

# BOOK OF THE YEAR: YOUNGER READERS

Entries in this category may be fiction, drama or poetry and should be appropriate in style and content for readers from the middle to upper primary years. 7-12 years.

N.B. Judges' critique is from CBCA website. Retrieved 1-4-21 from:

<https://cbca.org.au/shortlist-2021>

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## Orientation and significance of this critique:

Our critiques are based on our own views of the CBCA short listed texts 2021, and we prepared this critique to assist teachers when selecting texts to use in classrooms. We did not critique *Book of the Year Older Readers* (13-18 years) as our joint work is in supporting primary teachers (K-6). Our comments relate to these grades.

## Aster's Good, Right Things

Kate Gordon



Publisher:	Riveted Press
ISBN:	9780648492573
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Younger Readers

### Judge's Critique

Written with great insight and delight, Aster's voice is pitch perfect and the reader is treated to a view of the world seen through her eyes. Aster's 'good, right things' are sacrifices she makes in the service of others, as an atonement for her mother's departure which Aster blames on herself. Rich with imagery, flowers are used throughout to convey emotion. As the story progresses, Aster's sense of self-worth grows, and her need to make sacrifices diminishes – a very sophisticated plot and characterisation device. This change occurs when Aster is able to connect with Xavier who is challenged by depression and Indigo, a troubled child. The setting of a progressive school for the gifted is presented with gentle humour. Aunt Noni's efforts to make Aster enjoy life are misguided but well intentioned, while Aster's Mum's selfishness is breathtaking. A brilliant portrayal of mental health, which would appeal to the upper end of the YR category and could also resonate with YA readers.



### Lorri's comments

The target audience for this text is Stage 3, 10 - 12 year olds. The purpose of this narrative is to share the story of a child, who is initially crippled by anxiety and depression, common issues for many pre-adolescent children on the cusp of adulthood. She cannot function socially at school, cannot relate to her peers and lives in constant fear of most things, to the point that she is unable to answer when spoken to. The protagonist's name is Aster and she lives in a single parent household with her father because her mother has left them. Aster (wrongly) blames herself for her mother's departure, adding to her self-loathing and feelings of despair. Her dad is

the school principal of a “ridiculously fancy school in the city” (p2). Aster attends “*The Albatross School for Exceptional Children*”; however, her phobias convince her that she is *not* one of the special children, and she does not fit in socially.

Astor eventually makes friends with children who have bigger problems than her own. As she helps her new-found friends to make sense of their exceedingly troubled and complex lives, she finds she can see positives in her own life and her self-awareness increases as her character develops and changes throughout the text. Astor’s character develops throughout the text from a feeble mouse to an energised, determined young woman, keen to experience what life offers her.

Many children and young adults increasingly suffer from (sometimes severe) depression and anxiety. This text opens a safe conversation space for students to discuss issues that are impacting their mental health, using the “safety” of the text as a scaffold to facilitate discussion.

From an English teacher’s perspective, the text is a narrative with an interesting complication and open-ended conclusion, possibly for students to creatively reflect on or imagine how they feel that the text may conclude.

The English concepts I identified in the text include perspective – the thinking the writer and reader bring to the text; intertextuality - the main character enjoys books about shape-shifting, time travel and portals into other worlds. As well, contained therein are lyrics from songs, free-form poetry and references to the children’s book, *Noni the pony* (Alan Blabey). Other English concepts evident in the text include theme (living a ‘good’, ethical life), style, character and narrative. The author does not reveal all, at the get-go, when situating us to the text. We are left wondering what happened to mum for quite a while, a key element of the plot as she is an ever-present character lurking in the background, influencing Aster’s thoughts, words and deeds. Another example of this author’s particular style is that the reader is left wondering about the setting until quite late in the text. We belatedly find out the book is set in Tasmania. The author keeps us wondering, building suspense. I would use this text as a novel study in S3. Most outcomes of the S3 syllabus can be engagingly taught through the vehicle of this quality text. Additionally, it lends itself to students talking about their feelings, crucial in these uncertain times.

The title of this text, *Aster’s book of good right things* is an illusion. Aster tries to do good by others, but this only causes her increased anxiety and personal stress. Throughout the text, Aster’s character grows in self-awareness and confidence, and she learns that she really is an important person who positively impacts many people’s lives, including her own.



Michael’s comments

*Aster’s good, right things* is an overwhelmingly sad book. Not only is Aster sad, but so too is her father; her mother (when she is at home with Aster at least); her schoolfriend, Indigo; the home-schooled boy, Xavier, who lives next door to her school (he suffers from depression), a girl who works at a local café, Esme; even the stern librarian has a secret sadness (her son died two years ago). It’s all a bit too much! Of course, Aster does grow through the course of the novel and learns to be happy again, or at least manage her sadness, as a result of her own efforts to engage more with others, as well as the support of her loving father and aunt.

I wanted to like this book more: it raises important issues about mental illness. However, I didn't find the narrative engaging – and I doubt if many kids would either. Nothing much happens! At one point, Indigo runs away, but instead of building some suspense about her plight she is back home by the following chapter. In contrast, the author does develop some sense of mystery about the absent mother, who we gradually learn has abandoned her daughter and husband for a new life in another city, but Aster and the reader are denied the opportunity to understand the mother's decision because we are never privy to her point of view.

Despite this shortcoming, I believe the English textual concept central to this text should be point of view. The story is related through the first person narration of Aster – well, not so much narration as sharing thoughts and feelings. This method encourages empathy towards Aster, but does not give us access to other points of view, except through Aster's perceptions. I think that point of view is both a strength and a limitation in this novel.

I agree with Lorri that reading this text could be a springboard for students writing to express their own feelings, a very worthwhile thing to do. However, I believe the text's focus on personal development makes it more suited to PDHPE; there are so many better Stage 3 texts for the study of English.

## The Stolen Prince of Cloudburst

Jaclyn Moriarty (Illust: Kelly Canby)



Publisher:	Allen & Unwin
ISBN:	9781760875060
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Younger Readers

### Judge's Critique

The third title set in Moriarty's imaginative and richly created world of Kingdoms and Empires, it is a story which stands alone. Esther Mettlestone-Staranise is trying to etch out her own identity in a family crowded with talented personalities. Her memorable voice is full of humorous observations which contribute to the consistently charming tone and upbeat mood. Many of the characters reveal surprising secrets and are gloriously flawed. The complex plot is satisfyingly resolved. Although a fantasy, the dilemmas are echoes of the real world. Themes of valuing individuality, caring for each other and for the environment are strongly conveyed. This story is uniquely appealing for the target reader. The quality production includes detailed illustrations in a naive style. The hardcover design is beautiful.



This is a mammoth read for Stage 2 and Stage 3 students (Years 4- 6). It is not really suitable for a class novel study, in my view, as it caters for students with a particular interest in the fantasy genre and magical beings, set in a girls' boarding school. I'm unsure whether it would engage students en masse. It is well suited to students who love reading about magic, fantasy and adventure. When reviewing this text, I considered audience and purpose. *The stolen prince of cloudburst* is an imaginative text. The intended audience is primary aged children and its purpose is to entertain.

The setting is a girls' boarding school, in which the protagonist, Esther, finds herself embroiled in a never-ending plethora of sticky predicaments. She believes she is nothing special; however, she attains the ultimate life achievement at 12 years of age: Esther saves the world from evil beings. The theme of the text is an uplifting one, "We can all be heroes and achieve our dreams".

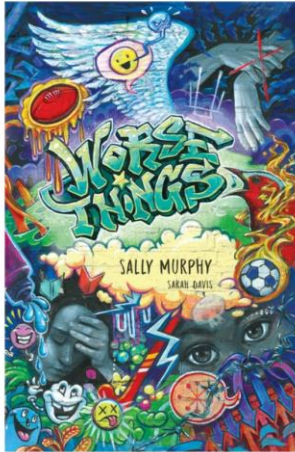
*The stolen prince of cloudburst* is part of a series and I believe those children who love this text, will be sold on reading the other (currently) two texts in the series. An imaginative, whimsical story, with interesting twists and turns that would engage students who love this type of text, during individual reading.

I was blown away by detail in the lead pencil illustrations by Kelly Canby. The illustrations throughout the text are familiar, relatable and accessible incentives, for those children who love to draw, to keep on drawing (and isn't that most children?). Congratulations to the illustrator, who succeeds in emphasising the uniqueness and detailed simplicity of lead pencil illustrations. We do not often see lead pencil used in this way, as an illustrative medium, in children's books.



# Worse Things

Sally Murphy (Illust: Sarah Davis)



Publisher:	Walker Books Australia
ISBN:	9781760651657
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Younger Readers

## Judge's Critique

Beautifully illustrated and presented, the language of this verse novel is poetic and lyrical. As the three characters reveal their troubles, Murphy shows they are connected through their feelings of being left out and alone through their relationships to the sports they play — Jolene hates hockey but is forced into it; Blake loves football but is left out through injury and Amed would like to play soccer but language difficulties are an obstacle. Making connections through kindness is a theme, as is friendship and it certainly opens up conversations about what goes on behind the front that people share. The text enables readers to empathise with the characters and to develop responses and ideas around each of their situations. The outstanding thing about this book is the use of language, including poetically framed definitions which highlight the themes. The poetic narrative is accessible for all levels of readers. It flows beautifully when read aloud. The presentation is impeccable and appealing.



## Lorri's comments

The book is about 3 main characters, all linked through a love of sport. Jolene, a talented hockey player, is the only child of two doctors. To the outside world, she has it all, and her peers resent her for this. To Jolene, she seems to be living her mother's dream, and she desperately misses close contact with her dad, who is on an overseas humanitarian mission. Jolene communicates with him through a computer screen. The second main character is Blake, who breaks his arm at football and is out for the season. His self-worth is intertwined with his talent on the football field, and Blake feels lost when this is taken from him. Next, Amed, a new arrival living with his aunt, who enjoys soccer. The round ball game is not played in his new home. Amed is having trouble learning English, and is isolated from his peers due to his inability to communicate and extreme shyness. However, Amed is a keen observer and although he cannot understand English, he is empathetic and eager to make friends. Tragedy brings the three characters together, and they find they have more in common than they first realise, which enriches all their lives.

Vocabulary is a focus of the book. Key words trace main events throughout the text, like a story map (comprising words), with a list of interesting synonyms, useful for student writing activities. In particular word clines, in which students order language items from one extreme to another. It is a narrative, told through the eyes of the main characters, so point of view is a key focus of the text.

I really enjoyed reading this text, and can readily imagine the deep, lively discussions about the key characters and their lives, familiar to students in Stage 3 classrooms, during novel study.

# We Are Wolves

Katrina Nannestad



Publisher:	HarperCollins Publishers
ISBN:	9780733340888
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Younger Readers

## Judge's Critique

The setting of East Prussia in the dying days of World War 2 (1944-1945) is vividly and realistically evoked. Liesel's voice as the narrator reveals an older sister working against all odds to keep her siblings alive and together. Nannestad's writing deftly reveals the ways people of different ages cope with the realities of war and evacuation. The story is heart-breaking as the characters become aware that Germany is going to lose the war. The children's hunger is palpable. The tension in the story is brought to a nail-biting climax. The language has moments of lyrical and descriptive appeal. The characters are complex with conflicting qualities, giving rise to the themes of individual identity, but also exploring the notion that nationality does not determine goodness. The hardback presentation is high quality and appealing.



## Lorri's comments

Three German children experience ongoing tragedy as they are forced to flee their homeland at the end of WW2, because Russian troops are advancing and enforcing unspeakable cruelties on German families. The Wolf children - Liesel, Otto and Mia - experience the loss of their father, (missing in action), grandparents (during the diaspora) and mother (who slipped into the sea when the ice cracked whilst fleeing advancing Russian troops). Liesel is forced to care for her young siblings, who endure homelessness, starvation and violence. Finally, the young family reach Lithuania where they are sheltered by a kind family who lost their child. Their own mother ultimately survives, locates her children and the family are reunited. We the readers, are not told what happens next in the narrative.

The text explicitly outlines the horrors of war, through the eyes of children. It is a very different world to the world in which our students find themselves. The German people have been brainwashed by Nazi propaganda into believing that Germany will win the war. People are convinced they will be victorious until Russian troops descend, creating havoc loss and tragedy for the German people.

*We are Wolves* received a plethora of accolades from Australian authors in the front pages of the book. The text is undeniably well-written, heart-wrenching and the theme outlines the resilience of the human spirit. That said, I would not choose this text as a novel study with Stage 3 students. It is much too heart wrenchingly sad. In these COVID times, I would prefer to choose more uplifting texts from a student wellbeing perspective. Students in the upper primary grades do not usually have the background knowledge to understand the horrors of war to the extent outlined unless they have personal family connections. From an historic lens, the text details the distress and horror experienced by the German people at the end of WW2, at the hands of advancing Russian soldiers. This prompted me to revisit our K-6 History syllabus and consider its contents through this lens. The aim of the History syllabus is to "stimulate students' interest in and enjoyment of exploring the past, to develop a critical understanding of the past and its impact on the present" (NSW History K-6 Syllabus p15). Stage 3 outcomes all refer to Australian history, which further fuels my resolution not to recommend this text be studied in Stage 3 classrooms. This historical narrative is well-suited to those students with a passion for European

history - which may make it more suited to secondary students, or for Stage 3 students who are emerging historians with an interest in learning more about this particular topic.



### Michael's comments

Katrina Nannestad has built a fictional text on a foundation of historical fact, so it slots neatly into the genre of historical fiction. In fact, in terms of English textual concepts, genre would be a good fit, but it is also a superb, suspenseful narrative with complex characters that change and develop through the course of the text, so narrative and character are other relevant concepts worthy of study.

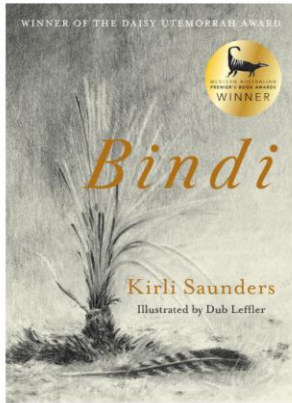
Most children's stories about World War II seem to present two particular points of view: English children who were evacuated to the English countryside or even different countries (*Letters from the lighthouse*, by Emma Carroll, *Goodnight Mr Tom*, by Michelle Magorian, *Carrie's war*, by Nina Bawden, and *The lion and the unicorn*, by Shirley Hughes, are examples) or Jewish children (*Once*, by Maurice Gleitzman, and *When Hitler stole Pink Rabbit*, by Judith Kerr, spring to mind). We don't seem to get many texts that tell the stories of children from countries perceived as aggressors or the enemy. One exception is *The boy in the striped pyjamas*, by John Boyne, which tells the interrelated stories of two eight-year-old boys, Shmuel and Bruno, one Jewish and the other German; another is the hugely successful *The book thief*, by Australia's own Markus Zusak, about a German family providing refuge to a Jewish man. However, these two books are definitely YA, not K-6, fiction. Nannestad's unique achievement is that she has written a story about WWII that is historically based, presents a German point of view and is beautifully written in language accessible to primary students (very suitable for Stage 3, in my view). But rather than teach this text in a unit on WWII, which is very much a History topic, I would teach it in a unit on point of view (as well as the concepts cited above) and look for companion texts that play with point of view in relation to other topics.

The whole point of this novel is that there are no real winners in war – and children are always the innocent victims, no matter which side they are caught on. Realising that there are other points of view, and coming to understand and respect those different points of view, is an important lesson for students in Stage 3 (as indeed it is for Liesl, the first person narrator of the novel) as they begin to take more interest in the wider world. *How* texts represent those different points of view is rich learning in subject English.

I loved this text. Unlike *Aster's good, right things* which is unrelentingly sad, *We are wolves*, which has every right to be even sadder given its subject matter, avoids this tone by focusing on the resilience of the three children, their love for one another, the remarkable determination of the mother to find her lost children, the kindly support of particular Russian and Lithuanian characters, and moments of wicked humour. It seems that adversity brings out the best, not just the worst, in people.

# Bindi

Kirli Saunders (Illust: Dub Leffler)



Publisher:	Magabala Books
ISBN:	9781925936667
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Younger Readers

## Judge's Critique

This most delightful verse novel tells the evocative story of an everyday family confronted by raging and dangerous bushfires. Bindi is an Indigenous girl with a strong and proud heritage whose perspectives are shaped by this background. The portrayal of indigenous culture influenced by immigration is sensitive and kind. The verse is cleverly positioned on the page to reflect the subject and the tone of warmth and comfort is maintained throughout. The text and format changes in line with the content. It is cleverly designed to add layers of meaning through text, content, language and illustration. Beautiful soft charcoal illustrations by Leffler reflect the nature of the writing and extend the story beyond the bushfire. The presentation of this book is excellent.



## Lorri's comments

I share my views of this text from the perspective of a teacher who has collaborated on producing a unit of work, and supporting schools in studying this text, over a term. The text is highly suitable for novel study in Stage 3. Student and teacher engagement in the text is high.

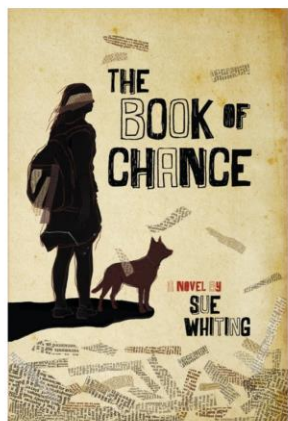
This text is termed by the publisher as a "junior verse novel". Many teachers share that they should be teaching more poetry in subject English, so this text addresses this perceived shortfall in current school curriculum. English textual concepts addressed in *Bindi* include *perspective*, the thinking that the composer and readers bring to the text, and *point of view*, how we as readers are situated to perceive the narrative through the eyes of the main character, Bindi.

Bindi lives in a country town during the south coast bushfires. The cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures and Sustainability are addressed throughout, in relation to fire management and traditional Aboriginal land management practices. The general capability of critical and creative thinking is clear in the deep discussions about the text and how it works. The text succeeds in creating intercultural understanding in the reader. Bindi lives between two worlds.



# The Book of Chance

Sue Whiting



Publisher: Walker Books Australia

ISBN: 9781760651367

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Book of the Year: Younger Readers

## Judge's Critique

This complex narrative is set south of Sydney in Wollongong, significantly far away from where the main character Chance Callahan started her life. Suspense and tension are deftly created through the use of a flashback device. Themes of honesty and truth underpin the events. Chance is convincing and engaging as she reluctantly pursues the truth about her birth and her mother, Nadia, with serious and unexpected consequences. The theme of having a fresh start is developed through the story of Chance and Nadia but also through the South Sudanese refugees who are neighbours and part of the family. This thought-provoking narrative would inspire many discussions on the morality of truth, and the sub-plot dealing with social media was deftly handled.



This book is based on a true story. It tells the story of a baby who is kidnapped by a desperate woman, who raises the child as her own. The mother, Nadia, has lost her husband to an accident and tragically, multiple babies through miscarriage. Nadia works with refugee families and is regarded by her community as a pillar of society, a model citizen.

Chance Callaghan, the protagonist, is an outspoken teen with a keen sense of social justice-including right over wrong, truth over lies. She nominates her mother for a reality show home makeover as a thank you for being a great mum. In the process, Chance discovers that she has been living a lie. Chance is not the person she thought she was, and she is devastated to learn that Nadia is not her real mother.

*The Book of Chance* is a contemporary narrative, which raises the potential negative aspects of social media, an underpinning of the text, with readers. It opens communication spaces about the ubiquitous perils and pitfalls of the minefield that is social media, so important to student wellbeing in this cohort.

The theme of the text deals with the complex nature of truth. Truth is not always "black and white" and truth is presented in multiple shades of grey throughout the text. We are invited by the composer to view truth from multiple viewpoints - the English concepts of perspective (the thinking that both writer and readers bring to the text) and the points of view of the various characters in the text. Chance is steadfast in her belief in relation to the importance of truth, in particular being true to self, which comes at significant personal cost.

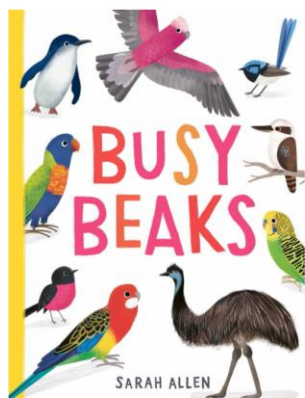
I can visualise this text, *The Book of Chance*, eliciting important, lively and deep discussions about responsible use of social media and identity, and what constitutes ethical behaviour, with students in Stage 3 classrooms. An introduction for students to the complexities of the crime fiction genre, the text is even more compelling due its links to an authentic event in Australia's recent past.

# BOOK OF THE YEAR: EARLY CHILDHOOD

Entries in this category may be fiction, drama or poetry and should be appropriate in style and content for children who are at pre-reading or early stages of reading. Ages 0-6 years.

## Busy Beaks

Sarah Allen



Publisher:	Affirm Press
ISBN:	9781925972948
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Early Childhood

### Judge's Critique

Delightful illustrations that are bold, vibrant, and captivatingly accurate depict twenty-five Australian birds in this engaging book for young readers. The excellent endpaper design depicts a range of different eggs which readers may enjoy matching to the featured birds. The simple text allows the story to flow, with the 'Facts & Feathers' section at the end providing more detail for further discussion. Also included is the scientific name of each bird. This book is a joyous celebration of Australian birds providing age-appropriate information.



### Lorri's comments

Beautifully illustrated- a book about Australian birds to pour over, revisit and enjoy. The end sheet and flyleaf contain an assortment of birds' eggs. It would be fun to try and match the eggs and birds with young children. Great for teaching onomatopoeia. Although this book is a nomination in the Early Childhood Book of the Year, I would use this text in the K-3 classroom to build interesting noun groups and verb groups, and to teach young children about how language works, from a functional grammar perspective. For example, *cockatoos screech*, *the warble of magpies*, *swans gliding slowly*. Focusing on sentence structure, I would then ask, when, where, and why, building a beginning awareness of sentence complexity. The metalanguage associated with the various birds provide vocabulary extension for those students who are ready to be introduced to the correct scientific names of the birds in the text. Alliteration is evident throughout the text, e.g. *a gang of galahs*; *penguins' parade*. Additionally, some text is presented in rhyming couplets, building students' alphabetic knowledge e.g.

*In the late afternoon, busy birds all around  
flying home to their roosts as the sun's going down.*

The code and convention of the text, including text layout and the visual grammar associated with the illustrations, lend themselves to interesting lessons focusing on how words are arranged in patterns on the pages, to support meaning. Combined with the visual features of the text, including placement of images, salience, framing, vectors and story paths; text and images work together to create meaning. The final pages of the text summarise the main facts about each of the birds in the text.

What a beautiful book! So much can be done with it, to teach subject English in the K-3 classroom. However, the greatest gift of *Busy Beaks* to young students is for it to be read repeatedly, the engaging illustrations to be poured over, and the text to be thoroughly enjoyed!

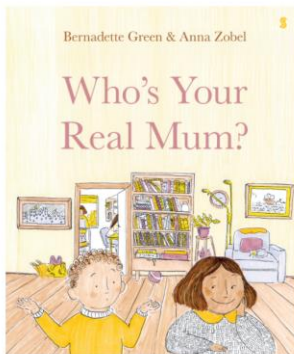


### Michael's comments

Great to see quality non-fiction in the CBCA Early Childhood shortlist. The stunning illustrations are the best feature of this text. Onomatopoeic language, representing bird song, is also worthy of exploration. The only drawback to my mind is the rhyme, unnecessary and distracting in an information text.

## Who's Your Real Mum?

Bernadette Green (Illust: Anna Zobel)



Publisher:	Scribble Kids' Books
ISBN:	9781925849493
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Early Childhood

### Judge's Critique

A wonderful book which celebrates motherhood, diversity and families. Skilfully designed, the front cover invites the reader to explore this story, with the title that boldly asks the question, 'Who's Your Real Mum?' Prompted by a child innocently and curiously asking this question of another child who has same sex parents, Green and Zobel sensitively and gently explore a mother/child relationship. Imaginative and whimsical elements appear throughout, especially in the outstanding illustrations. The beauty of this book is that it is imaginative and age appropriate. Elvi keeps her friend guessing with humour as the story gently unfolds showing what counts above all else is the love and caring nature of the mother/child relationship.



### Lorri's comments:

An imaginative text. Elvie has two mums. Both mums are equally important to Elvie. She compares her mums to superheroes. Her friend asks, "*Who is your real mum?*" The text is in a Q&A format. She tries to make her friend understand that both mums are equally important to her.

This text is an example of a growing body of texts that address the important topic of gender diversity with young children. Age-appropriate books that depict gay characters and gender diverse families woven into their storylines, expose students to the diversity of the real world. Similarly, texts that empower students to stand up for themselves and others, help children to learn coping skills that assist them in dealing with situations of homophobia and bullying. By introducing LGBTIQ related topics through quality literature, a familiarly comfortable genre for students, they are exposed to topics that some regard as controversial, in thought-provoking ways. Schools can play an important role in countering antigay sentiment and leading the way towards a change for the better for everyone.

*Who's your real mum?* is an important addition to K-3 classrooms. Reading a good book and identifying with its characters is an enjoyable and powerful means of opening up sometimes difficult conversation spaces with young students. In this text, deep discussions may lead to knowledge of and understanding about gender stereotyping and family diversity in a familiar, non-threatening, picture book format.

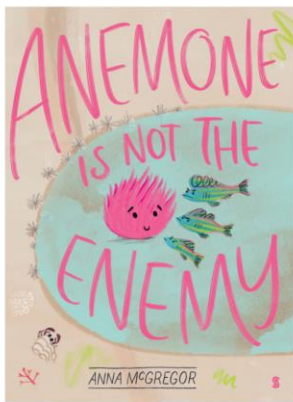


**Michael's comments:**

*Who's your real mum?* Is a clever text, dealing with the important and relevant issue of LGBTIQ+ diversity in a fun, age-appropriate way. It would be terrific to use this picture book as one of several texts in an English unit that examines how texts represent families in different ways, using the English textual concepts of theme and representation. Point of view is another English textual concept worthy of study here. The Q&A format is an effective way to represent Elvie's point of view, gradually and subtly revealed, that both her mums are wonderful regardless of who is the biological mother. The illustrations make effective use of colour: yellows and browns for Elvie's factual representation and blues for her imaginative representation of her mums.

## Anemone is not the Enemy

Anna McGregor



Publisher:	Scribble Kids' Books
ISBN:	9781922310118
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Early Childhood

**Judge's Critique**

Beautifully designed, this book features a vibrant, neon pink on the cover, and throughout the book; including the bold endpapers. With a tongue-twisting title, readers will be drawn immediately to the themes of friendship, loneliness, habitats, and sea creatures. Set in a rock pool, the story extends the reader's experience and understandings about the symbiotic relationship between anemones and clownfish. Readers will also see how anemones deal with predators, learn a little about hermit crabs, and see how tides work. This information is cleverly conveyed through the narrative, combined with wonderful illustrations, sophisticated design, and through the inclusion of fun facts at the end. The page layout is excellent with a balance of space and text. Told with quirky humour, the story is a series of dialogues and comments between the sea creatures, similar to speech bubbles, making it fun to read aloud.



**Lorri's comments**

The bright fluoro colours of this text would have high kid appeal for 0-6 year old children. It lends itself to a visit to the aquarium (or at least share information texts or videos together) where children can peruse anemones and other sea creatures; so they understand the specific vocabulary of the text e.g. barnacles, mermaids, pirates, Kraken, seahorse, starfish, sea cucumber, and clownfish; prior to reading the text.

The simple, enjoyable narrative tells the story of the special relationship between clownfish and anemones. Vocabulary development is a focus of this text; additionally, building inference through class discussion. The key discussion questions are: *"Why does the anemone sting the sea creatures?"*, and *"Why does the anemone NOT sting the clownfish?"*



**Michael's comments**

This picture book tells the story of an anemone that is shunned by other sea animals because it inadvertently stings them. However, a clownfish discovers that it is immune to the sting and that

the anemone provides it with a safe haven from other threats. At one level, the text is an attempt to imaginatively represent the symbiotic relationship between these two animals. At another level, it is a moral tale showing that one person's meat is another person's poison – or indeed, one person's fish is another person's *poisson*! In attributing human feelings of sadness and loneliness to lower-order animals, the anthropomorphism of this text misrepresents how nature truly works. Nor are the 'characters' particularly engaging anyway. Maybe the author's purpose could have been better realised through an information text.

## There's No Such Thing

Heidi McKinnon



Publisher:	Allen & Unwin
ISBN:	9781760877279
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Early Childhood

### Judge's Critique

This book is a delight from beginning to end. The illustrations are bold and fun. Night-time eyes dot the black backgrounds, enhancing the mood of the story. The reversed text stands out, with feature words in capitals for emphasis. The expressions and physical nuance of the characters reveal their feelings, while the dialogue between the two characters moves the story forward. Themes of imagination, monsters and friendship are woven into the story, along with a surprise ending that will delight young readers. This is a well-designed and high-quality production.



### Lorri's comments:

A charming children's picture book for young readers, best suited to K-2 students. Representation and character are key English concepts in the text. Two friends, Bear and Ted, go camping, a familiar scenario for many children and their families. Bear has a vivid imagination, and Ted is a realist. Ted is clearly much braver than Bear, even though Bear is big and Ted is small. Bear is scared of the dark and night sounds remind him of scary beasts and imaginary creatures. Ted extrapolates what the noises that Bear hears actually might be.

The delicious scariness of the text will engage and fire up young children's imaginations e.g. *It's very dark out there...* which could lead to class discussions about scary situations and happy situations, facilitating important classroom talk about feelings, helping students to make sense of their world. Descriptive nonsense words like *screeepy*, *boomba*, and *gaaah* make the text come alive in readers' minds, complemented by descriptive noun groups that add atmosphere and colour, e.g. *blood sucking spiders*.

An unexpected, delightful conclusion blurs the lines between the imaginary world and reality, which I suspect will be a fantastic springboard to writing. I can't wait to use this text in the K-2 reading-writing classroom!



### Michael's comments:

A delightfully scary narrative about a night-time camping experience. Bear imagines that all kinds of threats are lurking outside the tent (*blood-sucking spiders, hungry giant, fire-breathing dragon*), but little Ted reassures him with realistic explanations. In a surprise ending, Ted smells marshmallows being roasted over a fire – when he investigates he sees all three monsters that Bear had imagined! The book deals with the irrationality of fears in a light and humorous manner. More significantly, it examines ways in which we use our senses to make meaning of our world, asking us in particular to consider how we can use our senses of hearing, touch, taste and smell, when sight is not available to us. *There's no such thing* is perhaps first and foremost, however, an enthralling and suspenseful narrative with engaging characters.

## We Love You, Magoo

Briony Stewart



Publisher: Penguin Random House Australia

ISBN: 9781760896904

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Book of the Year: Early Childhood

### Judge's Critique

This simple rhyming text uses few words to convey the sense of playfulness and fun that begins on the front cover and carries through to the last page. The repetitive sentence structure leads readers from one of Magoo's misdemeanours to the next and encourages participation. The bright illustrations, making use of bold saturated colour, capture Magoo's loveable personality and his irrepressible antics, with the line and colour bringing his boundless energy to life. These carefully crafted illustrations show the world from Magoo's height perspective. The text and images balance well on the page, making this a high-quality picture book.



### Lorri's comments

I absolutely agree that this is a playful text to be enjoyed with very young children through repeated reading and revisiting. Kinder students would love this text! The illustrations are bright and colourful, and the black lines around illustrations frame the characters and settings, drawing the eye to particular elements of the illustrations, building context.

When students are well familiar with *We love you, Magoo*, I would identify the words that rhyme with students. We would together look for the digraphs within the words, making word lists to display in the classroom, useful as authoritative sources to support student writing, growing students' phonemic awareness (oral) and phonic knowledge (text).

I would also talk about character development throughout the text. I would guide class discussion about how Magoo feels at the get-go, and how he is feeling at the end of the book, and why we, the readers' feeling towards Magoo change throughout the text. Additionally, his carers... *Why do they act the way they do towards Magoo?* In this way I would discuss the English concept of representation with the students. Magoo is depicted in the text as a dog and his owner is telling him what to do.

Some key class discussion questions may be...

- *Does this story have any similarities to your life?*
- *Is there someone in your life who tells you what to do? Who? Why do you think they do this?*

A lively, energetic and colourful text that is begging to be shared for enjoyment and English development in the Kinder classroom.



### Michael's comments

A fun and light book, suitable for young readers, about a pet dog who humorously always wants what he cannot have. The family patiently and lovingly trains Magoo, helping him to realise he is a dog and not human. In the end, they find something they can give him: a delicious bone. Perhaps there is a subtle message here for young children about the need to accept the gentle guidance of family discipline.

## No! Never!

Libby Hathorn & Lisa Hathorn-Jarman (Illust: Mel Pearce)



Publisher:	Hachette Australia
ISBN:	9780734418906
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Book of the Year: Early Childhood

### Judge's Critique

A great title that positions readers right in the story before the book is even open. The addition of 'A Cautionary Tale' establishes the mood which is carried strongly in the tightly rhymed metre of the written text. The illustrations, executed in a child-like scribbly style, lend real vigour to the character's attitude and actions. They work with the written text to provide insight and extra information. The emotions of the protagonist are 'loud and clear,' as are the expressions of her parents and other characters. Young children being read to will delight in joining in the repetitive phrase, "No! Never!" The solution to the problem is neatly handled and although the resolution arrives quite clearly before the end of the book, readers will relate to Georgie's change of heart and new-found sense of cooperation. The underlying tongue-in-cheek sense of humour will delight both adult and child readers.



### Lorri's comments

Rhyme and repetition is a hallmark of this text, which situates it well to support phonological awareness in the early reading classroom. The text is very spoken-like, and children would love to join in with the repetitive line throughout, "No, no never!", in an angry, loud voice like the main character in the text, "*a [small] child, the sweetest ever....*" The child is naughtily defiant. She ignores her parents' reasonable requests to behave. Finally, her parents devise a tricky plan that should elicit deliciously deep conversations about feelings in the ES1 classroom.

Some key class discussion questions about this text could be:

- Why does Georgie say “No, no never!” to her parents?
- How does it make them feel when she tells them this?
- How is she feeling when she says it?
- Why does she finally stop saying “No, no never!”?
- How did her parents help her to stop saying it?
- When do you want to say, “No, no never!”?
- How could you change how you feel when this happens?

Vocabulary development in this text should include learning about and unpacking the meaning of the interesting noun group, “a cautionary tale” on the text cover, with students. The illustrations portray the feelings of the characters - coloured pencil, crayon lined with thin black ink for emphasis. Drawings are wild and woolly when the child misbehaves and more ordered and neater when the chaos at home has calmed. Illustrations lend themselves to enjoyable art activities particularly focusing on parts of the body, e.g., how our eyes are a window into our feelings. Additionally, talking with students about figurative language (idiom) in text, e.g., “What happens when the tables are turned?”



#### **Michael’s comments**

Clever, beautifully illustrated, book about a petulant child, Georgie, who answers *No! Never!* whenever she is asked to cooperate. The parents are at a loss about how to deal with this until they begin to use *No! Never!* in response to *her* wishes, showing her how it feels when others don’t cooperate with her. Georgie learns to say *Yes! I will!* and her life becomes much happier. The ‘*No! Never!* is put away/Until it is needed another day’ – a reminder that cooperation is generally the right track to follow, to get along with others, but sadly there will be situations in life where Georgie will need to refuse to cooperate. This book is a slightly more sophisticated companion piece for *We love you Magoo*, both texts dealing with the need for rules and cooperation. The realistic depiction of the family, the wilful child and the bemused parents, is tempered with much humour in both words and illustrations. Funny, relatable situations and characters make this a book for both parents and children to enjoy.

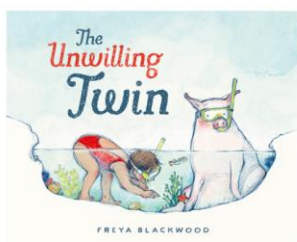


# PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Entries in this category should be outstanding books of the Picture Book genre in which the author and illustrator achieve artistic and literary unity or, in wordless picture books, where the story, theme or concept is unified through illustrations. Ages 0-18 years. (NB. Some of these books may be for mature readers).

## The Unwilling Twin

Freya Blackwood



Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers

ISBN: 9781460757536

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Picture Book of the Year

### Judge's Critique

This book about the relationship between 'twins' works on every level. Blackwood's artwork is pleasing and playful and rewards the reader with careful attention to the play between words and pictures. Her colours capture perfectly the small but enduring moments of summer such as long walks over hot sand and objections to being lathered in sun protection. At no time does Blackwood suggest this is an imaginary story. Her distinctive illustrative style – delicate and witty, carries the key to the entire story. A gentle, warm, evocative and tactile cover leads into endpapers that spark curiosity, followed by a title page full of snippets into characterisation that set up the story for the reader. The text is minimal and allows the illustrations to complete the author's intention. A gentle and heart-warming celebration of childhood.



### Lorri's comments:

Representation features highly in this text. *Are the two characters, Jules and George, really twins?* The back cover states the text is about sibling rivalry. This key question invites class discussions throughout the text. The juxtaposition of the images of the two main characters, Jules and George, is indeed humorous, possibly ironic and almost satirical- leading to discussions about the characters (point of view) and readers' (perspective) feelings as readers progress through the text. The illustrations do not quite match the words- suggesting a delightful alternate narrative to be explored, through investigating a combination of text and illustrations, which work together to make meaning.

There are some Tier Two vocabulary words that should be explicitly taught prior to reading the text with young students (suggest ES1 or early in S1). Words such as *identical twin, birthmarks, impossible, occasionally, massaged, and turret* could be frontloaded to support students in successfully joining into shared reading activities and to further facilitate meaning making. Additionally, a focus on morphology in spelling could assist students to begin to understand the meaning of common prefixes *un* (unwilling), *im* (impossible), suffixes *ing, ed* and compound words (*sometimes*).

English teaching points include the use of connectives and sentence complexity, e.g. *sometimes...*, contractions e.g. *it's, that's*, and complex punctuation e.g. ellipses. *This is the story of Jules...*; a discussion about inferential comprehension... e.g. "What does the composer

mean by... *George/Jules isn't always a willing twin...*“, “*Why do we occasionally disagree with our friends?*” ; and text cohesion e.g. following links between nouns and pronouns throughout the text.

In addition to representation, the English concepts of character and code and convention could be investigated in *The Unwilling Twin*. Nouns and verbs that describe the characters and their actions could be displayed on word charts in the classroom, as authoritative sources for writing, reinforcing the reading- writing connection. Code and convention, how words are arranged on the pages to achieve particular meanings, introduces students to word paths, story maps, vectors and salience. The overall theme of the text, the main idea, could possibly be something to do with how we are all the same, yet different, worthy of further unpacking with students.

Engagement with this text is pleasurable for teachers and students alike.



#### Michael's comments

This simple text about a girl and her 'twin' pig invites a comparison of similarities and differences, as represented in both text and images. Overall, not much substance to this text in my view.

## Not Cute.

Philip Bunting



Publisher:	Scholastic Australia
ISBN:	9781760972387
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Picture Book of the Year

#### Judge's Critique

A story with a strong, solid message and well-placed characterisation. Bunting is able to expand a single idea in a few, well-chosen words and seal the narrative off with a neat, amusing ending, largely told in his recognisable illustrative style. The final endpapers and the pale, natural colour scheme work extremely well to encapsulating the atmosphere and theme of the story. Design plays an important role in this book, both in the development of the characters and the 'moral' of the book. This is a great example of less is more and of how to get big ideas across in the simplest of styles – both visually and verbally.



#### Lorri's Comments

A delightful picture book for young children, K-2. An adorable quokka has decided he no longer wishes to be “cute.” This quokka likes to dress up. Other forest creatures comment on his cuteness, but the quokka does not want to be cute and tries hard to change his persona. This is a text to be enjoyed, read, and revisited; a great text for practising oral reading fluency.

I would also use this text to teach punctuation, figurative language, nouns, and verbs. Developing vocabulary, through building word consciousness in young children, is a feature of this enchanting text.

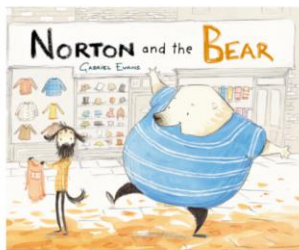


### Michael's comments

This picture book purports to be a fable – note the reference to Aesop at the end – with a moral about the need to be true to yourself. However, the silly story and the slightly disturbing ending undermine this serious purpose. The variety of 'saying' verbs is a potential resource for the classroom, but otherwise this is not a book for classroom study to my mind.

## Norton and the Bear

Gabriel Evans



Publisher:	Berbay Publishing
ISBN:	9780648785132
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Picture Book of the Year

### Judge's Critique

Taking the notion that 'imitation is the best form of flattery', Norton is a character who will be readily identified by readers as one who doesn't like anyone stealing his thunder. The illustrations are rendered with deftness that perfectly pace the story and depict Norton's increased anxiety as he tries to outsmart the Bear. The use of watercolour and pencils give the book a lovely ambience and Evans pitches his characters against white backgrounds. Characterisation is strong and readers will find it easy to empathise with Norton and Bear and their specific 'side of the story'. The visual and written text work perfectly and the typography is unusual but appropriate to the mood and style of the book. The resolution of the story, in which both characters are winners, is reassuring and pleasing. Text and the illustrations work as one, with animals and humans littered through several pages. Lots of detail with minimal fuss make this a delightful book.



### Lorri's comments

The endnotes and flypaper have lots of clothes (jumpers) drawn on them, an interesting orientation to the text which may lead to a class discussion about gender-specific clothing and gender stereotyping. Along with the cover, which shows the two main characters in front of a clothing shop window, we predict the text is about two people (represented by a dog and a bear) who like clothes. The back cover reveals the characters' names are Norton and the Bear, and Norton wants to look unique.

Vocabulary is a focus of this text. The words *horrified*, *identical*, *accessory*, *similar*, *annoying*, *disguised*, *decided*, *appreciate*, *sophistication* and *dratted* may be new vocabulary for young students and should be taught explicitly prior to reading the text together.

As well, figurative language terms e.g. “*fashion statement*”, “*dress differently*” and “*floral sophistication*” will need to be unpacked for young children.

I like the way the composer, Gabriel Evans, uses different colours for the direct speech /dialogue between the two main characters. This lends itself to acting out the story in-class, which is always lots of fun for all ages.

Character is the focus concept in this text. The reader learns that the way the main characters are constructed by the composer, invites a reader response. Initially, we feel sorry for Norton, being continually copied by Bear however at the end of the story, we learn that Norton also likes to copy, and he may also be annoying.

*Norton and the Bear* targets ES1, S1 classrooms, and its purpose is to entertain. It is useful for teaching the abovementioned aspects of English and the narrative invites reader discussion.

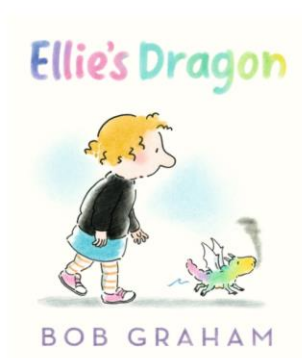


### Michael's comments

This picture book, suitable for Years 1/2, examines the notion of individuality. Norton prides himself on his distinctive dress and is frustrated when Bear copies his style. The story and illustrations invite comparisons: consideration of similarities and differences. Overall, this is a fun book, but offers little substance for classroom study.

## Ellie's Dragon

Bob Graham



Publisher:	Walker Books Australia
ISBN:	9781406387629
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Picture Book of the Year

### Judge's Critique

Graham literally bookends this book with endpapers that introduce and complete the story, beginning in what appears to be an ordinary supermarket. The high-production value of these endpapers make the reader inquisitive about the journey Ellie and her dragon Scratch go on together. The minimal text gives space to the artwork and design to provide additional information about the characters and the plot development. Scratch is endearingly characterised as he grows, first in Ellie's loving care and then without her. The visual device of transparency is used as a metaphor for growing up. Lovely characterisation of the mum, who is happy to simply accept Scratch as an imaginary friend; and the humour of dad and his extra passenger is so well placed to add further involvement and understanding of the characters.



### Lorri's comments

This text outlines the power of the imagination in young children. *Ellie's dragon* tells the tale of a child's imaginary friend, a dragon called Scratch, who shares her richly relatable childhood.

Scratch cannot be seen by adults. As Ellie grows, her imaginary friend becomes increasingly less important to her as she broadens her horizons and engages in different pursuits, and Scratch begins to fade from her life. Finally, when Ellie is 13, Scratch slips into the night and finds another young child to befriend.

The story is reminiscent of the timeless classic song, *Puff the magic dragon*, linking the English concept of intertextuality, introducing the idea that stories can be told in different ways. The engaging illustrations lend themselves to teaching perspective, and camera angle, how the viewer is situated to see the illustrations and how text and images work together to making meaning. Learning about how language works is a teaching focus of the text. Interesting noun groups e.g. *a fully grown, house-trained, affectionate dragon*; and sentence complexity e.g. *She heard a low, fiery furnace over the fence* (adverbial phrase telling where). Identifying verb groups in the story support students in writing about the text e.g. Key question: *What do dragons do?*

Dragons:

- Breathe fire
- Breathe smoke
- Fly
- Don't dance

I would also talk about the characters' feelings during class discussions in the delightful tale, e.g. how Ellie changes throughout the text, and how this makes Scratch feel. *Ellie's dragon* outlines the fleetingly magical time that is childhood. It is a wonderful that deserves to be shared!

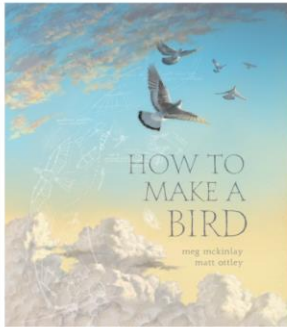


#### **Michael's comments**

*Ellie's dragon* is a powerful narrative, both thoughtful and emotive, a celebration of childhood and imagination. Younger readers will be thrilled by the idea of a dragon for a pet, while the inevitability of growing up will strike a chord with older primary students. The clever way in which Bob Graham represents the real and imagined in the beautiful illustrations is a feature of the text, inviting comparison with *Who's your real mum?* *Ellie's dragon* also explores the concept of point of view by allowing us to see the world through Ellie's eyes as she grows.

# How to Make a Bird

Matt Ottley (Text: Meg McKinlay)



Publisher: Walker Books Australia

ISBN: 9781925381894

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Picture Book of the Year

## Judge's Critique

Detailed, delicate and gently philosophical; in its movement from the practical to the universal this book suggests that there is more to a life than replicated parts. McKinlay and Ottley expand poignantly on the wonder of migratory birds while alluding to all-encompassing issues such as climate change in the illustrative reference to a house built high above the tide. There is a subtle but definite suggestion to take chances and breathe life into new ideas – perhaps the house so high is a reference to the child living with her head in the clouds, perhaps it is simply the place she goes to explore her ideas.

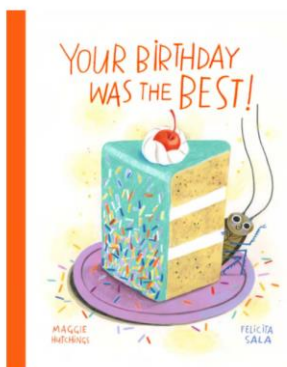


## Michael's comments

For some reason this picture book haunts me. At one level it is about the wonder of birds and their fascinating anatomy, enabling them to not only fly but to bravely traverse the globe. More than this, however, it is an imaginative guide about how to make a bird and is indeed written like a recipe or manual. In encouraging the maker to set the bird free to 'open sky and soaring flight', the text is commenting on the act of creation, the need to let go of the things we create as they take on a life of their own. Using quite simple language, certainly accessible for Year 3/4 students, Meg McKinlay poetically evokes the mystery and beauty of both the natural order and human creation. This text is perfectly complemented by Matt Ottley's exquisite illustrations that zoom in on precious details of avian anatomy, then open up to vast expanses of sky and the promise of freedom. Sublime!

# Your Birthday Was the Best!

Felicita Sala (Text: Maggie Hutchings)



Publisher: Affirm Press

ISBN: 9781925972535

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Picture Book of the Year

## Judge's Critique

The premise of this story is refreshingly new and offers a different perspective on birthday celebrations. Hutchings and Sala work in perfect union to introduce the reader to the amusing antics of these cockroach anti-heroes. The result is a series of witty situations which encourages the reader to consider that bugs might revel in all things gross such as hairy cheese and toenails. The minimal and powerful text gives room for the illustrations to carry much of the story. This book works on many levels; a scream of fear or a scream of excitement? Readers will delight in the inventiveness of this bold and uproarious story.



### **Lorri's comments**

*Your birthday was the best* made me laugh and laugh (and laugh some more)! Initially, I thought the story was told from the point of view of a party guest. Children were sitting around the party table eating, playing games, and having fun, a familiar scenario....

We need to set the scene for students with this text, by explicitly asking “What do you think this book is about?”, and “Who is telling the story in the text?” Through careful observation and discussion, students may notice the cockroach behind the cake on the cover, and the vacuum cleaner on the title page, lending themselves to creative interpretations of what the text may be about.

A cockroach has adopted a family and is excited to be included in the birthday party fun. Dad eradicates it with the vacuum cleaner, and it is deposited on the dustbin, where it is reunited with its extended family. However, the cockroach misses its human family so returns home, much to the chagrin of the family members!

What clever plot development and character portrayal in this text! Representation, narrative, and character are English concepts to investigate throughout. Everything in this book is topsy turvy - the cockroach is the main character, not the people, as evident through the illustrations. The text is written in capital letters and lower-case letters begin sentences, which some children will hopefully notice, drawing attention to code and convention in the text. The illustrations are more of a focus than the words on each page. By looking at the expressions on the faces of the characters throughout students are invited to retell the story in their own words, embellishing existing text with lots of additional description. *Your birthday was the best!* is a picture book for young children not to be missed!



### **Michael's comments**

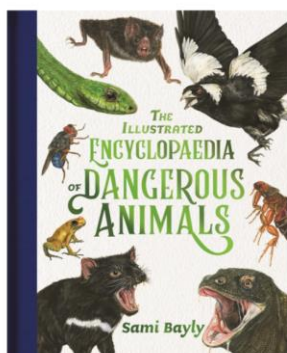
I thought this was a fun and engaging text. In telling the story of a birthday party from the point of view of a cockroach, it invites young students to retell other familiar stories from alternative points of view. This text is suitable for Years 1 and 2, although interestingly point of view does not figure significantly in the NSW English syllabus until Years 3 and 4, so this text could be used as an introduction to point of view for Stage 2 in conjunction with a more challenging text.

# EVE POWNALL AWARD

Entries in this category should be books which have the prime intention of documenting factual material with consideration given to imaginative presentation, interpretation and variation of style. Ages 0-18 years.

## The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Dangerous Animals

Sami Bayly



Publisher:	Hachette Australia
ISBN:	9780734420015
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

### Judge's Critique

Bayly challenges the idea that certain animals are 'too often seen as something to fear or kill instead of the fascinating creatures they are'. Exquisitely detailed illustrations enhance clearly written, well researched text. Examples include the Crown of Thorns Starfish; toxic to humans and devastating to the marine environment. Through the inclusion in the book of Black legged tick that transmits Lyme disease, Bayly argues the importance of 'creatures, no matter how annoying, have evolved to serve a purpose within their ecosystem'. This beautifully produced book will fascinate many readers.



### Lorri's comments

In addressing the criteria for this award, the text, *The illustrated encyclopaedia of dangerous animals* documents factual material about (some) little known creatures. Many of the creatures in the text are familiar to readers. Some creatures that I found fascinating were the Irukandji Jellyfish (p77), another, lesser known venomous stinger from northern Australia; and the kissing bug, which sucks its prey's blood from around the eyes. I was surprised to learn that a wolverine is not just a fictional movie character - it is actually a dangerous creature!

This text is the second by the author/ illustrator Sami Bayly. Her first, *The illustrated encyclopaedia of ugly animals*, also an award winner, is just as noteworthy and fascinating. Sami is a natural history illustrator, evident in the level of detail and specificity in her illustrations. It is an information text with detailed, life-like illustrations. The endpapers contain simple diagrams of animals from which children would love to trace or copy.

From a primary English teaching perspective, I would teach aspects of text layout in information texts using this book, in particular how the page layout supports the illustrations and vice-versa. Information about each creature is clearly laid out in accessible language for most S3 students under the subheadings of description, danger factor, conservation, diet, location and habitat. A fun facts section on each page gives additional, lesser known and fascinating information about each animal. Additionally, visual literacy can be taught from the text, including framing, and salience e.g. the Yellow Fever Mosquito. Vocabulary development is a focus of the text, especially those more challenging, Tier 3 level technical terms. E.g. the word "monoecious", meaning a living organism with both male and female body parts as in the Pork Tapeworm



(p93).

This book is one that primary students will open, pore over and fall into. The illustrations are almost scientifically diagrammatic in detail, and the text is clearly laid out so relevant information can be easily located; and the content is of high interest.



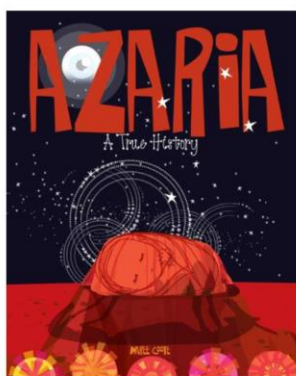
### Michael's comments

This is an impressive information text. At first I cynically thought the focus on 'dangerous animals', the more sensational members of the animal kingdom, was just an attempt to exploit our fears. However, the author takes some effort to show each animal in a more sympathetic light, like how they raise their young and how many are struggling to survive. Indeed, this encyclopaedia is a celebration of all living creatures, *including* the dangerous ones! The lengthy written text may discourage some young readers, but it is organised into manageable chunks. Illustrations are attractive, but some only show part of the animal and therefore do not give readers a good idea of what the whole animal looks like.

While definitely a science text, this book would also be an excellent companion to *Mechanica*, by Lance Balchin, a wonderful text very worthy of Stage 3 English study, as it would allow students to see how *Mechanica* subverts the genre of the field guide or animal encyclopaedia.

## Azaria: A True History

Maree Coote



Publisher: Melbournestyle Books

ISBN: 9780648568407

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

### Judge's Critique

This book is beautifully designed and eloquently written. It keeps readers transfixed by provoking them to re-evaluate the historical Chamberlain case, as well as question expectations of justice, truth and scientific evidence. The main character, Lindy Chamberlain, is developed through multiple perspectives; as a police suspect, a character in the media and, eventually, as a human. Carefully selected words and phrases create impact in making sure mistakes of the past are recognised but not repeated and that a heavy topic is made accessible. The sophistication of the illustrations and design are striking and match the tone of the text with the colour palette reflecting the Uluru setting.



### Lorri's comments

When I first obtained this text, I doubted its "kid appeal" as we are all too familiar with the sorrowful tale. Many Australians (I do) feel shame in relation to what this young family experienced and the tragic consequences that resulted. However, after sharing the text with a teacher friend, we

collectively decided it portrays a significant event in Australia's history, in an engaging, creative format, using accessible language for children. The text is beautifully presented, and should be shared, as in turn, the story of Azaria was shared with us, perpetuating the lessons we learned from this sorry saga with children today. Those lessons being to not judge too quickly, and things are not always as we are led to believe. On reflection, possibly the most important lesson to learn from this historical narrative may be that personal biases often skew peoples' perspectives on what actually happened.

The illustrations have a rich Aboriginal flavour, entirely appropriate in an historical narrative set at Uluru, the site of the recent Uluru Statement, enshrining a first Nations voice throughout the text. It pays homage to the vast wisdom of our Aboriginal Australians in relation to country. Did local Aboriginal people try and tell the police what happened at the time of Azaria's disappearance and were they ignored? There is inference in this text that suggests this may have occurred.

It is certainly a worthwhile text to study in-class from an English teaching perspective. For example, the visual literacy of the text is exemplary - p4/5 has THE BEST story map that visually retells the story and draws the reader into the text, through a series of holiday snaps. Examples of framing, salience and vectors are ubiquitous throughout the text, supporting teachers in modelling how words and illustrations work together to construct meaning for the reader. Wonderful use of conjunctions and connectives throughout e.g. "*Like most visitors, their first day at the rock...; But like most adventures, ...; You see, on that very night ... and a dingo took a baby.*"

*Azaria: a true history* is a persuasive text. We the readers are situated the feel and think in certain ways about the historic events portrayed. It lends itself to discussions about the English textual concept of authority (e.g., p24, 25):

- What evidence was used to convict the woman in the text?
- What evidence was used to release her from jail?
- What do we now know about the behaviour of dingoes?
- What evidence do we have for thinking in this way?
- How did the public's thinking about the Azaria disappearance change over time? Why?

The audience is around S2, S3 - a stunning picture book for older readers. The purpose of this text is to inform and persuade the reader about events on the 17 August 1980, when a tiny baby called Azaria was tragically taken by dingoes and killed; and her mother Lindy, who continues to suffer the heart-wrenching consequences of her loss to this day. This story is burned into Australia's psyche forever, and this text supports its retelling to our children.



### **Michael's comments**

Definitely a Stage 3 (or even 4) text, *Azaria: a true history* is a sophisticated and important picture book. The author carefully avoids focusing too much on the sad death of baby Azaria, explaining that

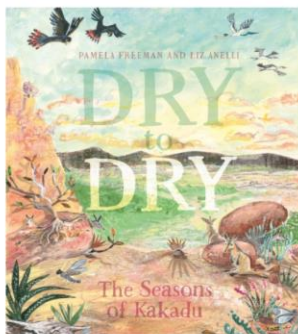
the dingoes were just doing what they naturally do. Rather, she scrutinises the process by which the innocent mother, Lindy, was wrongfully accused and then found guilty of her baby's murder. This text seeks to tell the true story, not to sensationalise it, exploring how the police, media and many Australians got it wrong. Let's not forget also that it's a new story for Australians born after 1980.

One of the significant achievements of this text is how the writer manages to examine the nuances of a painful and complex event in Australian history using such accessible language. Newspaper clippings alert readers to the media's culpability in spreading misinformation. The beautiful illustrations, many using Aboriginal motifs, add significantly to the story, providing both a natural and spiritual salve for the sorry events, a kind of subtle healing. The text also reminds us that the local Aboriginal people, the Anangu, said from the start that a dingo was probably responsible for the baby's death. The remarkable ways in which the text represents an historical event, and examines different responses to that event, make it very suitable for study of the English textual concepts of representation and perspective.

This story fearlessly goes to the heart of the national psyche. It shows how truth can become twisted and how misinformation can become truth in the minds of people. It confronts us with mistakes we have made in the past – but only by confronting these mistakes are we able to move forward. Significantly, the author chooses to retell this story to children, the hope of our future.

## Dry to Dry: The Seasons of Kakadu

Pamela Freeman (Illust: Liz Anelli)



Publisher:	Walker Books Australia
ISBN:	9781760650285
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

### Judge's Critique

This book explores the changing seasons of Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory. Offering parallel texts of narrative and factual information, the book is poetic and engaging. The language used transports readers to Kakadu and keeps them engaged through the change in font, size and direction of text, making the words to jump out at the reader. Additional information at the end of the book, as well as a discussion on the seasons that the Indigenous people of Kakadu recognise, highlight the importance of Kakadu to traditional owners, adding to the overall high-quality production of this book.



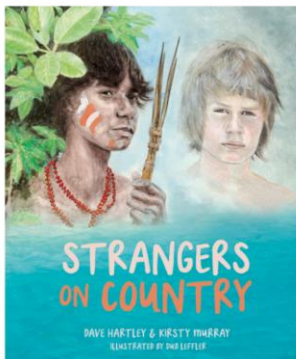
Kakadu is indeed a wondrous place. This text, *Dry to dry: the seasons of Kakadu*, invites the reader to look closely at the intricate and deep illustrations and notice the magic of these unique landscapes. We are invited to "Look closer! Look out! ...". The composer then records what the reader observes e.g. "There is a northern long-necked turtle that has buried itself safely in the cool mud...". There are two types of text in the book. First, in a larger font, the composer explains Kakadu to readers, with passion, explaining the seasons of Kakadu, its geographic features and the flora and fauna that can be found there. This text is rich in imagery and

figurative devices e.g. “*Lightning and thunder! The first kiss of rain on the blazing dry grasslands*”. Words are emphasised in a variety of sizes and fonts, to draw the readers’ attention. Learning about noun groups, verb groups and sentence complexity using this quality text would be exciting for teachers and students alike. E.g. “*High in the sky over the Yellow Water Wetlands, the red-tailed black cockatoos flock noisily to their night time home, a grove of eucalypts, before afternoon storm clouds gather*”. Additionally each page contains factual information related to the illustrations and text on each page. Although the field is the same for both segments of text (all about Kakadu), the tenor changes, evidenced by the relationship between the composer and the reader. The larger initial text (Times New Roman) contains emotive, colourful language, full of the composer’s passion for her subject; whereas the factual passage discreetly placed on each page, is more authoritative and contains more technical language (Tier 3 vocabulary) e.g. *acidic rains, monsoon season, humidity and estuaries*.

The hand painted map of Kakadu in the back of the book contains intricate factual detail. As well, the *About Kakadu* factual summary is succinct and provides additional information that is easy for most primary students to read and understand. There is also some local Aboriginal language words, describing the seasons of Kakadu, as well as a comprehensive index. This text presents factual information to the reader in an imaginative and engaging way.

## Strangers on Country

David Hartley & Kirsty Murray (Illust: Dub Leffler)



Publisher:	National Library of Australia
ISBN:	9780642279552
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

### Judge's Critique

This book is a sensitive collaboration depicting five instances of first contact interactions between Aboriginal peoples and early white colonisers. Skilfully derived from the NLA's Living with the Locals: Early Experience of Indigenous Life, five stories feature young European castaways, escaped convicts and a shipwrecked girl and boy, all adopted by Indigenous communities along the North east coast of Australia. Supported by factual accounts of these stories, this well organised, thoroughly researched and beautifully illustrated production presents nuanced readings of colonial history accessible to readers from primary school upwards.



### Lorri's Comments

This text, *Strangers on Country* would be an excellent text to teach perspective and point of view in the S3 classroom. Based on fact and written from both a European and an Aboriginal view, the text retells 5 short stories about Europeans living in traditional Aboriginal society, at the time of European invasion. What makes this text unique is that it describes in-depth the views of Aboriginal people in each of the stories, juxtaposed to the Europeans whom each story is about. The setting of the text is various tribal groups on the north eastern coastline of Australia and the Torres Strait. One of the authors is Aboriginal, Dave Hartley; and the other is European, Kirsty Murray. The illustrator, Deb Leffler, also illustrated the text, *Bindi*, above.

Each story is told through the eyes of the Aboriginal person who found the European person on the beach, as a result of a shipwreck or being left behind by their crew for various reasons. The European person gives their point of view of what occurred and what it was like living in traditional Aboriginal society over many years. Finally, there is a “The Facts” section at the back of each story, which outlines the historical data on which the story is based. “The Facts” section comprises photographs, scientific diagrams and drawings, journal entries and artworks; giving the text a degree of authority. Based on the evidence provided, the text is well-researched.

Most of the stories conclude with the European person being rescued by European seafarers, and the person choosing to return to their birth families, after being well treated and nurtured by their Aboriginal families. In the final story, however, two boys are captured by an Aboriginal Islander tribal group. The group murders the survivors of a shipwreck who wash up on the beach, capture the two young boys and hold them as prisoners. The boys are mistreated, and rescued by another tribal group, further evidence that not all Aboriginal tribal groups, understandably, wished to interact with Europeans; nor lived in harmony with other tribal groups at the time of European invasion. The boys remained with their Aboriginal family for two years before choosing to return to their own kin.

*Strangers on country* is a children’s’ version of an adult book by John Maynard and Victoria Haskins, *Living with the locals: Early Europeans’ experience of Indigenous life*. Early Australia, with its penal beginnings, was a harsh place, and this book is testament to the fact that some Aboriginal tribal groups provided refuge for castaways and convicts when they needed shelter in the early years. It provides a different lens to that commonly used to look at our past, and is important reading for young adults (suggest Stage 3) when studying first contact in primary history. The short story genre, as well as its focus on point of view and authority, make it a worthwhile text to study in-class in subject English.

## Hold On! Saving the Spotted Handfish

Gina M Newton (Illust: Rachel Tribout)



Publisher:	CSIRO Publishing
ISBN:	9781486311842
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

### Judge's Critique

This fascinating and well-researched recount of the Spotted Handfish, a little-known species which was alive in the time of the dinosaurs, tells the story of observant scuba divers who stopped the destruction of the fish as dissection specimens which lead to a Recovery Plan and Captive Breeding program. Concisely communicated and detailed illustrations depict the Spotted Handfish species and its underwater Tasmanian habitat, through an engaging first-person narrative. The glossary and abbreviations exemplify lucid science writing. Demonstrating the impact of Citizen Science programs this book encourages young readers to consider the impact of human behaviour on one particular species, and, to sea creatures generally.



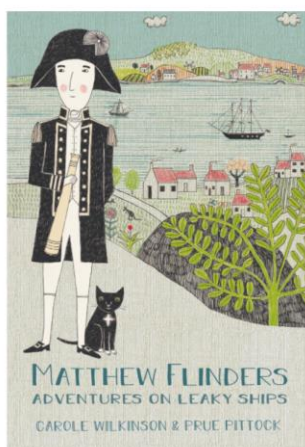
## Lorri's comments

A book about an endangered species: the spotted handfish. The species traditionally was ubiquitous off the coast in Southeast Australia. It is now only located in a small region off the coast of Tasmania. The text touches on a range of creatures at serious risk of extinction. It is an interesting mix of fact and humour. It is a vulnerability check for this unique fish species that walks on the bottom of the ocean. This peculiar fish does not swim because it has no swim bladder.

The text is written from the point of view of the fish - useful for teaching this English concept with young children. It describes the life cycle of this fish. Although this text deals with the possible extinction of a species, it is a story of hope. Scientists are working hard to manage environmental threats to this species. At the back of the book is a spotted handfish observation timeline (links to mathematics), and a glossary of Tier 3 related vocabulary, useful for building word awareness. Text layout is attractive and colourful.

## Matthew Flinders - Adventures on Leaky Ships

Carole Wilkinson (Illust: Prue Pittock)



Publisher:	Wild Dog Books
ISBN:	9781742034935
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

### Judge's Critique

This book presents an engaging overview of Matthew Flinders' life and journeys. Factual information is cleverly conveyed through a narrative format that engages readers through accompanying contemporary-feeling illustration style and design choices. The author has chosen fascinating information to build the reader's understanding of Flinders' life and experiences and this is supported by the addition of a timeline, glossary and maps. The illustrations are whimsical and depict an accurate representation of the life and times of the age, adding to the factual nature of the book.



## Lorri's comments

In this text, Matthew Flinders' life story is told in the form of an historical narrative. I loved the simple lead and coloured pencil illustrations throughout the text. Students may have lots of fun appropriating the unusual and unique artwork using a range of coloured pencil technique, which is quite child-like in its presentation.

We learn early on that the book, *Robinson Crusoe*, influenced his life choice to become an adventurer on the sea. James Cook was another major influencer, as Flinders wished to finish

what Cook had begun, to complete the mapping of the coastline of Australia.

The text contains a detailed map showing Finders' four major journeys. He is accredited with the "discovery" of the Chappell Islands, which he named after his wife. He proved that Van Diemen's Land was an island, and named Bass Strait after his sailing partner, George Bass. In the text, we also learn why the Great Barrier Reef is so named - it really is a barrier that acts as protection of the coastline from the open ocean. Flinders is also accredited with naming the continent of Australia. Joseph Banks wanted the continent named *Terra Australis* - Latin for Great South Land. However, in 1824, Finders suggested it be shortened to *Australia*.

Students learn about many Tier 3 specialist vocabulary words throughout the text, particularly in relation to navigation and sailing e.g. *latitude, longitude, sextant*.

Features of the text, which present the information in a creative, easy-to-access way for readers, include a timeline (which is almost a story map) and an accessible glossary for young readers (at the back of the book). In terms of the criteria for the Eve Pownall Award, *Matthew Flinders: Adventures on a leaky ship* certainly documents factual material in creative, accessible ways, making history come alive for young readers.

It will be interesting to see whether contemporary public opinion about Matthew Flinders wavers, as has that of his mentor, James Cook.



Photo taken by author. State Library, Sydney, NSW.

# CBCA AWARD FOR NEW ILLUSTRATOR

This Award aims to recognise and encourage new talent in the field of Australian children's book illustration. Ages 0-18 years.

## Ribbit Rabbit Robot

Sofya Karmazina



Publisher: Scholastic Australia

ISBN: 9781743834060

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Crichton Award

### Judge's Critique

The illustrator of this unusual and refreshing book creates a fun mood through the use of bright, layered colours and great expression that enhance the narrative tension maintained throughout this story about a frog, a rabbit and a robot. Karmazina has been able to elevate these mad, crazy characters to a whole new level. She demonstrates the ability to tell the story through all elements of the book including, the cover and the endpapers. Her characterisation is strong and she has used acrylic paint to great expressive effect. The economy of the text has been successfully taken up by the illustrator making this a hugely enjoyable book. Karmazina's witty and clever illustrations make this a book that rewards on each subsequent reading.



### Lorri's comments

The illustrations in this text are imaginative, colourful and have high kid appeal. There are three main characters including the frog, rabbit and robot. All the characters are drawn from basic shapes and elaborated on with intricate details. The text would lend itself to interesting drawing activities with children. In fact, the illustrator, Sofya Karmazina, models how she made each illustration in tutorials on-line, which comprise a useful teaching resource when using the text in-class.

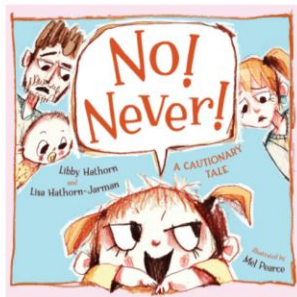
The story is about three friends, when rummaging in an antiques shop, find a magic lamp, reminiscent of the story of Aladdin, an example of intertextuality for young children. It supports phonics development in early readers as the onomatopoeia in the text changes from *ribbit*, to *rabbit*, to *rubbit* by changing the medial sounds in words. Wonderful examples of alliteration begin with the title, *Ribbit*, *Rabbit*, *Robot*, and continue throughout the text e.g. *row it*, *ride it*, *rev it*. There are also opportunities for students to develop their morphological spelling skills in "reboot" which would lead to discussions about the prefix "re" meaning again to indicate repetition. Code and convention in the text leads to discussions about how words are arranged on the page, story paths and various font sizes used for emphasis. The friends rub (*rubbit*) the lamp and a genie appears with an exciting message for readers.

A strength of this text is the rich opportunity for deep discussion about how text and illustrations work together. Great for modelled, guided and independent writing activities in the K-2 classroom.



# No! Never!

Mel Pearce



Publisher:	Hachette Australia
ISBN:	9780734418906
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	CBCA Award for New Illustrator

## Judge's Critique

The energy and angry defiance of Georgie – the recognisable toddler who says, “No! Never!” to all requests – is perfectly rendered in Pearce’s apparent child-like artistic style. Using hand-drawn images, which have been digitally coloured builds the pace and explosions of emotions – for the adult and child characters. A colour-palette limited to browns and pinks heighten a sense of frustration. Speech bubbles are full of energetic execution and demand readers to join in on subsequent readings. The emotions of the protagonist are ‘loud and clear,’ as are the expressions of her parents and other children included. Each page brings a variety of design devices – from full-page bleeds, to graphically sequenced events which builds up the reader’s understanding of Georgie’s life as a toddler trying to establish her own agency. The underlying tongue-in-cheek sense of humour will delight adult and child readers.



## Lorri's Comments

I have critiqued this text above. Comments that relate specifically to the illustrations include:

“The illustrations portray the feelings of the characters- coloured pencil, crayon lined with thin black ink for emphasis. Drawings are wild and woolly when the child misbehaves and more ordered and neater when the chaos at home has calmed. The illustrations in the text lend themselves to enjoyable art activities particularly focusing on parts of the body, e.g., how our eyes are a window into our feelings”.

# Seven Seas of Fleas

Dave Petzold



Publisher:	Starfish Bay Publishing
ISBN:	9781760360986
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Crichton Award

## Judge's Critique

This fantastical journey across a backyard during a comical dog-washing session is full of action and colour and fun. Petzold’s artwork makes the book live and as a new illustrator he has done well using quickness in line and attitude to deliver a human character and a dog with personality. Using a limited colour palette of teal blues, yellows and the odd red splotches of colour, the digital illustrations reference a stylish use of printmaking to engage us in the boy’s world of flea elimination. This wonderful print-maker feel of many objects, with their sharply defined edges contrasting to the shaggy, flea-ridden dog introduce us to a promising new talent.



## Lorri's comments

I absolutely loved the fleas compiled from thumb (prints) dipped in ink. This is an all- time

favourite activity in primary art lessons. Illustrations throughout the text are humorous, imaginative and engaging for young children. Illustrations comprise printing and collage, with a limited colour palette for emphasis.



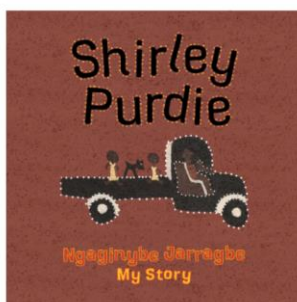
This imaginative text is about a boy, Bryce McFee who is sick of washing fleas from the family dog. So... he has an exciting adventure in his imagination which involves magical garden creatures. Rhyme, repetition, alliteration are features of this text. Word order is unusual e.g.



This text, *Seven Seas of Fleas*, should lead to interesting classroom discussions about a range of poetic devices and poetic form.

## Shirley Purdie: My Story, Ngaginybe Jarragbe

Shirley Purdie



Publisher: Magabala Books

ISBN: 9781925936131

Awards Year: 2021

Category: CBCA Award for New Illustrator

### Judge's Critique

There is strength in the simplicity of these illustrations that belie the profound nature of this autobiographical story. The dot work used as an outline is effective and complements the written text also surrounded by dots. The use of Indigenous language is paramount to telling a story that belongs to another culture. The art style falls into a naive-indigenous genre which is a whole new concept transcending the two cultures. Glorious earth colours convey meaning to the print text. The endpapers exemplify the sophistication of this artist's design aesthetic and the extra text at the end of the book provides information which allows the reader to understand the author's story at a deeper level.



### Lorri's comments

Shirley Purdie is a contemporary Indigenous Australian artist, as well as being the title of this

text, her first children's book. The book tells *her* life story, in English and Gigi, an Aboriginal language from the Kimberley region in Western Australia.

This text is a series of vignettes, in words and pictures. Through reading and perusing this text we learn her about traditional Aboriginal culture, her Dreaming and her working life as a maid on a cattle station. As well, we learn about Shirley's current life as a notable Aboriginal artist, who uses richly textured ochre and charcoal in her work.

The publishers (Magabala Books) state, "*the series focuses on developing the skills of Kimberley Aboriginal artists in children's picture book storytelling and illustration*". It is more than a worthy candidate for the CBCA new illustrator award. *Shirley Purdie* has my vote.

## This Small Blue Dot

Zeno Sworder



Publisher: Thames & Hudson Australia

ISBN: 9781760761110

Awards Year: 2021

Category: The Crichton Award

### Judge's Critique

This book is a visual and verbal celebration of the creativity of a child's mind when welcoming a new sibling into the world. Sworder uses a surprising array of mixed-media images on each page to illustrate his often-abstract concepts about life, ecology and sustainability. The incorporation of chalk drawings by a child into the endpapers provide convincing representations of the world of children. This book is an example of an insightful, contemporary work of art with an understanding of how picture books work for child readers. The execution of design and colour demonstrate a pleasing confidence for a new illustrator.



### Lorri's Comments

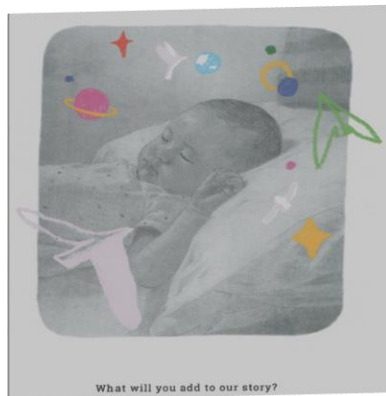
This section of the CBCA Book Awards considers the work of new illustrators so I will focus on the illustrations in the text, whilst briefly outlining the content. *This small blue dot* is about a small girl who describes living on Earth (a small blue dot that we need to care for together) in a series of lessons. The author/illustrator, Zeno Sworder, calls his main character Miss Crayon in an on-line interview, but this is not mentioned in the text. The text is told through her eyes, first person present tense. I think the text is suited to Stage 1 or 2. Its purpose is to inform and entertain. It is a very spoken-like text, e.g. *Our dot is pretty great and we only have this one, so we need to take care of it*. Zeno Sworder shares that he wrote the text for his two daughters, to share the wisdom of his family members from different parts of the world, no longer living. There is a strong multicultural flavour throughout the text. Sworder states, "*You sail through life on a carpet woven from the love and wisdom of your ancestors. Having a wild imagination helps you to make up your own story. You can create worlds with crayons and a piece of paper*".

The first and last two pages contain intricate greyscale lead pencil drawings, full page illustrations.

Miss Crayon is giving advice to a newborn. *Welcome to Earth...*, The text concludes with, *What will you add to our story?* These pages state the theme of the text, evidenced throughout: the interconnectedness of life and our shared responsibility in caring for our world.

The body of the text is brightly coloured. Primary coloured backgrounds are covered with a child's crayon drawings, which outline life lessons for the reader, told through the eyes of a child. Some of the pages are almost mind maps, diagrams that explain Miss Crayon's thinking. She informs the reader about the vastness of mother nature and the oceans with wonderment. She praises the imagination and how it enriches our lives when we look for creativity in the everyday.

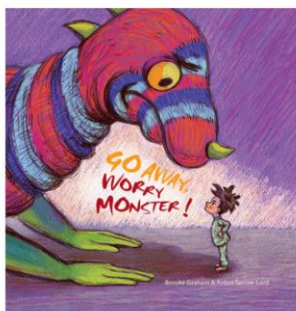
The text deals with scientific content (planets, the sky, space travel, human evolution) in a child friendly way. As well, the importance of love, friendship, favourite desserts around the world and living a magical life, all contribute to having the best life we can on our 'small blue dot'.



Sworder, Z. (2020)

## Go Away, Worry Monster!

Robin Tatlow-Lord



Publisher:	EK Books
ISBN:	9781925820393
Awards Year:	2021
Category:	The Crichton Award

### Judge's Critique

Tatlow-Lord has used coloured pastel pencils on dark-coloured surfaces to create an evocative interpretation of night-time, to impressive effect. Her rich and textured drawings support the minimal text and create a colourful worry monster; a quirky version of a dragon with a sock on its head. The illustrations 'grow' and 'diminish' the ego/worry monster to reassure children about common night-time fears. The use of design to pace and heighten the atmosphere of the tale is to be commended in someone new to this narrative form. Tatlow-Lord's illustrations are confident and well considered and will help readers relate to this story.



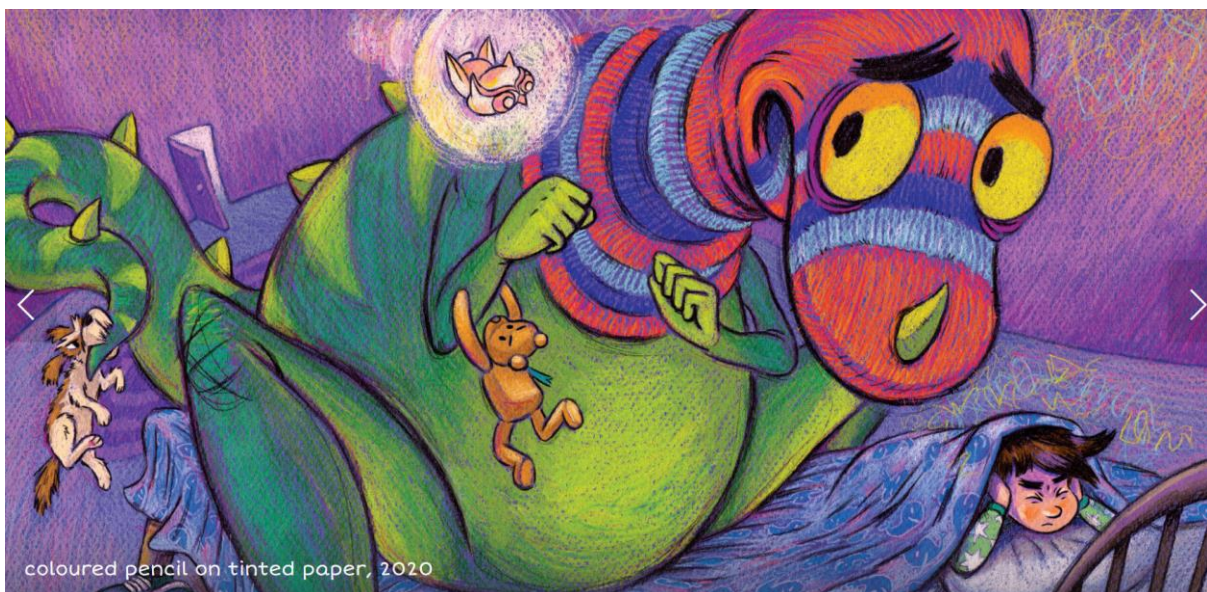
### Lorri's comments

The illustrations in this text are bright and appealing. The background colour in the text is

purple, suggesting night time and a scary setting. Contrasting to this, the illustrations are bright colours, which stand out due to the dark background. There are lots of interesting textures in the illustrations. You can even see the different colours of knitted stitches on the worry monster, which may elicit interesting conversations with young children.

The text has two main characters- a worry monster and a boy called Archie who is worried about starting at a new school. Archie is reminded about all his (possible) worries by the worry monster, who looks a lot like a sock puppet with the body of a dragon. Archie worries so much that his head hurts, his tummy flutters and his heart pounds. Archie follows a series of simple steps to manage his anxiety that children could follow if needed, including deep breathing, considering the facts, and being assertive. Through following these steps, Archie makes the worry monster disappear. *Go Away, Worry Monster!* provides children with useful strategies to manage stress and anxiety. At the get-go, the worry monster is larger than life. As Archie becomes more assertive by following his series of steps, he grows in confidence and stature. Juxtaposed to this, the worry monster shrinks until he finally disappears. Perspective is cleverly used by the illustrator to contrast how the characters develop throughout the text.

This quality text is beautifully illustrated. The illustrations work together with the text to identify aspects of character in this imaginative book. I would have to make sock puppets with my class after reading this text. As well, we would have art lessons comprising texture rubbing so students understand the clever artwork that is evident in this text. There are some interesting tier 2 vocabulary words that require explicit teaching, and would support student writing activities e.g. *decided, scrawled, realised* and *favourite*.



<http://www.robintatlowlord.com/>