodbye to you now, You aren't in my life, I don't miss you at all, You can see why, So this is what I say, Ta-ta goodbye.

By Eden Buttler
Year 6, Altona Green Primary School
ALTONA MEADOWS – VIC.

Her struggle was a long one
A fight she could not win
A neighbour had just found her
While taking out the bins
He ran over to her body
Which lay there on the road
He tended to her wounds
And spoke his favourite ode
He spoke it slowly, softly
As if to a child in bed
And then from the concrete
He lifted her injured head
Her eyes were purely innocent
She'd done nothing to hurt the world
And yet here she lay so wounded
This unassuming little girl
Her eyes began to flicker
Her arms began to fall
And he knew this girl
Would not last long at all
And in that very instant
She became far distant from most
Nothing more than a memory
A spirit, a soul, a ghost.

By Shannon Allas-Scott
Year 7, Gleneagles Secondary College
ENDEAVOUR HILLS – VIC.

Exhilarated and inclined
I tie my dainty ballet shoes
The ribbons like copper coils
Encircling my electric legs

I grand jete over the timber floor
Quite a poor conductor of heat
While my hamstrings stretch like rubber bands
With endless elastic potential

I perform a perfect pirouette
My arms encompassing my twirl
The centripetal and centrifugal forces
Confirm that I never tumble

I finish with a quaint curtsy
And undo the metal spirals
The battery charged with ballet moves
And science revision too

By Anoushka Kothari
Age 13, St. Paul’s School,
BALD HILLS – QLD.

Ghost

By Oz Kids in Print
November 2012
OPENING the giant golden doors embroidered with sprawling water sprites and winged creatures, he was young, fit and muscled from sparring with his soldiers. With a sweep of his blood red cape he sits on a wooden chair unique in its carefully carved dragons cut into and fierce silver dragons on his armrests. His hair jet black and eyes sunken and sorrowful brown speckled with gold.

Day in day out, he would sit and listen to arguments about whose land was being trespassed on or political discussion. How he yearned to be free of the invisible chains that locked him into place and to go and sail the seven seas. No, he couldn’t because of his royal blood-line flowing in every vein in his body. He would stay ever stuck in his royal chains unless someone had the courage to help him set himself free.

“King James, this is the rebel who knocked out one of our guards” called a soldier with a look of disgust as he pushed a cloaked figure to her knees, her clothes in tatters. “Pull back that hood, you peasant” hissed the guard. James didn’t like how his guard talked to the prisoner as he looked at each person as an equal, even a low life peasant. The hooded figure threw back her hood. There, before him was a beautiful woman with hard blue eyes and messy brown hair.

“What is your name?” he asked. “My name is Jasmine” replied Jasmine, giving him a cold glare. “You have been accused of knocking out one of my guards” he said holding her gaze. “Your punishment is to rot in jail for two years” he ended.

Soon James was down in the cellar unlocking the cell where Jasmine was locked. “Good acting James” whispered Jasmine, giving him a hug with her eyes softening. “The boat will be here in a few minutes” Jasmine added. The pair scurried through the dark and mundane dungeon to a trap door. James went first and James followed and slipped down the tunnel.

“Open the lid, Jasmine” James said with one mighty heave. She pushed open the lid giving way to the silver moonlight. “There she is, your majesty” said Jasmine. In front of them was a beautifully carved wooden ship with Fearless written on its side and a proud dragon’s head on its mast. “She’s beautiful” sighed James, climbing aboard.

Soon they were sailing. Finally, he could live the life he always wanted. His plan to get on to a ship had worked. It took James months but he was finally able to find a ship that was willing to take a stowaway prince. One of his childhood friends, Jasmine had agreed to take him aboard her ship Fearless. Jasmine had broken his royal chains, the ones binding him by blood, and he’d done something he hadn’t done for years.

He smiled at the stars which sparkled like diamonds in a velvet jewellery box. His eyes glistening and his hair ruffled by the cool wind. He was free!

By Manisha Jinali Peramuna-Arachchi
Age 11,
Greenvale Primary School
GREENVALE – VIC.
First Impressions

I grimaced as I eyed the new girl who had just shuffled into our classroom. “What a freak!” I whispered to my best friend Olivia, who nodded and giggled beside me.

“Girls, this is Giorgia”, said our teacher, “she is a new member of our class and I want you all to make her feel very welcome”. She was looking straight at me and Olivia and we quickly turned away. Everyone’s eyes were on Giorgia as she slowly walked over to her seat and sat down. Olivia giggled again. “What is she wearing?! “No idea”, I replied, “but it looks like she’s been dipped in multi-coloured paint!” I sniggered. “What a loser!”

Giorgia was wearing a fluorescent orange, green and purple tie dyed T-shirt, which was partly concealed by a hot pink blazer covered in bits of flimsy white lace. Her jeans were green and flared, with a yellow studded belt holding them up. Her shoes were so bright they hurt my eyes, covered in every colour imaginable and her hair was dyed to match. Smothered laughter came from all over the classroom, and Giorgia turned bright red from embarrassment.

The next day everyone was waiting excitedly for Giorgia to come to school, so we could mock her clothes once more, but when she walked into the classroom there was a sigh of disappointment – Giorgia was wearing plain, everyday clothes and her hair was brown. She had obviously realised what type of clothing normal human beings wore, and was now trying to fit in. Everyone was disappointed, there was no longer an obvious reason for Giorgia to be the target of our bullying, but that didn’t stop us, she was still a freak and a loser no matter what clothing she wore. The title had stuck and there was no going back.

A couple of weeks later, Olivia and I had a massive fight. We couldn’t even remember how it started but in a matter of days we were worst enemies. Olivia was much more popular than me and she convinced everyone to stay away from me and ignore me at lunchtime and recess.

At first I still tried to join in with their games, but eventually it all became too humiliating and I was left sitting by myself. I thought I was all alone, and I spent three days moping and feeling sorry for myself, without looking around me. On the fourth day though, I realised that I wasn’t the only person sitting alone – Giorgia had no friends either. But did I really want to make friends with the weird, freaky, loser Giorgia? I decided I did, it was better than no one, and I didn’t want to baby myself forever.

So the next day at recess, I sat down next to Giorgia. “Hi” I said, “I’m Maddy”. “I know” she replied, “Why are you talking to me?”. “I was wondering if we could be friends”, I answered nervously, what if she said no? Her eyes lit up with joy when I said the word “friends”. I realised for the first time that she had a very nice, kindly face. Her eyes were big and earnest, her mouth was small and solemn, but when she smiled (like she was doing now) it erupted into a huge toothy grin, that comforted me and made me like her a lot. “That would be great!” she said enthusiastically.

I felt comfortable with her immediately, and we started chatting away like we’d known each other for years. I had thought she was a freak, but actually she was one of the most normal people I’d met. She told me that the reason she had turned up in those weird clothes on her first day was because it was National Colours Day, and at her old school they had always celebrated it by wearing colourful clothes to school. I felt extremely bad for thinking that she was a weirdo and a loser and for teasing her and laughing at her. I apologised and she was very nice about it, which only made me like her more. Ever since that day we have remained firm friends, and the girl I once called a freak and a loser now sticks up for me when others do the same to me.

By Maddy James
Year 8F, Genazzano FCJ College
KEW – VIC.
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Terrie Saunders
Creative Net
Country Downpour

Have you ever felt the coolness of a country downpour?
Forever beautiful for both the rich and the poor
Clouds gathering above slowly blocking out the sun
Splashling in the puddles young children having fun
Dressed in waterproof clothing
Never seeming to make a big difference
They always come inside
Coated from head to toe in rich country mud
Have you ever been swimming during a country downpour?
The cool lake, the droplets are its only flaw
Feel the soft cold rain on your face
You could stay there until night takes its place
Swimming out, gliding backwards cutting the smooth surface
Feel the soft wake slowly lapping at your body
Taste the cool sharp taste of freshwater hitting your tongue
You don't get out you'd be all wet and soggy
Have you ever taken a walk during a country downpour?
Every step you take almost trips you over
Turn around and walk back, never
You're cold, you're wet but you don't stop, why would you?
What will you do?
Cooped up all day, staring out of a window
But no, you're out here enjoying the type of entertainment that's free
So why would you have all those games
When you can have rain, that's free you know, no fee

By Ella Andersen
Year 6, Derinya Primary School
FRANKSTON SOUTH – VIC.
Teacher: Mr Williams

A Story

A story is like a piece of imagination
You can hold in your hand
The words flit inside your head
Like graceful butterflies
The pen spins across the page
Just like a ballerina
A story everyone can read
And enjoy the words within the cover.

Characters

A character is part of a story,
Without it,
A story is nothing

A character can do anything
With the help of a writer
Without a writer, a book is nothing.

A writer is vital to a book
She can write anything
with the help of imagination.

Without an imagination
A story is nothing.

Abracadabra

The magician works her magic
While she’s at her writing table
Swishing her wand across the page
I’m sure that she is able
To conjure a story clever
She opens up her mind
And the doves fly high and free
She lets her colours shine

By Matilda Hrotek-Jones
Year 6, Vistara Primary School
Richmond Hill via Lismore – NSW
Teacher: Leah Bryce
**Ambassadors**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meredith regularly presents writing workshops for kids and adults in libraries and schools, and enjoys helping writers create stories based on their own experiences. To find out more about her books, pets and early writing years, visit www.meredithcostain.com.

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

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

If you’d like to find about Jeni’s books or to get some hot writing tips please visit www.jenimawter.com.
CATS make better pets than dogs. I totally agree. Kittens are the most adorable creatures on Earth.

Cats have a much lower volume than dogs. Some dogs bark and bark all day long, while cats only give meows and purrs. Occasional hissing and whining may occur, but it’s sure guaranteed to NOT get a complaint from a neighbour going “KEEP THAT MANGY CREATURE QUIET!” A very good reason to choose cats over dogs.

Cats may have the wackiest ideas an animal could have! From chasing laser pointer beams, to fat cats sitting on couches like ex-husbands, cats can be true comedians. Kittens also like to roll over, whilst dogs need a much larger stage.

Cats are really quite responsible with the term “What goes in one end must come out the other end”. Cats use litter boxes, and there won’t be litter on your carpet. Dogs on the other hand: they can leave things on your furniture and carpet, and make a revolting mess of the back yard.

There is nothing WORSE than stepping in dog poo in your own back yard!

To add to the cleanliness of cat’s rumps, they can also keep themselves clean. Cats have a rough tongue, so, when they lick their fur, it gets rid of any parasites, or fleas. But, dogs... they need shampoo, and GALLONS of water. Washing your dog regularly means an increase in the water bill, and it takes so long. But, cats clean themselves, no fuss, no nothing.

A really good benefit to a feline companion is some of them are able to stow away on the streets in solitude. Dogs are always demanding to be walked, in any weather conditions at all. Cats, though, they usually just sit at the window. But, if they do want a stroll, it’s just a quick trip to the litter box and off they go.

Kittens and cats also do well at “kissing” insects. Cats are natural born bug exterminators. The only words they have for a roach is “Your destiny is immediate termination”. All dogs do is just laze around and let the flies buzz away, then you’ll have to buy all those expensive fly chemicals, and that’s a lot pricier than a cat’s duties. It’s absolutely guaranteed that cats can and will dispose of any bug infestations you have. It’s a lot cheaper than hiring a real exterminator. From crickets to moths, cats will deal with them straight away.

If you’re worried about your friendly little feline while you’re on a getaway, well don’t! Cats can be totally independent on their own. All you need is for someone to pop in and feed them. Your cat may enjoy solitude in darkness. Dogs? Oh, they need absolutely every sort of treatment! From constant grooming, to feeding, to walking, to playing with ... Well, the list is endless. Cats can totally survive on their own (minus the need for feeding).

Another financial advantage to cats is that they’re cheaper to feed than the animals of the canine variety. Cat food comes in tins only an inch and then some long, and only centimetres tall. This clearly shows that cats eat TONS (I use that word strongly) less than dogs, meaning their food’s also a lot cheaper. Dog food cans are nearly a foot tall, and about twice the width of a cat food tins.

So, in summary: they are quieter, cleaner, cheaper, easier to look after, great exterminators, just to name a few reasons. There’s still plenty more why it’s a wise choice to choose cats over dogs. See below!

By Zane Woollett
Year 5W,
Grace Lutheran Primary School
CLONTARF – QLD.

My kitten Ebony using the laptop (this proves cats are smarter than dogs)!
Loneliness
Lost, beyond detection
A pool so deep you cannot see your reflection
A murky, bottomless pool
To go to the bottom you are quite a fool
You curse the wind and snow and ice
So easy as rolling a dice
And yet so hard to complete
With loneliness, it is quite a feat
You can forget about it all you want
But the loneliness
Go away
it shan’t

By Molly Waters
Year 3, Robertson State Primary School
ROBERTSON – QLD.

The Ocean
Waves crashing
Water curving
Wet sand
soggy
white foam
gleaming
in the
sun
Salty air
Fresh air
and
Waves crashing

By Hamish Angleton Lynch
Year 2, Carlton North Primary
CARLTON NORTH – VIC.
Teacher: Cath Blewitt

Marvellous Things
The rushing white water tumbles off rocks,
Into the freshwater pool,
The hot summer sun makes us run from the car,
Eager to leap in and cool.
The hours rush by as we drift down the river,
Chasing the fish deep below,
Splashing and playing, laughing and resting,
Watching the sun hanging low.
As the sun disappears, the heat fades away,
And the water is suddenly cold,
We stumble over the black slippery rocks,
The shadows quickly grow bold.
Traipsing through bush, we all stomp our feet,
Wishing we’d remembered a towel,
Clapping and chanting and keeping the beat,
Our stomachs beginning to growl.
When we get to the campsite, the fires ablaze,
The sweet smell of sizzling meat,
As we unroll our sleeping bags in our domed tents,
It’s impossible to keep it all neat.
After dinner we roast the marshmallows,
Get the guitar and we sing,
Camping with my family, out in the bush,
Is such a marvellous thing!

By Elizabeth Lotfali
Year 9, The Essington School
DARWIN – NT

The Gift
The waves, they crashed upon the shore
With moonlight shining down
It formed a ring around his head
A halo or a crown?
She stood and watched him from afar
To see what would entail
As the light shone from behind
She suddenly went pale
Was he a gift from up above?
Too perfect for this planet?
His visit short and purposeful?
His face was set like granite
His expression was unreadable
His flawless face was empty
The windows to his soul were closed
Suddenly his trance was gone
As though she had clicked her fingers
The moonlight gone, yet she remained
As uncertainty still lingers
His usual self returned once more
Searching in the dark
Wondering where she could have gone
In surroundings which were so stark
She finally revealed herself
His relief was clearly shown
They ran into each other’s arms
What had happened, still unknown

By Laura Best
Year 11, Westminster School
MARION – SA
There once was a peasant who had neither spirit nor soul. The people of the village saw not much of her, she loomed in the shadows. Her eyes were piercing, as black as the midnight sky, and her matching hair reached down to her knees. Amadea was her name, which meant 'God's love', however she did not seem to live up to it. She never attended church, in fact, she was rarely seen during the day; she only went out in the night to search for the leftover food of the rich.

She was sly, unpredictable and everyone called her 'The Dark Soul'. But there was a light inside her, a light that could change the world. Sadly, she was too dark for it to shine through.

In this land, everyone had a fairy as a guardian. These fairies were created from the real person inside, and they were looked up to. Sadly evil loomed in many people and this was shown through their fairies. Amadea's fairy was a mystery. Like Amadea, no one knew what she was like. People spread rumours about her fairy. They all implied she was dark, like Amadea. However, all of their rumours were incorrect as Amadea's fairy was the complete opposite of her. Amadea's fairy was the true Amadea, the Amadea with spirit and the Amadea with light. Sadly, the gods sent Amadea to stay in the darkness, and how she lived up to their expectations! Her darkness eventually led her to her doom.

The palace guards stood attentively in front of the garden gates. In the palace garden were the finest flowers and foods! The tastiest apples belonged to the apple trees in the middle of the garden. It was believed they could restore you to your true self. That is what Amadea was aiming for. She had it all planned out. Stay in the shadows of the walls and sneak past the guards. Go through the small gap in the gate. Run in the shadows and take an apple from a tree. Retreat until past the palace guards and out of sight. Run. Just after the sun disappeared, her plan began.

An owl hooted in the distance as Amadea crept through the hole in the gate. Her cunningness was doing her a very large favour and the guards had no suspicion at all.

‘Willa-Mae?’ She whispered quietly to her fairy as she took a risky break in the shadows of some rose bushes.

‘Yes Amadea?’

‘If I die tonight, will you die too?’

‘Of course I will, Amadea! After all, I am you!’

‘But I don’t want you to die.’

‘Then don’t die!’

Amadea reached the apple tree very quickly. She took a deep breath, closed her hand tightly around an apple and…

‘GUARDS! Get her!’

The guards charged at her, and she ran as fast as her legs would allow her.

‘I am going to die!’ she cried.

‘AMADEA!’ yelled Willa-Mae. ‘DON’T GIVE UP HOPE!’

So she kept running. But it didn’t matter because the guards were too strong and they caught her.

The palace was grand and beautiful, but Amadea could not see it through the tears that welled up in her eyes. The guards took her to the gardener first.

‘We caught this young peasant trying to steal your apples,’ said one of the guards.

‘Send her to the dungeon’ , he said and returned to the book he was reading.

‘But Emmanuel, we don’t even know the crime she committed yet,’ The Queen objected.

‘She attempted to steal an apple from the garden, your Highness,’ said the guard.

‘Send her to the dungeon,’ he repeated.

The Queen wanted to object but she knew that the King had much power over her. She watched as Amadea screamed as the guards led her to her doom.
The dungeon was dark and gloomy, and the guards locked Amadea in so she starved. She was deeply scared, and she wanted to die. She grabbed something sharp and she shakily held it to her chest.

‘NO AMADEA!’ screamed Willa-Mae. ‘Please don’t kill yourself!’

‘This is what’s best for me, to die now and skip the suffering. Willa-Mae, you are my only friend and I love you for helping me when I was down and always telling me to do the right thing. You kept me alive, you showed me the way in and out of things.

You are amazing and you will stay in my heart forever.’

Suddenly Amadea started to glow and how she lit up the room! Willa-Mae was blinded by the light so she rubbed her eyes. Standing before her was a girl with golden ringlets that reached down past her waist and shimmering blue eyes. She wore a white dress made of the finest lace that draped elegantly down to the floor. She looked like a beautiful princess. Her rags, piercing eyes and black hair miraculously disappeared before Willa-Mae’s eyes. Most importantly, so did the darkness that blanketed the light. Willa-Mae smiled. Amadea was now her true self.

She may have still killed herself that fateful night, but all her light shone through and the real Amadea stepped out of the darkness. She felt free.

That was all she ever wanted.

By Jasmin Scriven
Age 13, St. Aloysius College
ADELAIDE – SA

Vagabond night, streaming like woe through wakeful air
Drunk with the wine of wanderlust, pulsing like rage
Over moonstruck mountains and woods in a whimsy
Moving lovelorn lakes in the last spray
Of fine-grained silver from moonlight in a shaker,
Now light splits shadow and the night like a diva
Sings with a great voice to the world once vast and heedless
Now in its still hours, when the saplings cease to play,
The vagabonds to roam, and time itself to tread,
Now in a hush of night the world listens.
Now in the hush the vagabond sings
And its voice, vast, measureless like the universe,
rises into quivering columns of air
soars with velvet eyes and wings
swells above the symphony of tree and wind
throbs, moves in time with the ceaseless tide
A song wordless, shapeless, meaningless
To a world blind, deaf, dumb
Remote from the great scheme of Things,
Remote from the wanderer, the orphan, the outcast, the one who seeks –
The one who seeks and does not find
The one who knocks and is turned away
The one who cries, and is not answered. Hush night,
Hush wind, rain, air – hush world, and listen
Listen to the voice of the wanderer
Listen to the song which takes shape, sound, meaning
In a still world, in a star-hung breadth of sky,
In the listening air. Voice pure like brook water
High as an eagle’s path, deep as heartbreak
Vast as hope. A song of boundless spaces, silent sky
hostile eyes, bolted doors and then,
The wine of wanderlust, the taste of freedom, a cry for home.
Now in its still hours, when the winds cease to mock and the voices to condemn,
Now in a hush of night the world weeps and finds its soul again.

By Evangeline Yong
Age 14, Box Hill High School
BOX HILL NORTH – VIC.
I GET out of the car with mum and dad while looking at a big gallery. Mum says "Ib, this gallery is called the Fabricated World". I see a man at the desk writing people's names down. I tug at mum's arm and say "Mum, could I go in to the gallery?". Mum replies "OK, but don't bother the other people here".

I am walking up some stairs when I see a headless manikin standing and looking at nothing. It is wearing a blue dress and is quite scary. I walk back downstairs to the other room and see a strange fish statue in an underwater picture. I skip my way down to the back and see a big rose sculpture. I walk over to it and see a person looking at the sculpture. I ask him "What's this sculpture?". He replies "I think it's one of Guilletina's works".

I see a little boy trying to grab some petals. He asks me "Could you get me a petal?". I explain to him "You might get in trouble". He runs away.

I walk back up to the top floor and walk over to a big painting. It looks like I could just touch it and it would become a liquid. I manage to just touch it when it happens.

Chapter 2
The Fabricated World

I see a bright flash of light and I walk to the manikins. I think "Strange, I thought there were people here just before" as I walk past them. I go to the desk and the man is gone. Same with my mum and dad.

I go over to the underwater fish and see some footsteps leading into it. I hear a voice say "Come down Ib, come down, I have a surprise for you". I jump in without hesitation and find myself in a weird red corridor. I walk down the corridor and see a green door. I go into that and find myself in a room with manikins standing around. I walk into the weird red rope thing and the manikins start moving. I run to the button on the other side of the room and press it. Just as I press it a woman in a painting comes to life and is crawling at me. I run to the yellow button and press it. The yellow woman comes out of her painting. I finally press the blue button and everything stops.

I walk out and see a hallway and I walk down it then a strange arm tries to grab me. Then another and another! Until I have to sprint down the hallway. I see a door that's blue and I open it and find myself in a room with two paintings. One a grieving bride and across the room from her a grieving groom.

I walk down the hall and see a room. I walk into it and there is a rose on a table. There is a note next to the table. It says when the rose ____ the owner will ____ with it. Strange, I don't know some of the words, I think.

I pick up the rose and walk outside the room. In blood there is a sentence saying you stole my rose, thief on the ground. I walk to the door and see the man from the rose sculpture lying on the ground. I walk over to him and he groans.

I see a blue rose he's holding to that's just about dead. I pick it up and put it in a vase of water. It instantly blooms again. I go to the man and give him the rose and he gets up. He screams "AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHMH STAY BACK!" as he walks backwards.

I walk to him and he says "Could you possibly be someone from the gallery?". He stands up and says "Well we haven't all day to get out of here". I get up with him and he says "My name is Gary you know". I tell him faintly "Mine's Ib". We walk down the hall to a door and I open it. It's got a strange clown statue, a manikin and a tree. I go to the tree and see a ring. I grab it and see Gary staring at the clown. He mumbles "Jeez, Guilletina had a twisted mind".

We walk outside and I put the ring on the ring finger of the hand, and the grieving groom and bride are now smiling and the bride throws a flower bundle onto the ground. I pick it up and walk around a bit. I see a painting that's moving and says pretty flower could I have it? I give it the flower bundle and say thanks and opens its mouth. Gary and I walk inside of it and see a strange room with a painting. I go into a room and see a girl.

Chapter 3
Mary

A young girl pushes me into the door and I see she has blond hair, blue eyes and a yellow rose. Gary runs in and sees her and asks "Are you from the gallery?". She nods. She follows us to the painting. I ask her "Do you have a rose?" and she says "Yeah it's yellow. I like yellow but I like red too and blue the most!". Gary just mumbles "Learn to listen".

I am looking at the painting and I think I can see something coming towards us. Just then Gary yells "DODGE!" and he pushes me out of the way just in time as the stone vines stab up through the ground.

Gary says "I'll look around for a way out, you two should stay here". I walk over...
to a door and it strangely opens. It has a painting with a manikin standing on a door mat. Mary and I go downstairs and see a room filled with random sculptures. I walk over to a box and Mary says “Look, a palette knife, maybe it might cut the vines?” I reply “Maybe, maybe not”. Mary exclaims “Naa, it's just a knife, it wouldn't cut stone”.

We are walking back and the door is locked. I try again and it's still locked. Gary is still at the vines, he yells “Ib, Mary are you okay?” but gets no reply. I guess I'll check the room behind me, Gary thinks. He walks back and sees a room filled with bunnies. I leave the room again and go back into it and it is filled with dolls. I push a bookshelf and it reveals a secret passage. I walk into it and see a weird staircase. Gary runs up and knocks her out. He says “Just wasn’t it?” I nod. Mary and I go downstairs and see a room filled with random sculptures. Mum says softly “Let’s go look for other things you like”. Mum and dad come down to the rose sculpture. Mum says “Do you like this Ib?” I mumble “yes” then dad explains “It probably represents someone's heart”. Mum says softly “Let’s go look for other things you like”.

I drop the note and go with Gary to the plastic house. We open it and inside is a toy box. We walk over to it and look inside but all we see is darkness. We suddenly get pushed in and hear Mary laughing. I hear a crunch then I see black. I wake up and see my red rose on the door mat. Mary and I go downstairs and see the strange bud that wasn’t bloomed I poured the water on. As it sprouted and bloomed I noticed a note inside saying “I’m coming for you, Ib”.

I go outside and look around. I see a blue house and I go over to it and I read on it that to open this house you have to read the pink house’s instructions. We walk over to the pink house and it says you have to get the plastic key to open me. We walk over to the blue house and it’s unlocked. We walk inside and see a bucket. I grab the bucket and I hear someone open the door.

**Chapter 4**

**The Yellow Rose**

I see Mary come into the house but she doesn’t see me and Gary hiding beside the closet. She says “Gary, Ib where are you?” quite faintly then runs out of the room.

She dropped a key on the way out. I pick up the key and go outside to the plastic house but I first fill up the bucket with water from the pond. The strange bud that wasn’t bloomed I poured the water on. As it sprouted and bloomed I noticed a note inside saying “I’m coming for you, Ib”.

I walk down to the rose and see the strange man. I walk over to him and he says “Hello little lady, does this catch your eye?” I nod. He replies “Well I better be going”. He puts on his jacket and mutters “Hmm?” and pulls out mother’s handkerchief. I say “That’s my mum’s!” and then he says “Ib we made it, we’re back!”. He asks me “Do you remember, right?”. I nod. He says “Could I keep this? I mean can I wash it?”. I say “All right” and he walks off.

Mum and dad come down to the rose sculpture. Mum says “Do you like this Ib?”. I mumble “yes” then dad explains “It probably represents someone’s heart”. Mum says softly “Let’s go look for other things you like”.

THE END

*By Neo Moon*

*Year 3/4N, Bellbrae Primary School*

*BELLBRAE – VIC.*

*Teacher – Matt Nalder*

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The creeping warmth crawls up your neck, prickling your face. A lump rises in your throat, and you feel your pulse begin to race. You break a sweat and all turns cold; chills dance along your spine. The shifting mist engulfs you, oblivious to place and time.

Your ears start up a ringing, a whistle of distant trains, As borne on your blood like a poison, it courses through your veins. An ever-changing, living thing, it settles in your gut And heaving, washes over you with waves of nausea.

You stand quivering, eyes darting about and hands beginning to shake While serpentine, it coils around your chest, stifling all sounds you make. It holds you in a vice-grip, forcing your breath into short, panicked gasps. You want to escape, but you’re paralysed; it has you in its clasp.

Icy tendrils caress your neck, slowly wrapping tightly around. You want to cry out but your voice won’t work; you’re helpless to make a sound.

But just before the fog consumes your mind, you find your voice once more And screaming, try to disperse the mist; but alas, Fear has won this war.

*By Hannah Nugent*

*Age 15, Fairholme College, TOOWOOMBA – QLD.*
In 2011 the evil, enigmatic, psychopathic megalomaniac, Maximus Black, exploded onto our shelves in *Mole Hunt*. Trained to kill in a variety of gruesome, yet thoroughly inventive ways, Black is intent on universal domination and will settle for nothing less. But the blacker than black-hearted Black is a master of manipulation and misdirection, rendering those around him blind to his motives—all, that is, except for fellow RIM agent, Anneke Longshadow who's had Black pegged from the start.

Commandeering Dyson's Drop—the location of the Dyson jump gates, which can transport travellers to any point in the galaxy—is part of Black's plan. There are also a set of coordinates to be found, and for the galaxy's sake let's hope Black doesn't get to them first. Thankfully he has competition—and the tenacious terrier Anneke Longshadow snapping at his heels.

Collins has artfully woven a deceptively simple, yet emotionally complex tale of vengeance told through alternating chapters from Black and Longshadow's viewpoints. Black is anything but an evil cliché hungry for power as one might expect. I found myself liking him as much as I loathed him, and I still can't pinpoint exactly why that is. Perhaps it's that he is so utterly alone, and despite his obvious cunning and intelligence, still very much a child.

Anneke Longshadow is everything Black isn't, yet paradoxically she understands him the way no one else can. Equally matched in brains and skill their fight is an eternal one. The contrast and similarities between these two is why this story works so well.

Although set in the distant future, this is a classic and timeless story that will appeal to teens and adults alike. The pace is relentless, the attention to detail spot on and the stakes couldn't be higher.

Jenny Mounfield is the author of three novels and a number of short stories for young people and adults. She lives with her family in north of Brisbane, Queensland.

**Trust Me Too**
Edited by Paul Collins
Intro by Judith Ridge
Ford Street Publishing PB RRP: $24.95
Ages: 11+
Reviewed by Ivana Wright

Finally, a companion to Ford Street's hugely successful 2008 anthology, *Trust Me!* is here. And nothing in the marketplace can match it for either variety or value for money. Set out in no-nonsense easy to read contents pages, fifty-seven authors and illustrators display their wares with every genre represented—including poetry and graphics. With such names as Isobelle Carmody, Ian Irvine, Meredith Costain, Shaun Tan and Bill Condon, I don't see how this book can possibly fail to impress.

SF fans will be hard-pressed to find a more thought-provoking and deeply disturbing tale than Michael Gerard Bauer's, *Oh Brother, What Art Thou?* If it's a ghost story you crave, then Janeen Brian's, *What Goes Around*, or Kirsty Murray's, *The Night Swimmer* are sure to please. There is a full course of fantasy on offer by authors so well known they need no introduction—as well as adventure, crime, humour, romance and horror. I will never see my local Woollies in quite the same light after reading Michael Pryor's, *Shop Till You Drop*. And I mustn't neglect to mention perhaps the most sobering and important inclusion in this anthology: Di Bates' heart-wrenching fact-based story, *Child Slave Crusader*. Forever more I'll be reminded of Iqbal Masih's fate whenever I see ads on TV for ridiculously cheap department store clothing and rugs.

As Judith Ridge states in her introduction: 'There are many more stories and poems, and many more writers within the pages of this collection—too many to name all in this introduction, but all of which offer something to enthrall and to entertain, to challenge and to inspire'.

There is nothing more perfect for today's multi-tasking young person than the short story. Many will vow the short story has died a slow death over the years, but I refuse to believe it. These shorts require little chewing; in fact they can be easily swallowed whole and are every bit as satisfying than the meat and three veg novel. The only downside to the short story is that in many cases they are so tasty we glutinous connoisseurs are left wanting more.

Ivana Wright is a writer, reviewer and consumer of fiction in all its forms.
I look up at the girl's reflection. I stare, however rude it may be. I just can't tear my eyes away from the horror.

Her cheeks are hollow. Mascara streaks her face, but her eyes are dry. The pain and terror still exist but she has no more tears.

The screaming starts. Her hands cover her ears. My eyes linger on the blood stained sleeves of her sweater.

A sleeve falls. I can see her scars. I can see the bloody wounds around her wrist.

Her hair moves. Her neck is revealed. It's covered in hand shaped bruises.

Her hands reach for her neck. I attempt to yell and stop her, But my voice gets caught in my throat.

She squeezes. I feel her pain. I want to tell her that it will be okay.

I stand and walk towards her. She moves towards me as well. Hands still clasped firmly around her neck.

Her lips are turning blue. I try to yell out again. But my voice gets caught in my throat.

I can barely breathe. It's all too much. It shouldn't end this way.

I feel dizzy. I can't see straight but I still walk. It can't end this way, I won't let it.

We both look up. We both take in each other's appearances. We both grimace in pain.

Her hand releases her neck. As she stumbles towards the mirror. Rubbing my neck, I stumble too.

Finally, I'm at the mirror. My hand goes towards the glass and meets with hers. And I cry, I just stand there and cry.

I look up. And I take in the image. Of the monster that I have become.

By Jaida Walker
Year 9, Cerdon College
MERRYLANDS – NSW
I wonder how he feels today.

I run my hands down his majestic body. I feel his pulse, pumping under his pitted skin. I breathe in the time that he's been standing here for; watching and listening to Time drift by. I smell the sweet-slightly-bitter smell of the scarred beauty. I rest my ears on his burning cool cheek, hearing his melodious serenity.

I wonder what he is seeing.
I wonder what he is thinking.

Thoughts fill my head like a tap that won't stop dripping. Drip, Drip, Drip...

He waves at me, as a gentle breeze passes, with those big hands of his. I wave back.

The weather is calm today so he is standing pretty still. Not like yesterday. He was trunkalunkaling, trinkalinkaling and twinkalinkiling all night. Swaying like a drunken ballerina, wriggling like a worm which had sprouted legs. His leaves were shimmying like spiders at a disco, his feet threatening to tear up the dance floor. An arm of his had crashed off last night, so now he looked a bit, lopsided.

I prop my head on my hands, sitting cross-legged, gazing at him from beneath.

I spot a nest up amongst his many arms. A mother bird chirps as she guards her chicks. She's chewing up a long spindly worm for them. The chicks clap their wings about in a feathery cloud of excitement. Eagerly awaiting breakfast; their mouths gaping holes of hunger.

I wonder how he feels about the birds.

I wonder how he feels today.

Perhaps he enjoys long conversations with the birds, about the glorious view, about the weather, about her eggs, about the grasses, about the weeds, about the clouds. They gossip about what old Mrs Grasshopper did to Mrs Cricket, about what the kookaburra got up to with the canary last night. They sit and watch the day fly by, singing songs to each other like old chums. Him rustling and bustling; her tweeting and cheeping away. A good harmony.

Or maybe he loathes the birds and can't wait for them to leave. They are a constant pain that he just can't get rid of. Like an itchy spot on your back that you just can't quite ... reach. How sore his arms must be with that bird's nest weighing him down. How prickly that must be. How frustrating it must be. How irritating it must be. What a nuisance the birds are. That aching, itching feeling shooting around his body. No wonder he was looking a bit pale, his bark, a bit flaky and off colour. Maybe that's why an arm of his had crashed off last night, he was feeling too weak.

I uncross my legs and lie on my back, nestling into the soft grass, like a beetle flipped onto its shell. I wiggle my toes and stretch my arms out.

A leaf of his sails down, glides across the air, does a little w i r l, and then lands gracefully on the lawn. He was turning yellow. And orange. And red. Embarrassed. Angry. Or maybe in love.

A sea of leaves surround him. His leaves are his babies, all grown up. It is time now for them to leave home. How proud. Sad. Nostalgic. Emotional he must be.

In Winter he has battled it out with the angry winds and chills. Come Spring he nurtures them, feeds them, loves them. Come Summer, they wilt and brown together in the blistering heat. And Autumn, at last his babies are ready to venture out into the world. One, at a time.

His babies f l o a t i n g d o w n from his lofty heights, landing with the
slightest whisper. And then waiting. Waiting. Waiting patiently. For a breeze to take them somewhere, some place exotic perhaps.

I get up and walk over to him. His skin is rough under my palm. But silky and velvety at the same time. I reach up my arms and start to climb. One foot at a time, reaching out, moving into the sky.

This is easy for me. I know every single groove, curve and indent from the thousands of times I climb.

…And also, alien sightings have been reported in Victoria. Police refuse to believe that this is true and further investigations are going on. One of the twelve people that saw ‘the strange, glowing thing in the sky’ said that the supposed UFO made no sound. Police and scientists are baffled as to what the object could be. So, that’s all for today’s news. Good day to you all.

I sulked as Matt turned off the radio and smirked at me. “See!” he said, “Even the police don’t believe in aliens, and here you are, reading My Friend the Alien and painting UFOs and green people every day”.

I was confused. Was the thing really an alien?

Just then something light hit my head. It was a green piece of paper with purple spots. It said “HAPPY ALIEN FOOL’S DAY!”

And I grinned to myself as I saw the strange glowing thing zoom across the sky.

By Megha Sheth
Year 5, St John’s School
SCARBOROUGH – WA

By Karen Gan
Year 10, Baulkham Hills High School
BAULKHAM HILLS – NSW

Happy Alien Fool’s Day

The familiar tingle of exhilaration races through me. It’s an allergic reaction. A good one, that gets me every time. From the ground, the waves can drone monotonously. The silly birds seem to squawk their regular, tedious tune. The grasses might sit; as they always do. The dreary clouds seem to gather in their humdrum formation. But not up here, in him. I see what he sees.

Inhaling the insight and realisation that too often eludes us. Over all the rooftops and buildings. The breathtaking understanding hanging in the air. Seeing over the hectic lives of bustling neighbours. Seeing pass the feeble wearies of daily life. Seeing through the trivial traumas us petty people get into.

He sees. Yes, he sees everything.

I wish I could too.
The Life of a Cat

I’m out and about at dawn’s first light,
Quietly stalking the halls of my home
My footsteps unheard and my whiskers twitching,
I’m ready for another day to hunt and to roam

I ponder upstairs to wake up the family,
Cautious of creaks and cracks in the floor
Meowing loudly so I know I’m heard,
I wake up the sleeping family of four

Tangling myself around their legs,
I let them know it’s another day
I race down the stairs avoiding a cuddle,
Twisting and turning out of their way

At last my meal is put down before me
I gobble up what’s on the plate
I stretch before I wander outside
And jump onto the old front gate

I prowl along the picket fence
Choosing my footing with utmost care
I keep one eye on the birds that pass
And enjoy the crisp morning air

The sun rises higher as the day drags on
I squeeze myself into a hidden gap
I lay my head upon my paws
And close my eyes for a midday nap

I wake up to the sound of laughter
Coming from across the lawn
I leave my hidey-hole behind
And slowly stretch and yawn

I slept until the afternoon
Now dusk is coming in
As I reach the house I smell my dinner
Coming from the tuna tin

The stars come out as night-time falls
And I am ready for bed
The children give me night-time kisses
As I snuggle down to sleep with a tummy well fed

It’s the life of a cat that can’t be beaten
So calm and relaxing and slow
No boundaries or limits to stop you
No control over where you go

Dedicated to my gorgeous ginger cat Gus
who lives the life of Riley!

By Imogen Biggins
Year 7,
Sydney Secondary College – Balmain Campus
ROZELLE – NSW
I T IS thick and worn, the leather-bound book which she gently places before me. Her fingers caress the cover, her skin as aged as the leather, yet more wrinkled and discoloured. She smiles at me eagerly, her eyes brimming with joy. Her silent lips mouth at me, encouraging me to open the book.

I do.

It is a photo album and as I stare at the first page, I struggle to recognise any of the young, beaming faces that grin up at me. I scrutinise the pictures, but I can't place a name on anyone. To me, they are just groups of happy children, playing in the piazza of a small village.

And then I see it. One of the girls is wearing a gold chain with a round locket. I glance at my grandmother, pointing to the little girl. She smiles, the skin around her eyes crinkling and folding until the irises are almost lost. She fumbles in her dressing gown for a moment and tugs at the golden chain around her neck, revealing the locket. It spins slowly, the chain winding and unwinding, as she holds it up for me to see and the sunlight shines dully on its fingerprint-covered surface.

The girl in the photograph is thin, but looks healthy. Her long hair is pulled into a plait that hangs over one shoulder to fall to her waist. Barefoot and wearing a flowered sun dress, she looks so different from the mute woman beside me. Except the eyes. They share the same intelligent hazel eyes, still brimming with the joys of an innocent childhood.

On another page there is another photograph of the girl, though she is older. Her hair is still long, but now she has a fringe and wears a fifties-styled dress, buttoned to the neck with sleeves to the elbows. She is posing now, sitting straight-backed on a chair with her hands on her knees, against a white backdrop with a flower pot beside her. Her face is passive, grave even, but it is in juxtaposition to her twinkling eyes.

Several photographs later, she is standing on the docks, a large ship behind her bearing the name La Roma. She is wrapped in a thick coat, her gloved hands clasp a battered suitcase. In another photograph, she reclines on a deck chair on the ship, hair loose and feet clad in sandals. A month later, judging by the dates scrawled below the photographs, she stands in front of a brick house – her aunt’s home in Merrylands, I think, if I remember correctly. Later again, her hair is short; she is a sophisticated woman standing beside her fiancé.

I look up at my grandmother and she beams at me. What do you think? she seems to ask.

“Eri una ragazza bella, Nonna”, I tell her. “You were beautiful.”

She blushes – yes, even the elderly blush – and gestures for me to turn the page.

I gasp. Wedding photos.

Outside the small church, walking down the aisle, saying her vows – she is radiance personified and I can’t help the tears from welling in my eyes. For the first time, I am seeing my grandmother as she was when she was nineteen. She dances at the reception with my grandfather, seemingly oblivious that they are amidst a tide of drunken uncles and joyful aunts throwing streamers and confetti over the newlywed couple. In another moment, she has glanced up at the camera and her cheeks are flushed with the joy of the day. The last photograph is the one that wrenches my heart. My grandparents, standing together, facing each other and clasping hands tightly. He must have said something to her, because she is giggling, head turned slightly to mask her embarrassment or delight. My grandfather just smiles, watching her face intently.

As I flick through the rest of the album, pausing on each page, the rest of their life is revealed. Moving into the house at Greystanes; the birth of my first uncle; tombola, or bingo, at Zio Guido’s house; Christmas lunch, the family gathered around the table gesturing animatedly; my mother as a baby, then a toddler, then a child.

I realise that I hold my grandmother’s history in my hands. The beaming village children, nestled safely in the hills of rural Italy, have a new meaning. I have gained an insight into what my grandmother was – the child, the teenager, the young woman she was before she lost her hearing, before she was rendered mute. Her journey to Australia, her love, her children – it’s all here in this one album, meticulously preserved.

I carefully close the album and grasp it tightly before handing it back and placing a soft kiss on my grandmother’s cheek. I feel enlightened, uplifted, because now I know her history and it’s my history as well. I am the grandchild of that beautiful, blushing woman, and I am so proud.

By Talia Walker
Year 12, Cerdon College
MERRYLANDS – NSW
SHE stared, and immediately wished she could sink into the ground. The roller coaster was beyond imagination, and Laura was next in line along with her friends Timothy, Matthew, and Alice. All were excited except Laura, who stared at the loops in the thrill ride. She would hate to admit it, but she was terrified right down to the bones in her chest.

“Next!” A burly man waited for the four of them to step into the falcon themed coaster. They all shuffled forward, but Laura hesitated before stepping in. “Don’t you want to do another ride first?”

“You kidding? I wanna go I wanna go!!” Timothy was jumping up and down in protest. “TIMOTHY!” Matthew gave him a look. Tim stopped talking. Matt turned to Laura.

“Laura, do you want to stay while we go? If you’re scared...” Laura noticed his arm around her shoulder. She hated to admit that she was scared. “No... Umm... I’m fine. I’ll go... I mean... Well, we are supposed to be enjoying ourselves right??” Matt didn’t buy it, so she stepped inside the coaster and sat down next to him with the others.

The man controlling the roller coaster pushed a few buttons, then swung a microphone towards himself. “Please take any personal belongings and place them all into this box.” He passed the box to the children and they put in their belongings. “Was the microphone really necessary?” Timothy asked. The man ignored him. “Enjoy the ride”, he said, then reached out and pulled a lever.

Laura was scared. She didn’t want to look down, COULD NOT, but she somehow managed to peer over the edge. She shrieked. Then suddenly, as the coaster was about to go down the hill, she wasn’t scared any more. She wasn’t on a roller coaster, she was on a falcon.

The falcon was a brilliant white with shards of black feathers scattered in a luxurious cross-hatch pattern down its back. Its beak was a golden reflection of the sunlight in the sky and it had a black tip. Its eyes were pools of murky dark brown with a dull hazel iris on each one. It spread its wings and flew up into the sky performing death defying loops and spins through the air. Laura was having the time of her life.

The roller coaster pulled back into its little station and the four got off. “I wanna go on again!” Laura was excited. She had conquered her fear and was feeling like she had been washed by rain and dried by the sun. She was buzzing with pure excitement.

“Let’s go in the haunted house”, Laura was over her terrifying feeling from the start of that roller coaster. The others stood and stared at her, amazed at her strange transformation. “All right! Let’s go!” Matthew was smiling at her. That felt good. He never smiled unless for something special. “Cool. This will be awesome!”, shouted Alice. She knew that Laura was scared and she was proud of her for fighting the fear. Timothy stared at Laura.

“Are you guys sure you wanna do the haunted house? I mean... Well...” Timothy stared straight at the haunted house. He would hate to admit it, but he was terrified right down to the bones in his chest.

By Matthew Shaw
Year 7, Aitken College
GREENVALE – VIC.

By Sarah Merry
Year 12, The Kilmore International School
KILMORE – VIC.
I am hail, I attack the Earth with all my might
battering the ground like a machine gun.
Children watch in wonderment and awe,
they come out to play with me
but then I shoot at them, sharp bullets
that pierce, make them cower, retreat.

I am like a meteorite
descending from the heavens at speed,
when I make contact with the ground
I burst and break,
I rest there, in fragments
like a shattered mirror.

My remnants cover the land
in a white blanket,
and the sun shines down
making me glisten and gleam
like millions of tiny diamonds
until I melt away to a slow death.

By Sunny Mathur
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA

ONE sunny spring day, a little girl
named Izzie was playing with her
favourite teddy bear named Rosie.
Izzie was a 7 year old girl with long wavy
blonde hair, and she had blue eyes the
colour of the ocean. She has an older sister,
called Emerald and a younger brother
called Alex. They do not often fight but
when they do it is pretty intense in their
household.

It can be pretty hard being the middle
child, as Emerald gets a lot of attention
because she is the eldest child, being in her
last year at school mum and dad are always
going on and on about how important
her exams are. When Izzie is getting told
off for being too noisy, it sounds like this
“Izzie! Stop making so much noise, your
sister is trying to study, you know how
important these exams are, and the results
will determine which College she will get
in to. So keep the noise down!” Blah blah
blah she hears it all the time.

As for young Alex, everyone keeps saying
how cute he is, and how adorable every
word is that comes out of his mouth. He
can do nothing wrong. Izzie feels like she
is always getting into trouble and being
blamed for what Alex has done. He never
seems to get into trouble and it’s just not
fair!

So… On this sunny spring day Izzie and
her family were down at the local park
having a picnic and a good time. While
mum and dad were getting the food ready
Izzie was playing with her favourite teddy,
Rosie, who comes on all the family outings.
Izzie had just had a fight with her sister and
brother and now they were not speaking
to each other and had been sent by dad to
separate areas of the park to think about
their actions.

Izzie heard a groan, and looking down at
Rosie, thought she saw her blink. Thinking
the sun was playing tricks on her, she
looked down again at her favourite teddy,
“How are you doing? Why are you not playing with the others?” she said.
For once in her life Izzie was speechless!
She tried to speak but all that came out was
“I am alive, so why aren’t you playing
with the others?”. Izzie was just about to
answer when her dad yelled out “Lunch
is ready!” so Izzie started to walk back
to the picnic area to have lunch. For
lunch it was delicious hot dogs,
and as soon as Izzie saw the hot dogs she
started to run as fast she could to get the
first one as dad’s hot dogs were the best.

As soon as she had finished her lunch she
ran back to the shady tree she was at before
lunch and sat down again, then she started
to talk to Rosie, asking her how she was
able to talk but Rosie didn’t talk back. Then
all of a sudden a bright light appeared,
then she realised that she was still in her
warm bed and it was just a dream, but
every time she looks at Rosie she wishes
that she would talk.

By Caitlin Howell
Age 10, MINDARIE – WA
Bronte walked her fingers along the rough sandstone walls of her holiday home. She turned into the courtyard and stopped to pick the ripe fruit that was now covering the trees. As she peeled the skin gently off her mandarin she continued on her walk, heading to the grand entrance at the front of the house. She paused at the door and glanced wearily up at the sun, which was now beating down hard on the island. Her eyes watered but she wiped them clear as she turned the handle on the old front door. She stepped indoors, enjoying the cool air that replaced the heat from outside.

Bronte had spent the last week or so on the island, visiting her grandmother. Most of her holiday had been spent lazing around in the heat before making it out to the beach in the early afternoon. Her grandmother’s house was large, with big spacious rooms that were colourfully furnished. Every room had some interesting knick-knack to be found but the room that interested Bronte most was the small attic, stuffed with boxes full of old memories.

The day dragged on as Bronte drifted from room to room. Her grandmother was napping and her mother and father had gone out for lunch. They were all supposed to go to the beach that afternoon, but two hours was a long time to wait and waiting wasn’t something that interested Bronte much. She peered at the clock, balanced precariously on the sideboard. She knew she would have to find something to do so she climbed the stairs and poked her nose into each room, hoping to find something exciting.

After about an hour of snooping, Bronte found herself standing in front of the attic door. It was a large white door that had the paint peeling at the corners. A small creak escaped as she pushed it open. She looked behind her, half expecting to see her grandmother, but when the sound of snores returned she ventured in further. The room was stacked high with cardboard boxes. Poking out of each box were photo frames, postcards or cracked leather journals.

Bronte lifted down one of the boxes and blew on the lid, sending dust particles flying. She coughed and spluttered as she read the label. The word ‘history’ was written on the top in delicate letters. Bronte sat down on an old wooden chair and started picking through the items in the box. She slowly pulled out picture frames and postcards, travel journals and autographs, all with her grandma’s initials. Soon, Bronte found herself sitting amongst a sea of old memories. Time passed as she puzzled over the memories, trying to understand the island’s history.

She suddenly heard her grandmother’s voice calling. Bronte quickly stuffed her findings into a bag and flew down the stairs. She flung her bag on to her bed before racing down the next staircase. She was in quite a tizz by the time she finally found her grandmother in the dining room. Her grandma greeted her with a big hug before stepping back to look at her sweaty granddaughter.

Bronte sighed and picked up her grandma’s hand. She led her up the staircase, only stopping to pick up her bag from her room. When the pair reached the attic, they both stopped. Bronte felt her grandmother’s grip tighten and breathing speed up. She gently opened the door for the second time and quietly pulled her grandmother after her.

When Bronte’s parents arrived home they called to their daughter. When she didn’t answer they wandered upstairs. As they drew nearer to the attic, the sound of laughter could be heard from inside. Bronte’s parents exchanged smiling glances before quietly tiptoeing back downstairs, leaving the amateur historians to their work.

By Imogen Rebecca Biggins
Sydney Secondary College – Balmain Campus
BALMAIN – NSW
Teacher: Miss Anna Bullock
The YoungAtArt website and the Young Australian Art Awards are an initiative of the Children's Charity Network. All entrants must be no older than 18 years of age or attending either a primary or secondary college. There are 4 categories: Painting, Drawing, Photography, Computer Art. There are three age groups: Junior (Prep to Grade 4), Middle (Grade 5 to Year 8), Senior (Year 9 to Year 12).

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

To do this you will be required to sign up in order for you to have the access to submit artwork. If you or your school do not have access to digital imaging, you may send a copy of your artwork to Young at Art, PO Box 267, Lara, Victoria 3212. Further information is available online.
I looked at my bare hands, which were red from all the farming I had been doing since my father had gone gambling, spending at least half of our family’s hard earned money. We had been forced to mortgage more than half of our farming land to a wealthy landlord, leaving us with only 3 hectares of land, with which we used for growing crops, mainly corn and bok choy. Once a day, my family had a meal of rice gruel, and every day, our portions seemed to get smaller. “Wei Shin!” A familiar voice broke my trance. I looked up to see my little brother running towards me. Glad of a break, I straightened my back and stretched my tired arm muscles. “Father wants to see you!” he cried. My brow creased, unsure of what my father wanted. Ever since he had started gambling, he had become very unpredictable.

On the walk back, I attempted to make myself to look more presentable. As I combed my dishevelled hair with my fingers, I wasn’t too surprised to find insects and small sticks tangled in the mess. My shirt had a faded pink butterfly paint was peeling off, exposing the wood beneath. My family grow smaller and smaller until I was left corner and I stared at her. I hadn’t had a chance to look at her closely, and I was astonished to find my father talking to an elderly woman, dressed in an expensive gown that seemed to sweep the floor as she walked.

My father gestured to me, telling me to come quickly. As I walked towards him, I smelt the overpowering jasmine scent floating from the woman’s fragrance and coughed. My father glared at me with stone eyes, then continued conversing with the lady, speaking louder so that I could hear. “How much are you willing to pay?” he said in his usual loud, deep voice. The woman replied almost immediately. “Lao Fan has agreed to pay 1000 Yuan for the girl and not any more.” Father made a gruff noise, but the woman didn’t even flinch. “Fine, I’ll take the money”, he growled. A man dressed in a black gown suddenly hurried out of a carriage I hadn’t noticed before. The man was carrying a large brown suitcase, with which he presented to my father. He opened it with a loud click and started counting. I caught a glance of what was inside and gasped. There was enough money in there to feed my family for a whole month! Father made a slight nod and closed the suitcase. “Father, what are you doing?” I asked in a whispery voice. My Father suddenly looked a bit uncomfortable. “I don’t have all day”, snapped the woman. “We shall begin packing now”, replied my father.

He led me into the hut, where he sat down. A few awkward minutes passed until my father finally stood up. “I have decided to sell you to Lao Fan, a wealthy man, who will carry you to Southern China by boat to sell you to a household to work as a servant”, he announced, looking nervous and fiddling with his moustache. I stared at him, disbelievingly. “It is for your own benefit”, Father added. I sat on the haystack, speechless. I pinched myself, hoping that this was all just a horrible nightmare, but it wasn’t. It was real. “I’ll work harder and eat less”, I said, crossing my fingers, “if you let me stay”. Father’s eyes began to harden. “Do as I say, girl, pack your things and get ready to leave.” He stood up and walked away stiffly. It took me a few minutes to pull myself together. I shuttered, then stood up and began packing into my threadbare bag that hung from the woman’s fragrance and smelt of rotten fish. “DON’T BACK AWAY! PAY SOME RESPECT TO YOUR MASTER LAO FAN!” I jumped. His voice seemed to shake the entire ship. “Good morning Master Lao Fen”, I said trembling. Lao Fan seemed to go red all over and smoke nearly came pouring out of his ears.

“LAO FAN! THE NAME’S LAO FAN YOU STUPID GIRL!” He gestured me to move on, using stiff actions. I quickly walked away, shuddering. As the sun began to set, I was awoken by the sound of shouting. “Get up, you lazy girls!”

I immediately recognised the voice as Lao Fan’s judging by the harsh words. I yawned and stretched my arms. We halted to a stop and I stared out of the foggy windows. We had arrived at a small port, where different ships departed. The man opened the door for me and I stepped out, carrying my bag. He led me to the smallest ship, and told me to get aboard. As I slowly trudged up the plank, I spotted other girls lining up. A man was inspecting each girl and telling them to pass on. I walked into line. As soon as the man stood in front of me, I backed away. His foul-smelling breath was disgusting and smelt of rotten fish. “DON’T BACK AWAY! PAY SOME RESPECT TO YOUR MASTER LAO FAN!” I jumped. His voice seemed to shake the entire ship. “Good morning Master Lao Fen”, I said trembling. Lao Fan seemed to go red all over and smoke nearly came pouring out of his ears. “LAO FAN! THE NAME’S LAO FAN YOU STUPID GIRL!” He gestured me to move on, using stiff actions. I quickly walked away, shuddering. As the sun began to set, I was awoken by the sound of shouting. “Get up, you lazy girls!”

As the sun rose into the sky, I was awoken by the sound of shouting. “Get up, you lazy girls!”

I immediately recognised the voice as Lao Fan’s judging by the harsh words. I stretched and yawned, sitting up.

I quickly walked outside, and spotted a line of girls. Large men and women were inspecting each child. As I joined the line, I tried to shield myself from the sun’s bright glare. A few minutes passed until a woman started to walk towards me. “Do you know how cook?” she asked. I nodded,
not wanting to be the last few girls left. "I’ll take this one!" announced the woman. She paid Lao Fan and led me off the boat, gripping my arm strongly. As I walked along the street, I noticed different shops all lined up in a row. Bakeries filled the air with a heavenly scent and the horse’s hooves added a rhythmic beat to the atmosphere. After a few minutes, we were standing in front of a large mansion. The lady led me inside, where I was welcomed by the warming wood fire, positioned in the right wall. The lady showed me around. The mansion seemed more than ten times bigger than my family’s hut at home!

I began unpacking my bag in my room, once the woman was finished with the tour. I hung up my clothes and quickly stuffed the jujube into my mouth. Yum! After I had finished, I explored my room. It had a toilet, a sink, and even a shower! At home, we had to wash ourselves in the river, we had to wash ourselves in the river, as the kind lady had herself. “My name is Pei Wen, but you can call me Cook Wen. I am getting old and need support from someone, so I have hired this house is owned by the wealthy family of the Huan. I am getting old and need support from someone, so I have hired you to help me.” I sighed with relief. At least my mistress wasn’t a cranky person. “You will learn how to cook fancy dishes when there are parties, or normal dishes for a usual day. Tonight there is nothing special going on, so we are going to cook grilled and marinated kangaroo meat, which emitted a lovely aroma. “Well, dinner’s ready!” the cook said.

We dished the meat onto six plates, one piece of meat cut down to a round circle on each plate. We piled the noodles high on the plates and rang the bell so the maids would come down to get it.

When the maids arrived, they stared at me rudely. They were roughly the same age as me but they looked much neater than I did, their hair was tied into two plaits and their clothes were spotless. I blushed and looked down to the ground, ashamed. As soon as they left, I sat down and asked Cook Wen a question. “What are we going to eat for dinner?” The cook smiled. She gestured to the leftover meat and noodles. “We are going to eat the bits of leftovers.”

I jumped with joy. I had never seen such an amazing dish in my life, let alone eat it! As we sat down, enjoying our dinner, I spared a thought for my poor family, who would be eating plain rice gruel if they had anything at all. The egg noodles were delicious and the meat, even though it was the leftovers, was scrumptious. After dinner, I brushed my teeth and went straight to bed.

Life quickly fell into routine, cooking became a second nature and I loved it. Every Monday Cook Wen and I went to the market, to buy the freshest produce we could see. Every day, I thought of my family, hoping they were having a better life than what they had before I had left.

As I arrived I saw a bunch of bok choy, some cloves of garlic and an onion. Even though the kitchen seemed empty, I felt the presence of something alive. I knew my skills were being tested. If I wasn’t good enough, I would probably end up as the kitchen scrub, and I didn’t want that to happen! I washed the bok choy, garlic and onion and set them on a chopping board. Most of the tools were familiar to me, but there were some that I would have to learn how to use. My Grandmother had taught me how to cook basically, so I knew how to wash, cut and cook, but I wasn’t used to having a large oven, and I wondered what it might be used for. I cut the bok choy and separated the stem from the leaves, and then I chopped the onion. As I peeled and diced the garlic, I noticed that a wok was ready on the stove. I turned the heat up, and added some of the olive oil that sat next to the chopping board. As soon as the oil started to bubble, I threw in the onions and garlic. The wok began to sizzle and a delicious aroma filled the air. My stomach rumbled, making me realise that I was hungry. I hadn’t eaten since yesterday and the afternoon sun shone brightly. After a few minutes, I threw in the bok choy and added some Chinese cooking wine. As the vegetable started to shrink, I added some soy sauce and poured it all into a large plate I had found in one of the cupboards. I placed a sprig of mint on top from the shelves to finish the dish.

As soon as I had finished, I washed the wok, spatula, knife and chopping board, and placed them on the drying rack. Suddenly, the kind woman was in front of me, smiling with bright eyes. "Well done! You passed! "She announced, "Now let us celebrate with a meal of bok choy!" I smiled for the first time I had in a long period of time. As we ate, the lady introduced herself. "My name is Pei Wen, but you will call me Cook Wen. As you can see, this house is owned by the wealthy family of the Huan. I am getting old and need support from someone, so I have hired you to help me.” I sighed with relief. At least my mistress wasn’t a cranky person. “You will learn how to cook fancy dishes when there are parties, or normal dishes for a usual day. Tonight there is nothing special going on, so we are going to cook grilled and marinated kangaroo meat, which emitted a lovely aroma. “Well, dinner’s ready!” the cook said.

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Chapter 1 – The First Sighting

Kaitlyn couldn’t bear to look. Her brother Thomas was about to tear the head off her beloved doll right in front of her eyes! “Please don’t, Thomas! You know mama won’t be able to afford another for me”, she begged. Kaitlyn knew that her pleas and facts weren’t even going to be considered by him, though. There was no hope of saving her precious Cathleen now. He started to pull!! Kaitlyn fell to her knees, covered her face and started to weep. She knew she shouldn’t cry over such a little unimportant doll but she couldn’t help it. After a few seconds Kaitlyn looked up. Thomas hadn’t pulled Cathleen’s head off. He was looking at something on the ground next to the porch.

Kaitlyn didn’t quite know what he was seeing though. “Is it a bird?” she thought. Something was lying there. It looked rather like a huge overgrown eagle. But the strange thing about it was that it had a beak that looked like a toucan’s! You couldn’t really see what colour it was because it was like a shadow. “What do you think it is?” she whispered. Thomas didn’t reply. He couldn’t speak, for it was a strange thing to see outside your front porch and you mustn’t blame Thomas for not being able to answer. Kaitlyn seeing her chance, gathered her wits, ran over to her brother and grabbed Cathleen from his hands and clasped her to her breast. She was glad to have her precious doll back. When she turned around she couldn’t see the strange creature anywhere. “Where is it? Where has it gone?”

That night after Kaitlyn had said her prayers and went to bed she thought, “What was that strange bird on the porch today! If it even was a bird it looked more like a shadow of some sort. Could it have been a great overgrown eagle? No, it couldn’t be, its beak was too large for an eagle… unless the shape got muddled up in the shadow! That does happen sometimes though… I’ll think about it in the morning”. And with that she fell asleep.

Chapter 2 – Meg

“Cock-a-doodle-doo!!!” It was six in the morning and Kaitlyn had to get up. She wasn’t allowed to sleep in. She quickly jumped out of bed and got dressed. She put on a white dress that had blue roses all over it and a light blue trim with white polka dots. Over the dress she put on a lovely bright red jumper that had been knitted by her mother, walked down the stairs leading to the rest of the house and went to the kitchen.

Her mother, a kind lady, was busy making breakfast for everyone. “Breakfast ready yet, Honey?” called Kaitlyn’s father from his room. “Almost, dear!” mother called back. “Kaitlyn, please come here and help me set the table.” Kaitlyn did what she was told for she had grown up in a place where it was unheard of to disobey your parents. She set the table as fast as she could because she was very hungry and wanted to get out of the house quickly to finish her chores and play. “Well Kaitlyn, you’ve done an excellent job of the table. And my, how fast you’ve done it too! I could never have done it so quickly myself. Thank you for helping”, said her mother. She often said things like this to Kaitlyn and Thomas and their Pa.

As they were all eating Kaitlyn decided to tell her father about the strange thing she had seen yesterday evening. “It was so queer, Papa. It was like an eagle but much bigger and its beak was the weirdest thing of all! Its beak was long and thick! What do think it was?” Her father and mother stared at each other for a moment as if they where pondering whether to answer or not. They weren’t even going to be considered by them. For all we know you could be a giant eagle with a long and thick beak! It can’t be true!” said her mother. Kaitlyn was astonished that her parents didn’t believe her. She would never lie to them. She quickly finished her food and rushed outside to milk the cow, Meg.

As she walked out to the barn she saw Meg, their only cow, pop her head out from behind the barn door and give a loud welcoming “Moooo!!” Meg was a sweet cow that always let anyone milk her and was always waiting for Kaitlyn just inside the barn door. Kaitlyn couldn’t help smiling when she saw Meg. She was the sort of cow that made everyone smile. She had wonderful big eyes that were the colour of the sea and big spots of brown all over that looked like someone had painted them on her!

Kaitlyn grabbed a large silver tin bucket and walked over to Meg and started milking her. Suddenly Meg started to run all around the barn! The milk in the bucket went everywhere! Kaitlyn stood up and tried to get Meg to settle down, but she wouldn’t. “Stop Meg!! Slow down girl! Slow down!”

Then something terrible happened… a huge bird as big as an elephant flew in through the barn door and grabbed Meg from around the belly and started to fly away with her!! Since she was such a heavy cow though, the bird had to fly close to the ground at first until it got used to such a heavy load. Kaitlyn immediately saw that it was the same bird from yesterday! But this time it didn’t look like a shadow as it did then. It was brown and its beak really was like a toucan!!

Chapter 3 – Taken

Kaitlyn ran as fast as she could towards the strange bird and grabbed hold of Meg’s leg. She pulled and pulled with all her might trying to make the horrible bird let go, but it was no use!

The bird started to fly high! Kaitlyn’s feet no longer touched the ground! Three feet, six feet, eight feet high! Up and up they went until they were at least seventy feet off the ground! Kaitlyn was terrified! She had never been, much less even seen anyone so high in her life!! She put her hand on Meg’s back and pulled herself on top. She was still dreadfully scared but not as much as she was when she was hanging from Meg’s leg!

She could now see for miles in any direction. If she looked behind her, she could see her little farm house and barn getting smaller every second. If she hadn’t been so scared she might have enjoyed
to the feast.” With that she flew away before Kaitlyn had even gotten a chance to plead for Meg’s life again.

Chapter 4 – The Giant of Walls

Poor Kaitlyn was left alone in a country she didn’t know. She couldn’t go home for she didn’t know the way, and she had to try and save Meg from being eaten anyway. All she knew was that the kind hearted Toukeneye had flown towards the north, so that was the way she had to go.

Off she trudged, not knowing where she was going. Every time she thought she must be close and it must just be over the next hill she found out she was wrong.

After a long time Kaitlyn came to the edge of a dark forest, but she kept going. Kaitlyn walked for hours. It must have at least been 7:00 p.m. when she finally saw a twinkle of light in the distance. Although she was exhausted, she ran. She felt sure Meg was still alive and was counting on Kaitlyn to save her.

As she got close to the light she saw that it was really a fire. She also saw a crowd of Toukeneye gathering around it. Kaitlyn could not see Meg! She walked around the outside of the clearing until she saw a path leading out to a cave that was covered over with tree logs. “That must lead to where they are keeping Meg!” Kaitlyn thought. She quickly went around and looked through a crack.

Meg was inside the cave! “Meg!! You’re alive!!”

“Moooo!!” she replied. “Shhhhh!! Don’t make a sound, Meg, or they will find me, and you will become supper!”

She pulled free some of the logs, climbed inside, led her cow out of the cave and behind a small, nearby hill. Suddenly Meg let out a loud “Moooooo!!”. A huge Toukeneye flew over to where they were. “Run Meg!!” Kaitlyn grabbed Meg’s leash and ran. She didn’t care where she was going as long as it was away from the dreadful Toukeneye. She could see that the bird was Jelking, the same mean Toukeneye that stole her and Meg away. Kaitlyn was running as fast as she could but he was catching up!

Suddenly a huge person as big as a two storey building came stomping up and grabbed Jelking. “The Giant of Walls!!” Kaitlyn muttered to herself. “Quick!! We must save him!!” cried the kind Toukeneye that had helped Kaitlyn before. “Who will help me get him back?” None of the other Toukeneye volunteered. “Will you help me save Jelking, Kaitlyn? If you do, I will give you Meg back.” Kaitlyn couldn’t resist saying yes. “Excellent! You may ride on my back if you wish”, the bird said. “Yes! I would like that quite a lot, thank you.” Kaitlyn had to climb on top of a big rock and then on the Toukeneye’s back.

“By the way, I don’t know your name yet”, said Kaitlyn. “My name is Juntra. And what is yours?” “My name is Kaitlyn.” “Well off we go”, said Juntra.

Up they went, higher and higher. Gradually a gigantic house came into view. “Is that it?” asked Kaitlyn. “Yes”, answered Juntra. Juntra flew down to the ground. All around the dwelling of the giant were enormous cliffs that were so straight and smooth that they looked just like walls of a colossal building.

Continued on page 38
“Please get off my back”, asked Juntra, sweetly. Kaitlyn got off. “Here, follow me, Kaitlyn”, Juntra whispered. They ran over to a huge bush and walked behind it until they got right outside the house. There was a big archway on the front of the house that the giant must have used as the front door. Luckily the giant hadn’t made a door.

Just inside the house there was a very deep pit. “Careful! Don’t fall in!! That’s the Bottomless Pit of Doom! If anybody ever falls in they will never return!!” Juntra exclaimed softly.

They cautiously went around the pit. Across the room was another archway that they went through. Inside that room was a large black cage hanging from the roof. Jelking was inside the cage!

“Quick! Get me out of here before the giant gets back!” he cried. “Shhhh!!” said both Kaitlyn and Juntra together, but it was too late! They all heard a loud thumping coming from the next room. The giant came in. “What have we here? Mmmm, extra dinner!!” “Run!!” screamed Kaitlyn. “Wait!! Get me out! I don’t want to be dinner!!” shouted Jelking after them. They didn’t even hear him. They were rushing out of the giant’s house as fast as they could.

As the giant was running past the cage that Jelking was in, he knocked it and it fell to the ground. Luckily Jelking did not get hurt and the impact of the fall broke the lock on his cage. He did not waste any time in escaping. Out of the terrible house they all fled. Juntra was in front. Suddenly Kaitlyn had a wonderful idea...

Chapter 5 – The Defeat

Kaitlyn ran to the left and went back into the house. The giant swivelled to the left too and followed her back in. She ran around the bottomless pit and stopped at the opposite side. She turned around and said “Come on! You better run faster or you won’t catch me!!”. It wasn’t the best teasing but it was all she could think of. Even so it did the job she wanted it to do. Kaitlyn’s teasing had made the giant so furious he had sped up and when he had come to the edge of the pit he couldn’t stop in time. The giant in all its rage had run right into the Bottomless Pit of Doom, never to be seen again!

Kaitlyn had done what she wanted to do. She had done away with the giant, helped save Jelking and received Juntra’s promise to return Meg.

Chapter 6 – The Glass Trumpet

Juntra gave Kaitlyn a ride back to the Toukeneye village. “Thank you Kaitlyn for freeing us from the Giant of Walls. We are eternally grateful and we are here any time you need us”, said Jamundra the chief of the Toukeneye. “Here is a token of our appreciation and a tool to help you find us if you ever need to”, he announced. He gave Kaitlyn a chain necklace that had a tiny glass trumpet hanging from it. “When you want to call us just blow on this trumpet and we will come.” “Thank you, Jamundra. I will”, she answered. “Now I’m wondering if one of you would be so kind as to give me a ride home?” “I will!” said a young Toukeneye called Jamsbeana. A few minutes later they were off, flying very fast and high. Before Kaitlyn knew it, she was home. “I’m back Ma!!” she proclaimed when she came through the door. Her mother, father and Thomas were all in the kitchen worrying about her. “Where have you been?” asked her mother anxiously.

“I’ve been having a marvellous adventure, Ma…”

The End

By Jasmine Watson
Year 5, Nunawading Christian College
NUNAWADING – VIC.

Out on Miller Road there lived a dog called Spike
He would always frolic when he is on a hike,
Flustering and blustering trying not to fall down stairs,
He is whirling and swirling tangled with ribbons over chairs
Dragging and tagging in and out with his friend,
Jittering on the computer then starts to press the button ‘send’,
Flapping and slapping paper out of the white door
Bouncing and pouncing down on the floor,
Searching and looking under dusty and rusty tables,
Struggling and squirming playing with dirty old labels.

By Kym Eng
Age 6, MacGregor State School, MACGREGOR – QLD.
The Great Blue Sea

The lonely waves break upon the walls of a lonely shore,
Wearing away the fragile embankments of the desolate land ever more,
The boiling spray throws itself against the wicked sharp rocks,
Its voice entices and tempts, yet taunts and mocks,
The mortal souls who wander the golden sands,
Finding release and refreshment in these windswept coastal lands,
The tempest of the deep rages in its ire,
As its unrestrained fury refuses to tire,
And in deep hidden grottos, dolphins frolic and play,
But what the source of their eternal mirth is, none can say.

Over the ever shifting never-ending blue sea, white horses roam,
Their bodies made of deep silvery blue, their manes made of frothing white foam,
And beneath the wild waves, in an enchanted undersea domain,
Merrows, selkies and watershees under their sea king do reign,
Of all the news of the world they eventually come to hear,
It is gathered to them from every ocean, sea and merez,
The waters are vast; from the deepest trench to the sunlit heights,
They are filled with strange things to hear and awe-inspiring sights,
From the remote and wild yet refreshing beaches,
To the great briny sea's deepest enigmatic reaches.

Yet for all its lonesome appearance, the ocean is not as empty as you realise,
From kaleidoscopic reefs to the spectral wrecks of ships which in the sea meet their demise,
The waters are filled with the wonders of nature but also the ruins of mankind,
From the eerie remains of Atlantis to the fury of a sea serpent, you'll be surprised what you find,
Yet we heed not the sea's warning, with our filth turning once sweet blue waters dark sable,
The ocean is a living, breathing creature, and it demands love and care,
Or down with your bridges, seaside homes and docks it will rent and tear,
The sound of walls of water rushing in to fill valleys and plains is akin to furious thunder.

The ocean will forever be wild and free,
Enchanting and beautiful is every river, bay and sea,
And when all the land is long gone, the waters shall still be there,
Their face spread across the entire globe, shining blue and fair,
Unhindered its salty spray shall fly,
While underwater cities forever preserved shall lie,
Testament to the abounding power of the sea,
A fleeting glimpse of what true greatness can be.

By Matthew Harper-Gomm
Year 8, Kambrya College
BERWICK – VIC.
A LONG time ago, in 1764, there lived a red snake in a log called Fangpye. He lived near a slimy and smelly green creek. One day he saw a snake hunter so Fangpye quickly slithered into the tall yellow grass and hid behind a large stump. When the snake hunter was out of sight, he quickly slithered to the Snake King’s Castle.

When he saw the guards, he told them the secret password so he could enter the castle. The password is SNAKESRULE1764. When he saw King Snakehead, he bowed and said “Hello Master”. Then King Snakehead said in a deep voice, “What do you want son?”. After, he answered and said, “Can I have your golden crown?”. The king thought for a moment, and said, “You may have it if you do the following: Collect ten pieces of gold, five gemstones and two golden chainsaws”. Next, Fangpye went to the bushes and found ten pieces of gold in ten golden flowers. He was very pleased with himself. Secondly, he found five gemstones in a forbidden dragon cave.

After, he bought two golden chainsaws at an old Blacksmith for one hundred dollars each. So altogether he spent two hundred dollars. This was the biggest amount of money he had ever spent. Then, he quickly slithered back to the castle and said the password again. When he saw King Snakehead, he gave him the treasures. King Snakehead checked if they were correct and real. That was how Fangpye became King.

Many years later, there was a war from Ant Tartica. So Fangpye got ready his snake army. There were giant snakes, little snakes, green snakes, blue snakes, red snakes, orange snakes and brown snakes. The ants also got ready their army. There were multi-coloured ants. There were lots of explosions in the Fang City. It was close, but the snakes won the battle. Unfortunately, when Fangpye went to fetch his Trident, it had disappeared!! Fangpye demanded his army to follow the ants.

When they reached Ant Tartica, their first stop was Ant Kingdom. The army easily defeated the guards. So they went inside. The army couldn’t find the trident anywhere so they went to their next stop, ‘The Dragon Cave’. When they went into the dark cave, the dragon appeared out of nowhere! So the army shot everything they had. Then the dragon flew out of the cave and into the skies. The army found the trident under a gigantic boulder.

So the army took the trident away. When the army reached Fang Kingdom, King Fangpye was delighted to see his trident. After that, there was a huge celebration with a feast and fireworks!

Pigeons

In all the countries of the world, You will find one breed of bird, Peering down from a splattered perch, Moving their heads in a robotic lurch, Making their nest under a bridge, Or even in an old abandoned fridge.

Feeding on scraps of bread, Even feeding on bugs not long dead. Practising dancing all night long, Singing and cooing their favourite song.

Trying to scratch out a life, Though it gets them in all sorts of strife.

These creatures full of disease, Though they fly with the greatest of ease, Eating everything from lice and rice, Even picking on mice.

These birds have many names: Pest, vermin, lousy birds, lame! But I think this is quite absurd, Pigeons – a friend for you and me, Pigeons – for all to see.

By Simone Engele
Year 6, Oxley Christian College
CHIRNSIDE – VIC.

By Matthew Hau
Year 3, Haileybury College
KEYSBOROUGH – VIC.

Oz Kids in Print
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THE air is polluted with the smell of death and decaying bodies. I slowly kneel on the blood-covered earth. The earth that once was green and lush, but now will be forever dry and brown. The foul water seeps through my tattered pants and the holes are quickly filled with mud. My shoulder aches as once again I raise my sack and shuffle forward.

Slowly, never surely I head towards what I hope is north. I put all my trust in my loyal companion, Cal. My feet stumble and my legs give way so I just let my body fall. Cal is right by my side, his booming call ringing in my almost deaf ears. The ears that heard one thousand shots, one thousand screams. With the aid of Cal I am on my feet again. We rest on the tainted earth among the rebellious shrubs that refuse to die, but they will wither too, just like the mighty trees and the might of the soldiers.

After a quick snack and persuasion from Cal we are walking again, forever moving forward. He races ahead to keep watch. I met my friend Cal after the shrapnel rained into our trench and my life was never the same. Now my buddy leads me north to the border out of enemy territory. He is always watchful. He searches for dangers ahead, for mines and surprise attacks. His voice rises above the trees, telling of danger which is near. I rush to the left and my arm collides with a tree, I howl in pain.

Then the thunder starts, millions of heavy boots compressing the ground. I wait, fear stricken, for Cal to return. We crawl inside a small burrow. The marching rows of death pass over our heads. As we cower the bristles on Cal’s chin scratch at my skin. We lay here paralysed all night, through the gun shots and the endless marching.

When the lazy dawn sun rises and the warmth reaches inside our burrow, we cautiously tumble out of the hole. The air is stale and the ruthless army have moved on, spreading the fear and destruction. My dead eyes ache to see the world one last time, but I know what is done is by the will of fate.

I walk side by side with Cal into the black world of uncertainties. He gently nudges me forward with his wet nose. The sudden sound of Cal panting and the wind ruffling his fur fills the silence as we walk forward, always forward.

By *Erica Fawdry*  
Year 9, Mount Lilydale Mercy College  
LILYDALE – VIC.

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**More than Just a Scar**

By *Jaymie Buis*  
Year 12, Mount Lilydale Mercy College  
LILYDALE – VIC.

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People look at me, they don’t see  
There’s more to me than just a scar,  
There are all these little flashbacks –  
Like the memories of the skidding car

There’s many marks scratched on my heart  
Not just the one etched on my face  
There’s the silent pain I’m suffering –  
And the feelings of disgrace

There are those long days in hospital  
That makes me sick inside  
There are the awful pangs of guilt  
Which I try so hard to hide

I admit that it was all my fault –  
I know it should have been me  
The one who smashed into a tree

I don’t forget the way she screamed  
I see her face, inside my mind  
I miss the way her face lit up  
She was so passionate and kind

One clumsy night, a dumb mistake  
I did something I regret  
And now all these thoughts haunt me  
Never letting me forget

There’s more to me than just a scar…  
There are the salty tears I cried.  
There is the blood that stained my hands…  
There’s my best friend who once died.
THE wind was chilly, carrying with it an unpleasant bite. Thomas Bradwell hunched his shoulders, digging his hands in his pockets and pulling his overcoat closer around him, as another gush hurtled down the dimly lit street. He made little sound as he hurried across the dampened, mossy cobblestones. The residents in the area were long asleep; most of them home to businessmen, respected and wealthy people. None of whom the type to be out at this time of night, the time they would call ‘The Witching Hour’.

It had been by invitation that Thomas had made his way to the Trent coffeehouse several hours ago, and by command, he had left. Sent to deliver a letter. Hardly a warrior’s mandate, Thomas thought. For those who knew of it, the Trent was somewhat infamous for being more than an ordinary coffeehouse. It was known to play host to some unfavourable creatures and sights that the law strictly forbid. The Trent was on an open corner only a few blocks down from the city square, its location serving as a laugh in the face of the government. However, as it was blanketed with enchantments of cecity, it was no wonder that those who passed it saw nothing in its place, though the use of those enchantments alone was punishable by death. Those like Thomas who evaded the law were popular guests at the Trent, and he and his sister were very often the only humans that attended. Thomas despised being part of the hoi polloi and tried to set himself apart at every chance; and if that meant involving himself with those typecast as wicked and criminal, that was his path. Wherever danger was, you would find Thomas, and vice versa.

Thomas sighed and looked up, blue eyes watering at the rush of cold air that hit him full in the face. It ripped his dark hair away from his forehead and ears leaving him feeling bare and open. He slowed his pace, taking in his surroundings, before turning into a small side street, its width no longer than his arm span. The new buildings either side of him provided shelter from the wind making the alley eerily quiet. Thomas slowly padded down the passage and it wasn’t long before he reached a large, rusting metal gate. On the gate, one word was written in fine white script, ‘Fangelsi’. Thomas had always wondered why the Fangelsi was situated in the centre of the wealth, those to be protected. That he supposed, was the reason itself. Thomas looked up, the gate itself was only a small cut out in the sky high barrier of metal that was meant to halt intruders and trespassers, but this entrance had long been forgotten. Thomas slowly inched the gate open, its hinges producing a loud, grinding screech, piercing the air. Thomas winced at the sound and slipped soundlessly through the gap he had opened. On the other side, the buildings flanking him were the same, but as he looked down, Thomas realised with surprise that the ground below him had changed, it was no longer militarily lined cobblestones, but in fact a small brown path winding off into the distance, with damp, dark green grass clinging from its edges and hugging to the buildings on either side. There were small lanterns dangling at intervals from the two buildings, enabling Thomas to see slightly better than he had been able to in the previous half of the alley. Thomas sucked in a breath as he began his way down the path; this area had a sweet, cloying smell to it and Thomas instantly knew he was in the right place. He paused, curiously bending down to the grass, reaching out his forefinger and thumb to pluck a blade of it out of the ground. As soon as Thomas’ fingers made contact with the grass he retracted his hand and jumped to his feet, stilling a scream. Cradling his hand to his stomach, he could already feel the red welts begin to form on the tips on his long fingers where the grass had touched them. He had heard rumours about faerie grass, but he had always been sceptical, he never actually believed that the grass held any danger whatsoever. He had assumed it was just another plan from the government to frighten the public into a continuous loathing of magic. They had
conjured up stories to keep everyone quiet; stories of magical folk with hundreds of eyes and gruesome appetites. Thomas knew those stories were false from his time in the Trent, but it looks like he thought to himself at least the deadly grass ones were true.

With his hand clutched painfully under his coat, Thomas continued down the path, taking decisive steps to avoid the grass. Several minutes passed and having walked several hundred metres of identical path and building, Thomas began to wonder if it actually led to anything. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks, jerking his head around to listen in the direction he was heading. Sure enough he could hear a faint humming; he immediately backed up a few steps. Thomas had not encountered any subterfuge walls in his life, but he had been taught, and taught well. He was almost absolutely sure. Thomas plucked something out of his pocket, folding it neatly into a square before flinging it out into the space he thought had been sealed with a subterfuge wall. Sure enough a small blue light was emitted from the wall where the object had hit it and building, Thomas began to wonder if the ashes of what had been a small business card came fluttering peacefully to the ground in front of him into the space he thought had been sealed with a subterfuge wall. Sure enough she was a small blue light was emitted from the wall where the object had hit it before the ashes of what had been a small business card came fluttering peacefully to the ground in front of him. Thomas held no uncertainty in his physical strength but doubted his chances against the subterfuge wall. He took only one step towards the invisible wall, peering forward to check for any changes in the path before him. The path was just as lonesome as the identical one behind him, though, just as he was about to turn, out of the corner of his eye, Thomas caught a glimpse of light coming from the other side of the wall. It was a dim spotlight on the grass a few metres in front of him, moving slowly in his direction. Thomas stared in silence, as he realised two shapes in the centre of the circle of light. The light stopped and Thomas didn't have to look up much to meet the gaze of a small child.

She was such a pitiful sight and looked no older than ten years of age. So young to be imprisoned in the Fangelsi, and although she was clearly powerful enough to walk on the faerie grass, at first glance she was more pitiful than dangerous. This was the government's idea of protecting the country from magical evil. Thomas had heard of warlocks being ambushed and imprisoned, but never innocent children. The girl was tiny, her long black hair down to her waist. She was wearing no more than a dirty white sheet dress; her feet completely bear despite the cold. Her feet seemed to radiate a pool of light on the grass she was standing on, lighting where she walked. She had small, delicate, nimble fingers tipped with dark claw-like nails, but her gaze, if you could call it that was the most unnerving. Her eyes had long been sewn shut and over time her eyelids had thinned, like an almost transparent film over her black eyes. They seemed to search Thomas' face, questioning him. Slowly, she lifted her hand, pointing her clawed forefinger to a small hole in the building to her right, a thin smirk playing at her lips. For a few moments Thomas stood confused, regarding the hole in the building, trying to reach some sort of understanding. The hole was not large enough to fit more than three of his fingers through to the other side without touching the subterfuge. The girl's eyes traced their way down his coat, lingering at the pockets; and suddenly he knew. His fingers scrambled for the thin envelope in his pocket and lifted it up to the indent in the building beside him. Slowly, he slid it through to the other side of the subterfuge and into the girl's open palm. The girl clutched the letter at her chest still pointedly gazing at Thomas. He knew his job was done and slowly turned away, back to where he had come before breaking into a sprint.

The girl watched him flying off into the distance before lowering her face down to the letter. Gently running her thumb under the lip of the envelope and sliding the paper out:

You and your people will be freed. Your rights restored. Your power returned. War is on the horizon, and this time, we will not fail.

Make the call when you are ready.

She let the paper fall to the ground beside her, turning around and reaching her arms to the heavens, splaying her fingers. It's time.

By Jessica Garzarella
Year 9, Korowa Anglican Girls' School
GLEN IRIS – VIC.

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Grandpa on the Computer

When my grandpa uses the computer everything goes wrong. He makes the screen too big or makes it much too long.

He doesn't know how to Google or search for his websites. He just presses all the buttons and subtracts our gigabytes.

He looks at private emails and messes up my stuff. He looks at funny videos. I hope our computer's tough enough.

Doesn't he have better entertainment to look at? Maybe he could watch TV or play with our pet cat!

By Brigette Lill
Year 3, Loreto Kirribilli
KIRRIBILLI – NSW
ON A perfect Friday afternoon, Elizabeth was playing on her trampoline in her backyard. After a while she saw an orange tree. 'How odd?' she felt. The next morning when she again went to play, she noticed the orange tree is cut down. At that time Elizabeth did not know that it is a magical tree. That afternoon when she went into her backyard she saw that the lawn was turned to grey. Elizabeth was puzzled.

Elizabeth found grey patches all around her school oval just as in her backyard. She immediately thought it may be something to do with the orange tree and that it was a magical tree that gave colour to the world. Now the tree was cut down, the world will look dark, gloomy, boring and not exciting. 'I have to save this tree before the whole world fades away', she thought. How will I save this magical tree she wondered? I might be able to plant a new one she thought. When she went to the nursery to buy seeds, there were no seeds that produces magical tree and the time is ticking away. 'Maybe I can tape it back together.' No… that did not work either. Saving this tree is harder than I thought. May be if the tree is magical, I’ll try using magic. But where will I find magic? I’ll visit Berny, the wise owl. Perhaps, he will know. He will know for ‘Sure’!

The wise owl lives in a forest. Elizabeth went to the forest to see him. Berny said, “Go the fairies, near the enchanted waterfalls”. Elizabeth went to the falls. She saw the fairies. She asked them for some magic. But the fairies said they had already tried with it in vain. ‘That’s OK fairies, I’ll try something else’, Elizabeth said and moved on.

Elizabeth went to the witch’s castle to see if she could get some potions to make a new tree. She asked the dirty, ugly, smelly, lazy witch if she could borrow some potions. She said yes, but you must give me in return, something you like most in the world. Elizabeth gave the most precious thing she has, ‘The happiness’, to make the world a happier place to live. The witch gave her six different potions. The one she had to use just a little was purely gold, gooey and bubbling. The one the witch said to use the most was green, gloopy and looked yucky. The witch said try these six potions they may work. If they don’t work come back with your second favourite thing and I will give you some other potions. Elizabeth went home to try the potions. They didn’t work. So Elizabeth went back to the wicked witch again. This time she gave her ‘precious smile’. In return, the witch gave a potion called the ‘elixir’, the one and only that can heal any wound in the world. This time it worked amazingly.

The next day she saw slowly the grey patches were turning back to green. She also realised when the tree popped up there was only one grey spot left in her backyard. In few days, the whole neighbourhood was back to normal. Gradually, the whole world was again bright and beautiful. Happiness and smile is restored.

By Monica Rallabhandi
Year 3, Ross moyne Primary School
ROSSMOYNE – WA

The waves, they crashed upon the shore
With moonlight shining down
It formed a ring around his head
A halo or a crown?

She stood and watched him from afar
To see what would entail
As the light shone from behind
She suddenly went pale

Was he a gift from up above?
Too polerine in this planet?
His visit short and purposeful?
His face was set like granite

His expression was unreadable
His flawless face was empty
The windows to his soul were closed
They normally shared aplenty

Suddenly his trance was gone
As though she had clicked her fingers
The moonlight gone, yet she remained
As uncertainty still lingers

She finally revealed herself
His relief was clearly shown
They ran into each other’s arms
What had happened, still unknown

By Laura Best
Year 11, Westminster School
MARION – SA

Elizabeth and the Magical Tree
The fire blazed, towering 5 metres above me. It glowed a bright red-golden colour showing off its fancy outfit of flames pompously. The smoke was utmost suffocating, piercing harshly down my throat and shrivelling it like a rotten apple core. It would be any second that Megan would perish in the monstrous flames. I had to get her out. My head became confused with the most ridiculous thoughts. Kibble… run away… kibble… escape… No, focus Butterball! Focus! Before I even thought of what I was doing, I bounded into the flames. I closed my eyes, thinking of what it would be like to die. Was it lonely? Did it hurt? Did it just turn… pitch black? Was there really a heaven… (or hell)? Which one would I be in? I’ve only stolen kibble once. Oh please God, don’t put me in hell! I shook my head concentrating on my one and only target. I bounded through the flames barking frantically for Megan.

I heard howls of grief and pain. No, she can’t be… She just can’t be… I’ve failed the duty entrusted to me. To guard her. Protect her with my life. A thin stream flowed down my face. All the flashbacks of the good times we’ve had together rushed vividly through my head making me giddy. Was there a possibility… Come on Butterball, what’s stopping you? If she died because I stopped, there’d only be guilt. Guilt that I couldn’t save her when I had the chance.

Before I could start up again, I saw a limp and lifeless body on the ground. Eager with anticipation I dashed towards her. Eyes closed but mouth open, she looked as if she’d wanted to say something, but didn’t have the chance. The last crucial moment. My stomach started writhing and squirming, the most uncomfortable feeling. This time it was not out of hunger but of the petrifying idea of her dead. Her soul gone from the brutality of the world. She was too good for this world, much too good. She had Autism but that’s what made her unique. She had the ability to do incredible feats. A howl came from a cavernous hole inside of me. Instinctively, I started to lick her face, to try and give her one last hope of survival. Hers… and mine.

By Manasa Swaminathan
Age 10
CHARLESTOWN – NSW

Bright Stars

A Special Place
THE rain is thumping down in the black of night – cursed by winter! Arr! Waves be crashing and churning with relentless force, pushing my vessel into a raging chasm. Aye, ye scurvy dog! A lass has more muscle than ye! Damn Jack’s no nothin’ of labour. We search for gold and nothing more – for we shall never return to shore. Har har har! We swashbucklin’ on the high seas, close to destination, close to the booty!

“Where’s me grog?” I says.

“None left,” says William.

Arr, stuck with these fools for a lifetime. I was abandoned at youth and some may say, free. But I know not of love, compassion and fear. I was all alone, until I found my crew. I am a monster to some, a cap’n to others. I’ve travelled the seas for many years. Do not be fooled is my advice to ye; for the ocean is a beast. At day it’s calm, the waves are still. On another it’s vicious, a violent undertow.

I can see the cave approaching ahead. Full speed I say, full speed! Damn scallywags, must I do all the work? Well, they don’t call me Blackbeard for nothin’! I’ve travelled the seas for many years. Do not be fooled is my advice to ye; for the ocean is a beast. At day it’s calm, the waves are still. On another it’s vicious, a violent undertow.

Ye gods! They left none for us! They took all the doubloons – the whole lot of it! Greedy, good for nothing bandits. I’d be placin’ a black spot against their rougish hands. And all they leave is a button? What folly is this? Me crew and I was once the gentlemen o’ fortune and now we got these bandits’ stealin’ everything we desire. Well, this don’t look good for me name at all. But this button – this gold button. It was as large as me palm and light as a feather. I detected a foreign language etched into its glistenin’ coat. Looked like necromancer’s sorcery to me. It sent shivers down me spine as if something was comin’. All of a sudden the button leaped out of my hand and emitted a dark blue spark. It appeared to be opening some kind of portal.

I began to flee, my wooden leg dragged behind. Arr? I was pulled back, sucked in. Took time for me eyes to adjust to the putrid sight. He spoke in a queer voice, and I could not see a face for his hood fell so low. E’ was a large fella in high stirrups. Me crew took one look at ‘im and fled! Damn button, should never ’ave touched it.

Cowards. But I aint goin’ nowhere. I don’t fear goin’

“Be ye a pirate?” I says to ‘im.

“Fool”, he says. “You summoned me. What is it your desire, feeble human?” he scorned at me.

“You ain’t gonna slash me with that mighty spear?”

“If it is death you desire, I shall give it.”

“Arr, what kind of question is that?” I said transfixed on his glowing harpoon.

“If it is gold you desire, I shall give it.”

This had to be a trap! Or could it be true? Nay, he be playing tricks with me! Well I wasn’t gonna fall for that. Arr, I should’a eviscerated this fool! Should’a sent ‘im to Davey Jones I thought.

“But a wise move, old man”, he says, and suddenly, as if casting a spell, his hands start glowin’ gold. It was a signal for me to flee!

I ran for the ship, “Prepare to leave! Prepare to leave!” I shouted, my cowardice still lingering in my mind.

By Emma-Kate Panuccio
Year 10, Eynesbury Senior College
ADELAIDE – SA
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