

## **'SPACE FOOTY' AND OTHER STORIES'**

Companion to **'MY HORRIBLE COUSINS' AND OTHER STORIES.**

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|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Space Footy          | science fiction          |
| 2. The Alien            | adventure                |
| 3. FatCat & Alfie       | animal adventure         |
| 4. Liar, Liar           | humorous                 |
| 5. Saving the Bay       | adventure                |
| 6. Medal of Courage     | report.                  |
| 7. The Hippodrome       | historical fiction       |
| 8. Ghost-ercise         | mystery                  |
| 9. Freaky!              | science fiction          |
| 10. Rollerblade Heroes. | a novella: magic realism |

## **Introduction**

These stories are suitable for students who are fluent readers. Nevertheless, there are the easier-to-read ‘The Alien’ and ‘Liar, Lair’ as well as other more difficult stories that aim to develop the reader’s ability to deal with longer sentences and more complex vocabulary, comprehension and concepts.

These stories and exercises aim to help students:

- recognize mood and empathize with characters
- predict future occurrences
- read and access information for specific purposes
- improvise text and alter story lines
- call on previous knowledge
- form opinions
- make reference to authors and literary allusions
- think critically and evaluate
- recognize metaphors as both text and theme
- see reading as an enjoyable activity
- extend vocabulary
- identify setting, main characters, theme and occurrences in literary text, structures, orientation, complication and resolution.

### **These teacher notes offer:**

- a summary of key facts
- a synopsis
- hints on relevant themes and issues
- quick assistance in introducing the story in an appropriate manner and may provide a guide to further resources.
- suggestions for related activities such as writing exercises, discussion topics and debates.

### **Why bother to read fiction?**

At a time when so much information can be gained reading newspapers, magazines, watching TV and roaming the internet, some people argue that fiction no longer has a place in everyday

life. Nevertheless, there are many people who enjoy reading about other people, other times and other ways of seeing the world.

Fiction can take readers into areas they may never be able to explore. It can make a reader feel less isolated, discover ways to overcome a bully, make a comment on the everyday life around us, and help extend our imaginations. It can force readers to look at things in new and unusual ways, and help us lose ourselves in a story when 'real' life becomes unpleasant and we need to escape. Reading fiction can help us find new and better ways to express ourselves and communicate with friends and family.

### **Why read short stories?**

Short stories are pithy. Like poems, they make their mark with the least number of words. Short stories often seem to begin in the middle and end in the middle. Some short stories are so short you have to read them very carefully to get the point they might be making. However, it is said that writing a good short story is very like creating an excellent life drawing for an artist. Writing a good short story will teach you how to write. And many short stories help you understand the world around you. A final and excellent reason for enjoying a short story is that they are short and can be read in one sitting.

### **Why are these 'stories about boys'?**

Though all these are stories about boys, they were written for both girls and boys to read and enjoy. However, being a boy means that there are certain rules you are expected to follow in order to be accepted. Some of these rules are learnt from a very early age - like it's cool to like sport and hate reading. Like it's cool not to show your feelings and to be tough. You might like to ask yourself:

- Who makes these rules?
- What happens to you if you break them?
- What are you supposed to be good at?
- What are you supposed to be bad at?
- What's the worst thing that can be said about a boy?
- What's the best?

### **Some different ways of reading**

Students could try:

- reading aloud to the class
- reading to themselves
- reading aloud to a small group
- acting out some of these stories
- Creating video and audio playbacks
- Looking up further background material on the internet

### **Creating a readers' theatre**

- In a readers' theatre, stories are shared aloud with others.
- Readers should sit on in front of the audience so they can be clearly seen.
- Don't use props or sound effects.
- Movements are kept to a minimum.
- Readers should read slowly and clearly so the audience can hear.
- Readers should look up from time to time as they read
- Making an audio recording
- Making a short DVD

### **Moving from a short story to a play or film script**

Many well-known films and even musicals began their lives as short stories or as novels.

Some famous examples of this are *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Mao's Last Dancer*, *Nim's island*, the Harry Potter novels.

You might also like to read the article at the end of these notes.

# 1. SPACE FOOTY

**Text Type.** Narrative

**Text details:** Science Fiction. Third person. Past tense.

**KLA's:** SOCE. Science. Environment.

## **Synopsis:**

In a far flung future, Ioli and Aarvi, two young aliens, join forces with Jackson, a human boy. On first meeting they are only too ready to dislike each other for their differences. After a while certain similarities begin to emerge. It takes them some time, but eventually they realize how much stronger they can be if they come together to overcome Red taking over Starship X.

## **Text type:**

**In a science fiction story, the trend is that it:**

- starts with the premise 'what if'
- describes a society that is scientifically possible and technologically based
- is future oriented
- uses other worlds
- is often a quest
- has some kind of internal logic
- contains unusual but sustained characters with whom the read can identify

## **Major themes:**

1. This story is written from two points of view (POV), the so called Igs and Jackson, a human. Both sides have heard terrible stories about the other and both are equally scared. To begin with, in each others' eyes they look ugly. However when all three become prisoners on Starship X they must search for ways to communicate until they finally join forces to overcome Red.

2. Aarvi finds mucking around with Ioli can be a dangerous activity as it gets them both into trouble. Consider ways of remaining friends with someone like Ioli and staying out of 'trouble'.

**Background:**

Though this story is set in a far distant future, boys from differing ethnic and racial groups often dislike each other for no good reason other than ignorance and hostility.

In a famous experiment called the “Cave Robber Experiment” two dozen twelve-year-old boys in a summer camp formed two groups, ‘Rattlers’ and ‘Eagles’. They were first persuaded to behave aggressively towards each other, then to cooperate. Friction was stimulated by a tug-of-war, then harmony by close contact and the introduction of goals that neither group could meet alone.

This experiment demonstrated that conflict and enmity between groups can be transformed into cooperation and vice versa and that circumstances, goals, and external manipulation can alter behavior. Some have seen the findings of the experiment as suggesting ways to reduce hostility among racial and ethnic groups and among nations.

**Discussions Points:**

1. War has been around since humans first inhabited the world. So are gangs attacking other gangs for the only reason that they might come from other countries, have a different religion or look ‘different’. Does this always have to be the case? Can you suggest ways to overcome these animosities?
2. Some kids attract trouble because they don’t always think an action through to its consequences. Would this story have been different if that game of ‘Space Footy’ was played elsewhere?

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**Discuss:**

1. If a friend’s suggestion sets off an alarm signal in your head and you don’t want to look like wimp, what can you do to change his mind?
2. Space Footy is purely an imaginary game. However one day when we do inhabit more worlds, this game may become real. Can you design:
  - a. How this game is played?
  - b. Some of the more important rules.
3. Consider the various backgrounds of some of the kids at your year. Do all those groups get on? How many stick to their own ethnic group? Why? What can be done to make all the kids hang out together?
4. Jackson thinks Ioli and Aarvi look like monkeys. Argue the pros and cons of viewing people as animals.

**Write:**

1. Write a letter to Ioli and Aarvi's parents arguing that they shouldn't be punished for being in the hangar.
2. Write a letter to back to Earth arguing that Jackson deserves a medal for bravery.
3. Write a newspaper article about the mutiny on Starship X.
4. Write a magazine article offering:
  - advice for handling another ethnic group
  - advice for handling difficult friends
  - advice for playing Space Footy

**Activities:**

1. Draw a map of the space station showing where the space hangar is located.
2. Design a starship with its own central control areas, fuel machines, crew and captain's cabins, gym, leisure areas, water recycling and hydroponic areas.
3. Is there an issue in your school or neighborhood that can bring everyone together?
4. Find out more about new migrants who may be having problems being accepted by the locals in their neighborhood.
5. Illustrate a cover for this story.
6. Can you think of a better title?

**Debate:**

- Newcomers should always try to fit in with the locals.
- Some groups can never be persuaded to like others.
- War is inevitable, there's never been a time without it.

**WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY.**

There are too many stories in the media about different ethnic groups in my town ganging up on each other. These are only matched by the horrible stories that come from overseas where one group actually murders another for 'being different.' This was my way of showing how people getting together can achieve a positive outcome.

## 2. THE ALIEN

**Text Type.** Narrative.

**Text Details:** Science Fiction. Third person. Past tense.

**KLA's:** Civics and citizenship. Geography. Science. SOCE.

### **Synopsis:**

An Alien crash lands on Earth when Damon and his brother Josh set off for a fishing trip with their grandfather or 'Gramps'. But not of these are alone. Tom and Bert are at their camp site, and Bert isn't friendly. So in the end it takes a vegetarian telepathic alien spider to help Josh overcome these trespassers.

### **Text type**

**In a science fiction story, the trend is that it:**

- starts with the premise 'what if'
- describes a society that is scientifically possible and technologically based
- is future oriented
- uses other worlds
- is often a quest
- has some kind of internal logic
- contains unusual but sustained characters with whom the read can identify

### **Themes and Issues:**

This story is written from three points of view (POV): The Alien, Josh, Damon and Gramps, and Bert and Tom all have different reasons for being in the bush. Josh, Damon and Gramps intend to catch as many fish as they can. Bert and Tom are hiding from the police. The Alien has crash-landed on Earth and is looking for food and some way to get back to his mother-ship.

This story is intended to show how different groups can meet up though all three may have other things in mind. It's hard for us to imagine what meeting up with new creatures might be like. Try to imagine yourself as an Alien and meeting a cat or a dog for the first time. How would you approach those animals?

### **Background and definitions:**

**Telepathy:** Scientists are not sure telepathy actually works. However it is a common theme in modern fiction and science fiction with many super-heroes and super-villains being able to sense the thoughts of others.

**Vegetarians** are people who don't eat meat. With careful planning, a vegetarian diet can provide all the essential vitamins and minerals necessary for a long and healthy life. A vegetarian diet has many health benefits, but can result in some vitamin and mineral deficiencies if it is not carefully planned. There are three main types of vegetarianism. These are:

**Lacto-ovo vegetarians** - people who avoid meat, but include dairy foods (such as milk and eggs) and plant foods.

**Lacto-vegetarians** - people who avoid meat and eggs, but include dairy foods and plant foods.

**Vegans** - people who consume only plant foods.

**Discussions Points:**

1. The Alien is vegetarian, telepathic and peaceful. Being peaceful means that he doesn't like the way Bert is treating the boys and their grandfather. He also carries a handy tool kit inside his tummy. Do you find it hard to imagine a spider the size of a puppy with all those positive qualities? Why? Why not?
2. Too many stories and films describe aliens as unfriendly whose major aim is to destroy humans and take over our planet. Why should this be so? Isn't it possible to imagine a super intelligent peaceful alien?

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**Discuss:**

1. The Alien has a lot to learn about our animals. However his approach suggests that back on his planet, intelligent beings aren't human. Try to imagine these.
2. What might have happened to Bert and Tom before and after this story takes place?
3. Can you think of a better title for this story?
4. Imagine you are the Alien. What might the landscape and vegetation on his planet be like?

**Write:**

1. Write full descriptions of
  - a. the Alien
  - b. Josh, Damon and Gramps.
  - c. Bert and Tom

2. Write a description of the Alien's planet.
3. Write a description of your 'dream planet'.

**Activities:**

1. Rewrite this story as an audio DVD.
2. Illustrate the cover that will help sell.
3. Who in your class will play each character? Why?
4. Read 'War of the Worlds' by H.G. Wells.
5. Watch the movie made of the recent version of this book.

**Debate.**

- Spiders and humans have nothing in common.
- Spiders are always scary.
- Aliens are always scary.
- It would be good/bad to know everyone's thoughts.

**WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY.**

When I was quite young I woke one early morning to find a large huntsman spider on my pillow looking at me. I got such a terrible fright I never forgot that experience. But then I thought it would be fun to write a story about a spider that had many positive qualities rather than just being scary.

### 3. FATCAT & ALFIE

**Text Type.** Narrative.

**Text Details:** Animal. Adventure. Third person. Past tense.

**KLA's:** Civics and citizenship. Geography. Environment. Science. SOCE.

#### **Synopsis:**

FatCat and Alfie might live in the same village but while FatCat is pampered and spoiled by his mistress Hilary Grandiose, Old Jack Tweedle, Alfie's master, leaves Alfie to fend for himself. Only when their two owners disappear do these cats come together to travel to the city in a brave attempt to find Hilary and Tom.

#### **Text type**

##### **In some fantasies, the trend is that the story:**

- starts with the premise that this is a sustained and complex other world
- has some strong internal logic
- contains unusual but sustained characters with whom the reader can identify, and they do not always have to be people
- is often a quest
- has a strong moral message
- shows that good always wins out

#### **Themes and Issues**

Animals can reflect their owners' habits, views and life styles. In this story Hilary Grandiose and Old Jack Tweedle live at the opposite ends of a village and have nothing to do with each other. One lives in Grandiose Manor, the other in the local tip. Village life can be seen as a microcosm (a small version) of the bigger world. Whereas Hilary is so snobbish she refuses to talk to anyone but FatCat and therefore has no friends, Jack Tweedle keeps everyone away because of his smell.

In this story, though these cats behave as cats, they also behave like boys. Alfie is the tough kid who enjoys a fight, but he's really a neglected animal. FatCat is spoiled, greedy and a wimp. Both cats have to learn from each other. But where in real life cats mainly seek another meal and a comfortable place to sleep, FatCat loves Hilary enough to overcome his natural timidity, and Alfie his own selfish nature to rescue Jack.

**Background:**

A description of a typical Australian Coastal village (by Goldie Alexander) from *Notes from a Bush Hideaway*

“Relationships in our coastal village are as complex as in any African village. We soon learn how to differentiate between permanent resident and weekender. Studying their houses tells us lots. Old farmhouses with attached sheds surrounded by acreage are inhabited by families still involved with livestock. These local families are regarded as ‘aristocracy’ and often sell their land for astronomical profits. The wood and fibro holiday shacks put up in the sixties are being torn down to make way for more comfortable dwellings. Some of these holiday houses are so luxurious, any casual reference to them as ‘holiday shacks’ seems almost obscene. Somewhere between these are the young families and the new retirees who enjoy the peace and quiet of the bush and often pride themselves on creating botanic masterpieces. The bottom of the social pile are those families who invade the camping reserves to sleep, eat and quarrel in caravans and tents, regardless of weather.”

**Discussions Points**

How to look after our pets is a hot topic on the media. Yet the RSPCA is constantly under stress because owners get tired of their pets and find ways to get rid of them. How do you feel about this? What can be done in your opinion to rescue these animals that are eventually ‘put down’ if they can’t find another owner?

**Ways to look after your pet:**

- Many owners have chips implanted in case their animals are lost or stolen.
- Some owners spay their animals so breeding can be controlled.
- Dogs should always wear leashes if they are in a dog-free territory.
- Owners should be forced to pick up dog droppings and dispose of them safely.
- Some savage dogs should be outlawed.
- Cats should be trained not to rip their claws into furniture and drapery.

**Discuss:**

- What does the story suggest about Hopletton Village?
- The RapCats act like a street gang. Is there any other animal you can imagine as a gang? What about the sheep on the truck? What kind of human behavior do they suggest to you?

- What does the story hint about the way this hospital functions?
- What do we know will happen to these sheep? How do you feel about this?
- In your opinion, do these cats behave like cats? If not, why write a story like this?

### **Write:**

- Describe Grandiose manor as if you are the Real Estate agent who is trying to sell it.
- Now use the same kind of language for Jack Tweedle's run down hut on the edge of the village tip.
- The possums have a complicated relationship all their own. Can you describe it?
- Both Alfie and FatCat blog their activities. Help them write these up.

### **Activities**

- Do some research on the best way to keep your pet happy.
- Write another story about two cats, or dogs, and put this into an audio script.
- Now the cats are friends, have them message (text) each other on their mobiles.
- Now Hilary and Jack are friends, have them do the same.
- Design a cover for this story.

### **Debate.**

- Cats don't behave like humans so it's stupid to write stories like this.
- Village life has to be better than living in the city.
- City life is more interesting than living in a village.

### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?**

A friend owns a spoiled and overfed cat she calls 'Kitten'. I promised her a story about a very fat cat. But somehow the cats in this story ended up behaving more like boys.

#### 4. Liar, Liar

**Text Type.** Narrative.

**Text Details:** Third person. Past tense. Humor

**KLA's:** Civics and citizenship. Geography. Environment. Science. Maths. SOCE.

**Synopsis:** Best mates Jon, Dylan and Van look forward to a week in the desert, but when their class excursion sets off it never stops raining. As the bus travels into the desert, Dylan keeps getting into trouble. Only when the class shelters from the rain in a deserted hotel does Dylan meet his match in the shape of a ghost who also tells terrible lies.

**Text type:**

**In a 'supernatural' story there must be**

- Suspense/fear/violence
- Action
- Unusual or bizarre characters or phenomena
- The supernatural
- A naive character with whom the reader can identify

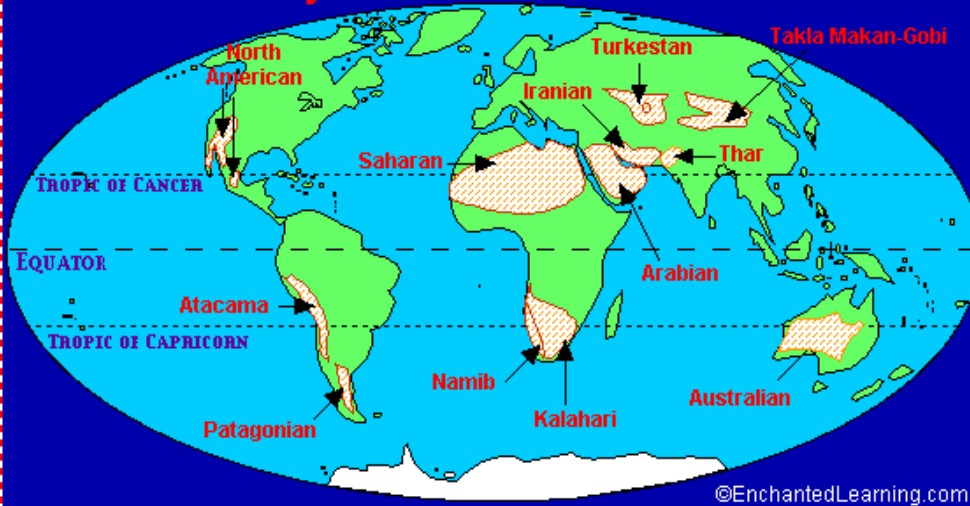
**Background:**

**Here is a map showing the major deserts on Earth.**

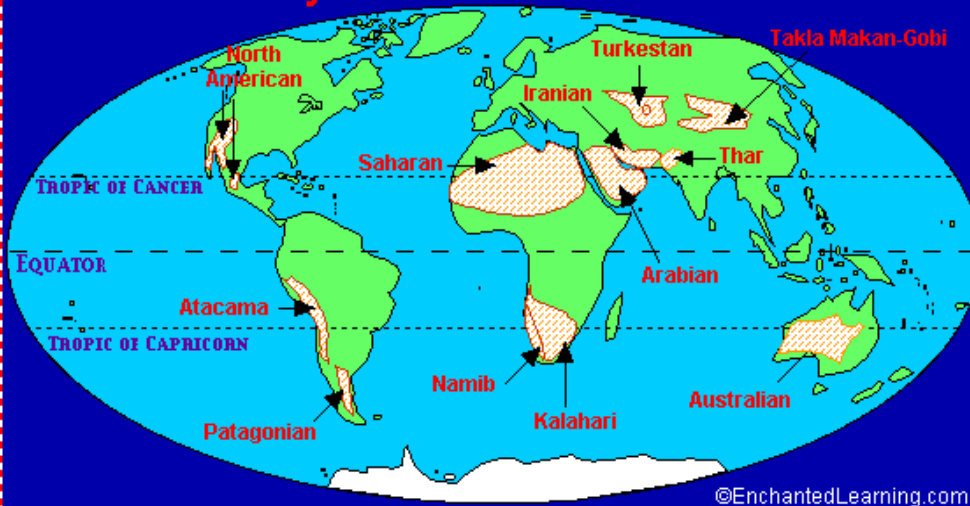
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## Major Deserts on Earth



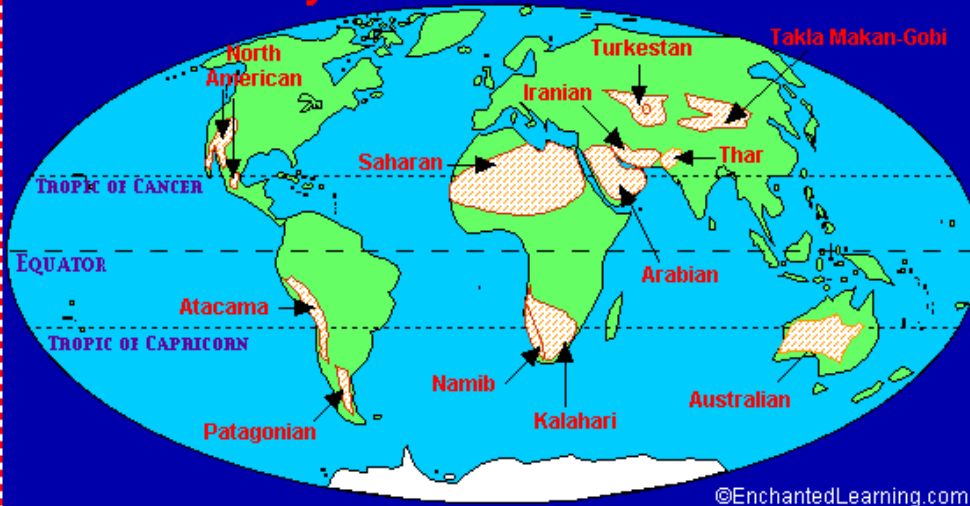
## Major Deserts on Earth



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## Major Deserts on Earth



Deserts cover about one-seventh of the earth's land surface. Deserts have been classified into sub-tropical desert, cold winter and cool coastal desert. Sub-tropical deserts lie between 15 and 30 degrees latitude. They are centered along the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Deserts are landscape forms or regions that receive very little rain or dew. Since desert air holds little moisture these places are very cold at night.

Some animals survive very well in the Australian desert. These include the bilby, dingo, kangaroo, wallaby, echidna, marsupial mole, quokka, and rabbit-eared bandicoot. Though it may only rain once every ten years, other small animals such as frogs and small fish hibernate in the dry mud until the rain comes. When they emerge, this brings birds, such as pelicans and other water birds, to feed on them, though so far no one knows how the birds are aware of what is happening so far away. For three or more weeks, the desert is a bountiful place. Some plants that are small and hardy manage to avoid the drought years as their seeds are covered in a chemical that stops them growing. When it rains, the water washes that chemical away and they can sprout. But then they only bloom for the length of three weeks. In this time however, they produce seeds that get blown in the wind and dropped elsewhere.

**Ghosts!** Do ghosts exist? They certainly appear in every culture. The answer for their existence may be found in ghost stories as these ghosts are mostly concerned with unfinished business. Ancient writers such as Virgil and Homer both wrote ghost stories. Similar to ‘urban legends’ those stories reflect our fears and concerns and it is suggested that through these stories that we try to make sense of our world.

### **Discussion Points:**

1. Best mates Jon, Dylan and Van are hoping to escape winter by traveling into the desert. They are convinced that in the desert, they will find better weather as ‘It hardly ever rains in the desert.’
2. Bus windows get misty when there are people inside and the weather is damp. This makes it hard to see and the boys become restless. However Dylan appears to be the leading liar cum trouble maker. Do you know anyone like him? If you don’t make him or her up. What does this kid get up to?
3. Some people believe in ghosts. Lots don’t. Do you have an opinion on this? And if you do believe in ghosts, what about a ghost that insists on telling lies?
4. If you were to dig up a box in an old building, what might you hope to find?
5. Sometimes it’s better to lie such as when you don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings. Can you think of any other time when a lie is better than the truth?

### **Discuss:**

1. What does this story suggest about Dylan? Can you find any evidence for him as a trouble maker?

2. Can you find any hints that Dylan's teachers are fed up with him.
3. Can you find hints that Van and Jon often go along with Dylan's ideas?
4. How do the girls in this class view Dylan?
5. Can you suggest any way to convince Dylan to be less irritating?
6. What about a ghost that tells lies? Can you think of a fitting punishment?

**Write:**

1. Write a story called 'Our Class Excursion'.
2. Write the script to this story and act it out. The whole class can take part.
3. Write a story called 'A ghost who never lies.'
4. Mock up an interview with the lying ghost. You are the interviewer. Or if you prefer, you can be the ghost.

**Activities:**

1. Write an audio play called GHOSTS and record it with appropriate scary noises and music
2. Design a cover for this play.
3. Plan a class excursion to a site everyone will enjoy. Make this a one day affair. Work out the bus fares, the entrance fee and what the final cost for each student. How many teachers will you need? What about food and drink? What should the class be told to bring along?
4. Read more ghost stories such as 'Thirty Australian Ghost Stories' edited by Linsay Knight (Random House) where this story first appeared.

**Debate.**

- Some kids should be banned from taking part in class excursions.
- Ghosts don't exist. They are merely a figment of our imaginations.
- Ghost stories are the best.

**WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?**

When I was a teacher I went on lots of school excursions. There was always a kid like 'Dylan' on our bus. Sometimes there was more than one. I wanted to record some of the trouble they got into though, as far as I know, no one ever met a ghost.

5. **Saving the Bay**

**Text type:** narrative.

**Text details:** First person, adventure. Present tense.

**KLA's:** Science. Maths. Geography. Environment. Civics and Citizenship. SOCE.

**Synopsis:** While vacationing with Jarred's grandparents, best friends Kim, Jarred, and Nick hear that a hotel planned for Easternport Bay will endanger the bay's mangrove swamps. As well, stolen jewelry is being shipped into the bay. When Nick's older brother Wayne, is unjustly accused, the three set out to find the real villains with the help of Dr. Dawn and Hermes. Kidnapped by Mr. Big and his henchmen, they are taken out to sea in Mr. Big's motor-yacht and Hermes is badly injured. But they still manage to save Hermes' life and row to Fowler's Island and safety.

**Text Type**

In an adventure the

- Main character faces physical danger in a challenging setting
- Confronts a baddie and wins
- Shows physical leadership and courage
- The hero should be sensitive and perceptive and the female must be independent.

**Issues and themes:**

The major theme of this story is what a few people can do to achieve some common goal. Kim, Jarred and Nick are concerned for the safety of the mangrove swamps that surround Easternport Bay. Thus the story revolves around keeping that environment safe from inappropriate development and smuggling in stolen jewelry.

**Background:**

**Mangrove swamps** are found along tropical seacoasts on both sides of the equator. They are named for the mangrove trees that grow there. Mangrove swamps might look like muddy, swampy places filled with mosquitoes, snakes and spiders. Actually, they are a forest community that bridges the gap between land and sea. Mangroves are found along muddy estuaries of large rivers, and in sheltered inter-tidal coastal settings that include lagoons, bays, tidal creeks and inlet. Mangroves are the roots of the seas as their root systems provide a

filtering system for run-off from the islands, these allowing the sediments to be removed before entering open water. This sediment would otherwise cover and kill coral reef colonies. The mangrove swamp is regularly flooded with salty seawater, but the trees are never fully submerged. With each high tide, the soil surface is covered and the soil often becomes waterlogged. The soil may also be shifted by the waves.

Mangrove Swamps offer mankind many benefits, including:

- Their importance for supporting the fisheries industry.
- They are a rich source of timber.
- Other mangrove products also used include the harvesting of mangrove plants for a wide range of medicines.

**Discussion Points:**

1. This story is told in a humorous way, but the issues it brings up are important. Jot these down as points.
2. Do you think kids can really make a difference to stopping inappropriate development in sensitive environmental areas?

**Discuss:**

1. Saving the environment is a ‘hot topic’. So is inappropriate development. Is there any place in your immediate environment that needs ‘saving’?
2. Some people argue that conservationists (those people that work hard at stopping certain developments from taking place) have too much say when economic factors are equally important. What is your opinion on this?
3. All seals, whales, and other water animals deserve to live in protected environments.

**Write:**

1. Write a mock interview on radio with Jarred, Nick and Kim. Get them to explain their adventures and how they rescued Hermes and themselves.
- 2 Write a different end to this story.
3. Write your own rescue story.
9. You are Hermes, *the Easternport News* ghost writer’. Write his newspaper column describing this adventure.

**Activities**

1. Explore your district and/or town. Are there any, in your opinion, inappropriate developments taking place?
2. Draw a map of Easternport Bay. Include the mangrove swamps and Fowler's Island.
3. Imagine you are either Kim or Nick. Describe another weekend's stay with Jarred.
4. These three kids are back at school. Their class project is to give a talk on one of the issues that came up in this adventure. Act this out.

**Debate.**

- Development can't be stopped.
- Mangrove swamps should be listed for total protection.
- Fowler's Island should remain off limit to all tourists.

**WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?**

I live in an area that is always up for some new development that is potentially harmful either to the environment or to the people living here. An adventure story seemed a good way to discuss this.

6. **Medal of Courage**

**Text type.** Non fiction report style. Science fiction

**Text details:** Third person. Present tense.

**KLA's:** Science. Maths. Civics. Arts. Environment. SOCE.

**Synopsis:** Orphans Cosmo and Zero live on a space station where the local sport is space-gliding. Forbidden to take part in the Great Glider Race because of Cosmo's disability the boys work hard at adapting their space glider so they can compete. However bullies Miro and Eugene, do their best to hold up the boys' progress. It is while the race takes place that Zero and Cosmo give up their own hopes of winning to save Miro and Eugene. It is for this act of bravery that they earn the 'Medal of Courage'.

**Text type**

In a science fiction story, the trend is that it:

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- describes a society that is scientifically possible and technologically based
- is future oriented
- uses other worlds
- is often a quest
- has some kind of internal logic
- contains unusual but sustained characters with whom the read can identify.

**Mixed formats:** The aim of a mixed format story is to demonstrate to students the varying ways of telling a story. Stories that use different formats such as diary entries, email messages, letters, class lists, newspaper reports and blogs make a story more credible by appearing to be based on a real incident.

**Characteristics of mixed format stories:**

- Often a character's motivation will be left for the reader to figure out.
- The setting is usually familiar.
- Major character/s are usually ordinary.
- The writing style must sound factual.

**Themes and Issues:**

The major theme behind this short story is bullying which still occurs in many schools. However, bullying isn't restricted to youngsters. Adults can experience bullying in the workplace and at home. Bullies are often weak, insecure people who only feel secure when they are overpowering someone else. The key to combating bullies is standing up to them, but this can be difficult if there are too many major obstacles such as differing size and positions of authority.

### **Background**

Bullying is defined as 'a person coercing other by fear/ to persecute or oppress by force or threats.' Mostly we talk about bullying as being inflicted by outsiders. However, some bullying can take place within families; for example, adults abusing children through either physical force or language, older children bullying younger, weaker members, boys bullying girls and girls bullying boys.

### **Kids with disabilities:**

A disabled boy's self identity and feelings about himself can be very fragile. He will be disinclined to try to progress if he believes himself to be incapable, a failure, or unimportant. Particularly vulnerable is someone without parents. This kid can feel worse than useless. He might feel miserable or like a non-person. Building that person's self esteem is very important. Excelling in some way, perhaps through sport, hobby or a contribution to the community will help.

### **Writing Reports.**

Their main purpose is to provide information so that others can make a decision or take action. Examples of written reports include:

1. A business company's annual report
2. A community centre's report detailing how certain money was spent

Reports can vary in length, as long as they meet the required outcomes. A report of one or two pages may be presented in memo format, providing a brief summary of activities.

### **Discussions Points**

1. This story begins with: *Officer ZOIU's report on Cosmo and Zero's Act of Brave Posted: 2nd May, AD 5415 for the "Office of Universal Administration"*. What does this tell you about the story's setting? What effect does this have on the reader? How credible does this make the story?
2. Cosmo and Zero are 'different'. In what way? How does this 'difference' help them overcome the other boys' bullying?

3. Try to imagine what a space glider might look like. In order for humans to fly one, it must have certain important mechanisms, for example: a good supply of oxygen. What else is essential?

+++++

**Discuss:**

What other ways can be added to this list of ways to overcome bullying? Here are some suggestions. Can you add to these?

- Create many highly accessible safe, ‘shame-free’ zones.
- Talk candidly about the gender straightjacket.
- Create trusting bridges.
- Mentors should connect with kids through actions as well as words.
- Empower kids: train them to be mentors too.
- Bully-proof your neighborhood and schools.
- Seek appropriate chances to share your own feelings and experiences

If the bullying is happening in cyberspace tell a trusted adult, like a parent or teacher, about immediately.

**Write**

1. In two short paragraphs describe SPX56789.
2. Can you use the details given in this report to write the story as a memoir by either Zero or Cosmo?
- 3 Now Cosmo and Zero are on Terra, how do they see this new world? What might have happened to our Earth by then? (Try to avoid a bleak outlook)
4. Eugene and Miro are no longer bullies. Instead they work hard at stopping anyone else bullying. Write a teacher’s report on this.

**Activities**

1. Design a space glider.
2. Draw a map of the space station and its ports.
3. Write up the new rules used in the Junior Glider Competition the following year.

**Debate.**

- Kids with disabilities should always be allowed to compete.

- Bullying can't be stopped.
- Space travel is only a distant dream.

**WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY.**

Lots of kids have some disability that makes it hard for them to join into group activities.

Other kids might be subject to bullying. It seemed a good idea to put the two ideas together.

7.

### **The Hippodrome**

**Text type:** Narrative. Historical fiction.

**Text details:** Adventure. Present tense. First person.

**KLA's:** Maths. Science. Civics. History. Environment. SOCE.

#### **Synopsis:**

It is 1881. After two sheep are stolen, George Frederick O'Connor is forced to run away from his boss Alfred Simpson on the old mare Jezebel. Fred Hoskins gives him a lift into the growing city of Melbourne. After spending the night in a hotel, Fred takes George to the Hippodrome that stands on the banks of the Yarra River which is the present site of the Victorian Arts Centre. George is introduced to the circus where meets the horse trainer Wang, and some of the other performers. He soon makes himself useful enough in the stables to finally find a happy home for himself and his old mare.

#### **In a fiction based on history,**

the trend is that it

- starts with the premise 'what if you were there at the time'
- describes a society which is based on fact
- is set in the past
- is often a quest
- has total internal logic

#### **Themes and Issues.**

History is the narrative of mankind. It provides answers as to how people lived in the past as well as provides for us the roots of certain ideas concerning laws, customs, and political ideas. The age-old adage, "you can't know where you are going unless you know where you have been" is actually very true. A true scholar of history realizes history does repeat itself. This repetition has importance in all societies. It teaches the value of certain social changes and governmental policies. A good example is the Aborigines of Australia who managed to hang onto their history for 40,000 years by word of mouth. A knowledge of history clearly proves early man's love of the arts and demonstrates that once a civilization is able to maintain a steady food supply, that their creative ideas flowed whether it appeared on rock walls, papyrus, or cedar bark.

### **The Melbourne Hippodrome medal, 1881**

This engraved silver medal was presented to the bandmaster of the Melbourne Hippodrome in 1881. The Hippodrome was an entertainment facility that stood on the south bank of the Yarra on St Kilda Road.



In 1881 the Melbourne Hippodrome was the forerunner of Wirth's Circus and sat where the Victorian Arts Centre now stands. As this story is based on actual events, it can be used as an introduction to 'fictionalizing history'.

#### **Did you know?**

Mary Ann Ward, wife and chief lieutenant of Frederick Wordsworth Ward, or Mrs. Thunderbolt as she was known, had her four children with her in the 1860's while being pursued by police and citizen posses. Twice she was imprisoned and twice the Governor of NSW, Sir John Young, ordered her release for wrongful imprisonment.

*Taken from an old newspaper cutting:*

"Every Saturday commencing May 18th at Wirth's Park Hippodrome: the big show presenting the world's greatest attractions Zak Ermakov famous manipulator d'armes, duellist, sharpshooter and ex-Secret Service agent; the Sidneys jumpers de-luxe and a Monster Vaudeville Programme: the Cracknells in The Drover's Holiday..."

#### **Discussions Points:**

1. It's said that 'The past is another country. They do things differently there.'

2. Imagine you have time traveled back to 1881. What might be a typical day in your life?
3. Explain what that old newspaper is advertising in your own words.

+++++

**Discuss:**

1. Can a story give an accurate picture of what life was like in the past?
2. I wish I could live in another century.
3. George should be punished for stealing Jezebel. He should have returned to the farm and explained the situation to his boss.
4. Sheep thieves should be severely punished.
5. Everyone should be as open to new people as George was to Wang.

**Write:**

1. Write a story called Horse and Carriage.
2. Choose a cover for this story.
3. Find another title for this story.
4. You are pleading with Mr. Alfred Simpson to forgive you for stealing his horse. Record this and play it back to your class. Make it convincing. Remember horse thieves were dealt with very severely back in 1881.
5. Decide to become a circus performer. What skills must you develop?

**Activities**

- Make a story-board or collage to convey the HIPPODROME.
- Mock up an interview with George with you as the interviewer.
- Then change roles.
- Illustrate a cover for this story.
- Write the lyrics for a song called HAPPY HIPPODROME.
  - Read by Goldie Alexander ‘My Australian Story: Surviving Sydney Cove.’  
‘Mavis Road Medley’ Scholastics Australia.  
‘Gallipoli Medals’. ADDC  
The Youngest Cameleer: fivesenses education.

**Debate.**

- “History is bunk!” said Henry Ford.

- History can teach us not to repeat the same mistakes.

### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?**

I really enjoy fictionalizing history and reading novels set in the past. The story about the beginnings of what was the Hippodrome, then the site of Wirths' Circus and now the Victorian Arts Centre has always fascinated me.

8.

### **Ghostercise**

**Text type:** Narrative style

**Text details:** Third person. Past tense. Ghost story. Crime.

**KLA's:** Maths. Science. Civics. History. Environment. SOCE.

**Synopsis:** One summer vacation Benjie joins Stamina gym where he exercises alongside the ghost of a past athlete. Determined to find out who is raiding the gym's lockers and why the gym isn't doing too well, the ghost helps Benjie find who is responsible and why.

#### **Text Type:**

A mystery is a crime, or something that appears to be a crime and has a

- Sleuth
- Suspects
- Suspense
- Clues and red herrings
- Keeps coincidence to a minimum
- A solution

#### **Major themes and issues.**

The crime novel posits a bad deed that must be solved before the end of the story. The wicked are always found out and vanquished. The conventions of a whodunit are always similar: order is disturbed and then restored, and the ending is a confrontation between hero and villain. There is usually a small circle of suspects. In "Ghostercise" the characters all have past connections. The basic point is the use of logic; the reader must want to match wits with the detectives. Benjie can't just stumble on the villain. He had to be seen to detect, and the criminal has to appear early on. There's lots of thinking and running around in a whodunit, sometimes in the detective's head, sometimes in dialogue, sometimes as action, the information is split up with lots of red herrings to lead the reader astray.

The four original **Queens of Crime** were Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh and Margery Allingham.

The history of the **gymnasium** dates back to ancient Greece, where the literal meaning of the Greek word was "school for naked exercise." Every important city had at least one

gymnasium. Usually built by the state, these grew from gathering places to complex structures with dressing rooms, baths, training quarters, and special areas for contests. Originally, they were where male athletes over age 18 received training for competition in the public games of that time. Supervision was entrusted to officials responsible for the conduct of sports and games at festivals and who supervised the competitors. The Greek gymnasiums also held lectures and discussions on philosophy, literature, and music, and public libraries were nearby.

**Discussions Points:**

1. Almost every third program on TV features some kind of detective fiction. Why do you think this genre is so popular?
2. Do you believe in ghosts?
3. If so, can you believe in a ghost that returns to help solve a crime?
4. How popular are gyms? How many are in your neighborhood or town? What in your opinion explains their popularity?

+++++

**Discuss:**

1. Once upon a time gyms weren't as important because people worked harder physically.
2. My favorite stories are all about solving crimes.
3. Ghost stories are best!
4. Ghost stories are scary.

**Write**

1. A story called 'My Favorite Ghost'.
2. *Someone is stealing money from the school lockers...*

Write a script that includes:

A detective. A thief. Other kids. (as many as you like.)

Some red herrings. The final solution.

3. Write a magazine article offering:
  - advice for handling ghosts
  - advice for handling difficult friends
  - advice for joining a gym

## Activities:

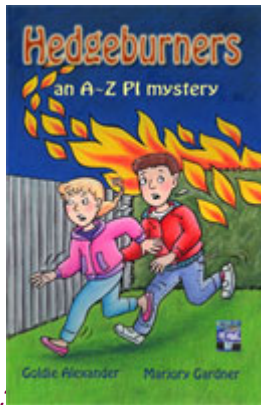
### 1. Read: **Books by the following authors:**

Nancy Drew, Fear Street, Goose Bumps, Babysitters' Club, Emily Rodda.

Hedgeburners: An A~Z PI Mystery by Goldie Alexander.

<http://ipoz.biz/Titles/Hedge.htm> )

(Ruth, am I allowed to add the following picture?)



2. Ghost-ercise is a made up word. What new words can you create by mixing two ideas together?
3. Can you think of a better title for this story?

## Debate.

1. Ghosts are figments of the imagination.
2. Crime stories produce more crime.
3. There are too many detective stories on TV.

## WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?

Gymns. Ghosts. Crime. I love to read about all three, so I combined them into one story.

9.

### **FREAKY!**

**Text type:** Narrative, science fiction.

**Text details:** First Person. Past Tense.

**KLA's:** Civics and Citizenship. Science. Society and Environment. History. SOCE.

**Synopsis:** Set in the very distant future, Jay is viewed by the rest of the universe as a 'freak' because he has two heads. Though Jay knows nothing about his origins, Bruth his father refuses to fill him in, and this becomes a family joke. As Jay grows older he and Bruth end up living on the streets on Salisia, an unfriendly space station, They live in the terror that if they are caught they will be sent to Cryopa and certain death In spite of everything that happens to Jad, his instinct is to always protect his second head. But it is only when Bruth is dying that Jad reaches a decision that leads them to a far better life.

#### **Text type.**

This story combines two elements:

#### **In a science fiction story, the trend is that it:**

- starts with the premise 'what if'
- describes a society that is scientifically possible and technologically based
- is future oriented
- uses other worlds
- is often a quest
- has some kind of internal logic
- contains unusual but sustained characters with whom the read can identify

#### **But as this is also a Fantasy, it contains**

- Sustained and complex other worlds
- A motive or moral purpose
- A quest
- Often the hero has an unusual background
- Even if the world is set in the future it might be drawn from the world of legend.

#### **Themes and Issues:**

**Looking right! Looking different!**

Looking different can be less dramatic than having two heads, but the effect on anyone can be very soul destroying if as a result a kid is bullied or called names. Few of us are happy with the way we look and magazines and TV don't help. What this story does is take 'looking wrong' to an extreme.

Humans have very small differences compared with other animals such as birds. For example, male birds usually have very colorful feathers, while the females are usually a single, plain color. Most differences in human appearance are genetic. This means that you inherit from your family many features such as skin color, hair type, and the shape of your face. Young people have to deal with rapid physical changes. You need to understand why and how this happens and to be ready for it. You can't influence your genes. But the more active you are, the more nutritious food you eat, the healthier you will be at every stage of life to tackle whatever your genes have given you.

### **Homelessness.**

The other point this story makes is about the number of people that are homeless for all sorts of reasons, ones for which they are often not responsible for. Every night across Australia, more than 100,000 people are homeless, of these 14,000 sleep rough. Every day, two out of three people who look for crisis accommodation are turned away. Many end up on the street or living in inadequate single rooms, caravans, squats, cars, refuges, or sleeping on friends' couches. Nearly half are under the age of 25. A recent study showed that domestic/family violence was the biggest single contributor to homelessness. Other major contributors are poor mental health, family breakdown, debt, poverty, lease expiry, family violence and abuse, chronic gambling and substance addiction.

### **Discussions Points**

- There are exactly seven super models in the world. What does that say about 'looking right'?
- What are some ways in your opinion that can help those people living on the streets?
- Can fictionalizing problems bring important messages home?
- Even if the relationship between Jay and Bruth is to be admired, it can only happen in fiction.
- When themes like 'looking right' and 'homelessness' are turned into science fiction, some readers mightn't understand what the story is really about. Do you agree?

++++++

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Design your own spaceship. What does it look like? What characteristics would you like it to have?
2. You have been flown to a 'better' world. Why is it better than Earth? What can you do there that you can't do here?
3. Salisia is run as a military dictatorship. What countries are run on the same lines? In the past? In the present? Research some people who have been prepared to fight for the freedom of their people eg. Joan of Arc. Martin Luther King. Nelson Mandela. Gandhi.
4. Describe your own ideal planet.

### **WRITE:**

1. Write your own science fiction story.
2. Describe the parts of Salisia we don't see.
3. Choose a cover for this story.
4. Find another title for this story.
5. Adapt this story into Jay's blog.
6. Write this story as an audio play and record it.

### **Debate.**

- Becoming homeless is the person's own fault.
- Plastic surgery should be free for anyone who wants it.

### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?**

Like most people, when I was a kid I wanted to look 'better' or 'different'. Also, I see many homeless people on our streets. This story combines both ideas.

## 10. **ROLLERBLADE HEROES.**

**Text type:** magic realism, adventure, fantasy.

**Text details:** third person, past tense.

**KLA's:** The Arts. History. Geography. Society and the Environment. Maths. Civics.  
SOCE.

### **Synopsis:**

Ritchie's parents have separated. Now living with his mum in a large apartment block, Ritchie wonders if his eyes are playing tricks on him. What are those lumps and bumps in the ceiling that appear and disappear? However, it is Lilla Winterbottom's stories of being in a circus, and his own rollerblading skills that finally help save Ritchie from the local bullies.

### **Text type**

In **magic realism**, the trend is that it

- starts with the premise 'in a familiar situation, what if something extraordinary happens?'
- describes someone or something that is probably not possible
- has some kind of weird internal logic
- can contain unusual but sustained characters with whom the reader can identify.

### **Discussions Points**

This story is not as simple as it might appear on first reading. There are several messages or themes.

#### **1. Split families**

A very recent study suggests that 1970s custody model in which children saw one parent 'every second weekend and school holidays' was outdated. This study showed youngsters wanted to be consulted about where they lived after their parents' divorce and the more they had a say in their living arrangements, the happier they were likely to be. It also found children had an acute sense of fairness in money matters. They did not like it if one parent appeared to have a better standard of living. The important message of the study is that children's views should be taken into account after a divorce.

### **Ways you can help elderly neighbors**

- Check on elderly neighbors at regular intervals
- Create a list of neighbors willing to offer help during an emergency
- Set up friendly visits by others apart from yourselves.
- Offer to help out by doing errands

### **The early history of rollerblading**

- Rollerblading was developed in the early 18th Century by a Dutchman who wanted to practice ice-skating in summer. He nailed wooden spools to strips of wood and attached them to his boots.
- In 1823 Robert John Tyers of London designed the ‘rolito’ where five wooden wheels were attached to his shoes. In 1863 the American James Plimpton made a four-wheel skate with two pairs of wheels side by side and invented the modern four-wheel skate. These ‘skeelers’ were used in Holland as a means of dry-land training.
- In 1980 Scott and Brennan Olsen, both ice hockey players, invented the modern rollerblade. They used a hockey boot, polyurethane wheels and added a rubber brake. Thus the modern in-line skate was born.

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### **Discuss:**

1. Why is life extra hard for Ritchie?
2. Imagine you are sleeping under a ceiling where bumps suddenly appear. What might they be? What would you do? Give some possible reasons not mentioned in this story.
3. Ritchie's ambition is to be a great rollerblader. A champion. How do his parents feel about this? Why do they disagree? How does this make Ritchie feel?
4. Ritchie envies Derryn. Why?
5. How does Ritchie try to improve to his rollerblading skills? What are some of the moves he makes? Which move is almost too difficult to master?
6. Ritchie checks out some of his neighbors. Who are they?
7. Who else is interested in the rollerblade competition? How do they try to stop Ritchie and Derryn from competing?

### **Write:**

1. Describe Miss Lilla Winterbottom.

2. Write a story called 'CIRCUS SCHOOL'.
3. Time Travel. Imagine you are able to travel back or forwards sixty years. How does life differ from the present?
4. Describe the circus that finally appears in this story? In what ways might this circus differ from a present day circus?
5. Consider the story's end. Do we ever find out why the circus might have appeared?
6. This story has lots of satisfactory conclusions. What are they?
7. Why is this story called 'Rollerblade Heroes'? Can you think of another title?

### **ACTIVITIES**

1. Make a story-board or collage to convey 'THE CIRCUS' or some other unexpected situation.
2. Sketch Lilla Winterbottom as an old woman, and then as a young girl.
3. Mock up an interview with Lilla Winterbottom with you as the interviewer. Ask a friend to be the interviewer.
4. Then change roles with him or her.
5. Illustrate a cover for this story.
6. What might happen after this story ends?
7. Design your own circus. What does it look like? What acts would you like it to have?
8. Read: Killer Virus : An Anthology of Short Stories. Goldie Alexander. (Phoenix Education) This collection of short stories for boys includes several stories with magic realism as their theme.

### **DEBATE**

- Fences make good neighbors.
- Time travel will always be impossible
- Circuses are boring.

### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?**

This story was inspired by a very noisy neighbor who lived directly above me. Her intermittent thumps and bumps were intensely annoying. I spent many nights wondering what could create such a terrible racket? When I tried to imagine what it could be, a circus came into my mind. After many inquiries, I heard that some hard to close windows were

responsible for all that noise. Unfortunately, though I love circuses, not a single one ever appeared on my ceiling.

## **Article: WHY THE SHORT STORY?**

People have been telling short stories ever since prehistory accounts of memorable hunting trips were painted onto cave walls. A good short story doesn't contain a complicated plot and too many characters; instead the focus is on one main concept and the way it is told. Edgar Allen Poe defined it as a piece that can be read in one sitting. In a good short story every word is carefully chosen. There is little time and space in which to make an impression. A good short story can take as long to write as a novel. They are the equivalent of life drawing for an artist. It is where a writer's skills are honed.

These days many boys and girls are reaching puberty while still in primary school. It is then a boy's attention span will drop, and his interests become vastly different to a girl's. Adolescence is a time of confusion. It is when the social group is everything, when both genders are fixed in their determination to meld with their peers and reject adult ideas and control. In my first collection "Killer Virus and Other Stories", each of the ten stories involved a thirteen year old boy involved in some new and different experience.

But while there was a big push to get more boys reading, it seemed girls were being neglected. As a result of better nutrition and more exercise, pubescence is happening earlier to girls, sometimes as early as Years 4 and 5. This led to "My Horrible Cousins and Other Stories" where I hoped to introduce girls to a variety of writing genres, improve their analysis and comprehension skills, encourage them to develop their own creative talents, and help equip them with enough communication tools to navigate the challenges they will face. What I didn't want were stories that sounded like chatty trend-driven magazine articles giving advice on fashion, gossip or the latest pop heroes. Instead I wanted girl characters that were strong and resourceful, good at overcoming adversity in differing situations and able to solve any problems thrown at them.

My third and latest collection, "Space Footy and Other Stories" also features twelve year olds, only once again these are boys. I am always aware that our students come from various ethnicities and I try to create appropriate characters and situations. The aim is to give young readers the opportunity to finish something short and satisfying. However when it comes to style and pacing, in every story things seem to take almost as much time as in real life and I use dialogue whenever possible to enliven the action. Here is an example from the lead story:

*Ioli kicked the ball. Hard. 'Bet you can't kick that high,' he yelled to Aarvi.*

*The ball sailed overhead. Ioli glanced nervously around. Spaceship hangars were strictly out of bounds. If Security caught them playing Space Footy, they'd be in BIG trouble.*

*Only one ship, Starship X, was moored in here. It was the biggest spaceship Aarvi had ever seen. Its roof nearly reached the ceiling and its sides were twice as wide.*

*Starships flew to this space-station from many planets. This one was from Earth. Not that Aarvi had ever been inside a starship. Nor had he ever been to Earth. But he'd seen holograms of Earth's inhabitants. Humans, they were called.*

*Humans looked weird. Short and squat, their nostrils were in the middle of their faces in a bony knob called a nose. Because they had very short arms and no tail, they had to balance on only two legs. With no body hair, they had to cover their skins to stay warm.*

*Humans were so ugly, even viewing their holograms made Aarvi shiver.*

It shouldn't be hard for any youngster to realize that Igs and Humans are metaphors for different ethnicities. Each boy in this collection is different and each story takes on a new direction. Some of my themes include Science fiction: *Space Footy, Freaky*. Adventure: *The Alien*. Humour: *Liar, Liar*. Historical fiction: *The Hippodrome*, Mystery: *Ghostercise*. Magic realism: *Rollerblade Heroes* and Reportage: *Medal of Courage*.

All my stories vary in length and difficulty. I am always aware that chronological age doesn't mean an equivalent reading age. Though all have twelve year old protagonists, they vary in complexity of comprehension, word usage and syntax. Most are split into small chapters to make life easier for the slower reader. But even if the language varies, the themes of self reliance and personal problem solving remain consistent.

Every time I write a new book, my website always provides comprehensive teacher notes that aim to assist in understanding my motivation and intentions. I am always aware of shortage of preparation time for teachers, thus I try to provide background to my work, some helpful exercises and the inspiration behind the stories.

We need stories to fire our imagination and to keep us thinking and dreaming. We need them to tell us something about our past, to make some educated guesses about our possible future, and to help us make friends. Stories help us empathize with other characters in similar or different situations, and give us a sense of what is right and what is wrong. Hopefully, they attempt to put some order into a disorderly world.

