

# An Amputee Elephant, a Zombie Bunny, and a Vego Piranha: Investigating Culture within Award-winning Australian Children's and Young Adult Literature

By Dr Kasey Garrison and Dr Mary Carroll

## Background

The Children's Book Council of Australia was founded in 1945 with a vision "to be the premier voice on literature for young Australians and to inform, promote critical debate, foster creative responses, and engage with and encourage Australian authors and illustrators to produce quality literature" (n.d.a). The establishment of the CBCA and its awards in Australia was, according to children's book critic and academic Mark MacLeod (2010), linked to developments in Australian librarianship at this time and a growing community concern over the need to establish libraries for children in Australia and educate parents and teachers on the value of reading for the child (p. 17).

These concerns emerged in the wake of the 1935 publication of the highly critical report *Australian libraries: A survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*, more commonly known as the Munn-Pitt Report (Munn & Pitt, 1935). This report is considered by many as foundational in the development of libraries in Australia as it served to focus the attention of the Australian public on the dearth of libraries, including those for children, which existed in Australia in the first half of the 20th century. The arrival of librarians from the United States Informational Agency in the 1940s continued the momentum started by the Munn-Pitt Report to establish libraries, educate librarians and promote reading in Australia. This push for librarianship education was in response to community concerns about education and was targeted at those working with children in public and school libraries (Carroll, 2007, p. 53).

In this context, it is unsurprising that the establishment of the Children's Book Council and the idea of a Children's Book of the Year award was taken up so enthusiastically, with the first Book of the Year award announced almost immediately in 1946 (MacLeod, 2011, p. 13), being awarded to *The Story of Karrawingi the Emu*, written by Leslie Rees and illustrated by Walter Cunningham (1946). From this initial endeavour, the CBCA has continued to promote its mission to the Australian community in a number of ways including conferences, a partnership with the National Centre for Children's Literature Inc. at the University of Canberra, and support for the much celebrated Children's Book Week around the country. The premier event in the activities of the CBCA and a critical element of this vision today remains the annual Book of the Year awards during Book Week in August each year.

## The CBCA Book of the Year Awards

Each year, the CBCA invites submissions of books for children and youth (both fiction and non-fiction) published in Australia (by Australians) for consideration for the the CBCA Book of the Year. These books are evaluated by members of the CBCA from branches across Australia who have been nominated and selected as judges. Judges for the award can self-nominate, with the final selection of judges based on a number of criteria including 'Recognised standing and qualifications in the field of children's literature,' and 'wide and recent knowledge of children's literature, especially Australian' (CBCA, n.d.b). Selection also takes into consideration a balance of gender, location, social and cultural backgrounds, and age. From the nominations and using the specified criteria, judges are selected by the Awards Committee to serve on the judging panel of one of the defined Award categories.

There are five categories for the Books of the Year: Picture Books, Early Childhood, Younger Readers, Older Readers, and the Eve Pownall Award for Information. Judges first compile Notable Lists for each category (also called Longlists) which are released early in the year and then Short Lists of six finalists from the Longlists

released a bit later. The staggered release allows librarians and teachers to actively engage with the booklists, providing opportunity to promote the texts fulfilling the vision of the CBCA to foster engagement with books and reading. Finally, and with much fanfare and celebration, the overall winners and two honour awards for each category are announced in August during the nationwide celebration of Book Week.

For books to be considered for the awards, a number of criteria must be met. The books must be aimed for readers under 18 years of age, the authors and illustrators must be Australian citizens, residents, or permanent residents, and the books must be written in English. Further, each award nomination includes a \$99 fee and five copies of the book provided to the CBCA for judges, which could cause potential access problems for smaller publishers.

Awards for children's books chosen by adults can be considered contentious, with concerns such as the intended audience (the child) not judging the merit and appeal of the book. In Australia, awards such as the INKY award (a national teen choice award) and the Young Australians Best Book Awards (YABBAs) have evolved in response to concerns about books being judged outside of their intended audience. MacLeod also notes the issues of commercialism associated with awards such as the Australian Book of the Year and comments about some of the winners reflecting an attempt to "shore up the cultural capital" of the group on the part of the CBCA (2011, p. 26). The CBCA has made efforts to address concerns of commercial interest with clear statements on conflicts of interest, vested interest and commercial gain, and close association with the author or those associated with the book in the judging criteria.

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Other concerns for award-winning books include issues of cultural homogeneity of the books' content and creators. For the purposes of this study, we note the historical cultural homogeneity of children's book awards. In the US context, this has led to the creation of ethnic specific awards for children like the Pura Belpré Award and Coretta Scott King Award for Latin American and African American authors and illustrators, respectively. In honour of the 70th Anniversary of the Book of the Year Awards in 2016 and in the spirit of the CBCA vision to "promote critical debate" (CBCA, n.d.a), we wanted to investigate the depictions of cultural diversity within the CBCA Short Lists for 2016 and consider their implications to Australian youth readership.

## Methodology

Using a content analysis approach (Patton, 2002, p. 453), we analysed the four Short Lists focusing on fictional works including: Older Readers, Younger Readers, Early Childhood, and Picture Books. The CBCA Short Lists comprise six books derived from the Notable Lists. In total, the study examined 24 books. The aim of the study was to establish a critical understanding of the occurrence and treatment of cultural themes within the short-listed books through the use of content analysis. Themes were associated with the identification of cultural constructs within children's fiction in earlier works by Kimmel, Garrison, and Forest (2012, p. 2-3) in research on the Mildred L. Batchelder Award titles published in the United States (Forest, Garrison, & Kimmel, 2015, p. 12). This model takes a wide definition of cultural diversity, focusing on eight specific socio-cultural constructs including 1) ability (physical and mental), 2) gender, 3) sexual orientation, 4) religion, 5) language, 6) class, 7) race/ethnicity/nationality, and 8) immigration.

Using this method, there is at least one reader for each book and in some cases, both researchers read the same book. First, the readers noted basic qualities of the books including format, genre/subgenre, setting, and characteristics of the protagonists like age and gender as well as main themes of the story in order to provide a broad perspective on the book's content. The researchers then read the books critically, recording quotes and passages with specific instances and critical incidents addressing the eight cultural constructs. Once the individual books were investigated, the results were analysed to establish any common or recurring themes, gaps or other features of the selection which might be of note or significant among the whole sample of books and among the eight cultural constructs (i.e., connections between passages of gender and religion). A discussion of our findings follows starting with the basic qualities of the sample.

## Findings

## Basic Characteristics

As noted previously, 24 books were investigated in this study. Basic characteristics of these books are included in the table in Appendix A and discussed in further detail below.

## Format and Genre

Of these 24 books, 12 were picture books from the Picture Book and Early Childhood Short Lists, 11 were fictional novels from the Older and Younger Readers Short Lists, and one book was written in poetic verse, Younger Reader Book of the Year *Sister Heart* (Morgan, 2015). Genres and subgenres mostly included contemporary realism. Also, while there were not many clearly fantasy stories included in the list, many had elements of magical realism. For example, Book of the Year for Older Readers, *Cloudwish* (Wood, 2015), was about a teen who made a wish for a boy in her class to fall in love with her which he seemingly did, but it is unclear if he did because of her wish or her personality.

## Settings

The place settings of the 24 books are shown graphically on the map in Figure 1. Most of them were set in Australia, which is expected since the award criteria focuses on Australian authors and publishers. However, there were a few other settings noted across the world. Some of these were openly stated, like Burma, Poland, Hong Kong and Turkey, while others were less obvious, like the Amazon River being the habitat of piranhas as identified in the extra notes in *Piranhas Don't Eat Bananas* (Blabey, 2015). We also noted a balance of regional (nine) and urban (eight) settings with most urban settings being set in Sydney (four). In regards to time, ten of the books were obviously set in contemporary times with five clearly set in the past. However, for nine books in the sample, time setting was unclear. For example, two books addressing refugee issues, Picture Book of the Year *Flight* (Wheatley & Greder, 2015) and *Suri's Wall* (Estela & Ottley, 2015), do not have obvious time settings considering the global refugee crisis happening today.

**Figure 1. Global settings of the 24 books**



## Protagonists

There was a good balance of age and gender diversity with the books' protagonists. About half of the books (eleven) featured girls as the main characters and nine featured boys. Three of the books had animals as the main protagonists. As expected, the ages of the protagonists mostly mirrored the intended age of the readers for each Short List (i.e., the Older Readers list had teen protagonists while the Younger Readers list had tweens, etc.).

## Cultural Diversity

The eight cultural constructs studied emerged as themes within the books in diverse ways. As previously noted, we used a wide definition of each construct using the previous model created by Kimmel, Garrison, and Forest (2012, p. 2-3). These constructs included ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, class, race/ethnicity/nationality, and immigration. The following discussion will explore each of these themes individually and then go into their connections with each other.

## Ability

Ability surfaced as a predominant theme in many of the books in terms of strains on characters' physical and mental ability, with the story focused in part on how to cope with and overcome their condition. Two books, *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (Bogle & Whatley, 2015) and *Book of the Year for Young Readers Soon* (Gleitzman, 2015), featured characters with leg injuries resulting from war impacting their physical ability. Another story, *Picture Book of the Year Honour One Step at a Time* (Jolly & Heinrich, 2015), was a beautifully illustrated book set in Burma about a baby elephant who steps on a landmine and loses her leg. Her owner Luk, a young Burmese boy, is very supportive and reassuring to the elephant while she recovers from her injury and gets a prosthetic leg. It is only on the last page of the book, that it is revealed to the reader how Luk is so knowledgeable about this pain and recovery process, as we see he also has a prosthetic leg.

Mental health was also prevalent in this sample of books. One of the young adult novels, *The Pause* (Larkin, 2015), dealt explicitly with the topic as the story tackles the issue of suicide. The reader is never really sure if the main character Declan actually jumped in front of a train or if he did, in fact, pause and give himself another chance at life. In the 'paused' version of the story, the readers follow Declan's recovery at a rehabilitation hospital with other people suffering from mental health issues.

The winning picture book for Early Childhood readers also addresses this topic at a lower level for the intended primary readers. In this story, the young main character Bill is feeling quite down and is followed by a large black cloud named *Mr. Huff* (Walker, 2015)

wherever he goes. Until he deals with Mr. Huff and acknowledges his feelings, Bill is unable to feel better. These two books make good biblio-therapy choices for early readers to young adults struggling with negative feelings and mental health issues like depression. Both aspects of ability, physical and mental, are tackled openly in authentic and inspirational ways.

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## Gender

Interestingly, gender was a cultural construct not much addressed in any of the books. It was only notable in the two fantasy novels where girls were characterised as strong and held powerful, important roles in their respective societies. In *Honour Book of the Year for Younger Readers Star of Deltora* (Rodda, 2015), only girls are eligible for a chance to be an apprentice under the famed female Trader Rosslyn and the story centres around young Britta's dream to win the role. In *Honour Book of the Year for Older Readers A Single Stone* (McKinlay, 2015), women are the leaders of the village and seven teenage girls are chosen and physically groomed to be the harvest gatherers each year. The village is fed through their physical efforts so they are revered as strong and powerful figures in this society. Females hold a lot of power in both of these novels,

which holds positive implication for female readers; however, the fact that both novels are fantasy and set in fictitious places could affect the validity of those messages.

## Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation was a construct noted in three of the Older Readers. Ironically, both *The Pause* (Larkin, 2015) and *Cloudwish* (Wood, 2015) have the same two minor characters who are gay and bisexual: a friend's mom and a best friend of the main protagonist. In both of the books, there is not much attention given to either of these characters or their sexual orientation; it is just another characteristic of who they are. In *The Pause* (Larkin, 2015), there is a scene where Declan's friend actually comes out as being gay to Declan and another friend. However, it is unclear what this scene actually adds to the narrative. Such trite presentation could be seen as tokenism.

*The Flywheel* (Gough, 2015) deals more explicitly with issues of sexual orientation and challenges that teens face as they grapple with their emerging sexuality. The protagonist of this story, Delilah, is a very strong teenager, a lesbian confident in her own sexuality and supported by her friends, but severely bullied by her classmates to the point that she drops out of school to focus on her family business. Despite sexual orientation and discovery being a big topic in this book, Gough is very tactful in how she writes and presents the story in an authentic and genuine manner, focusing more on the aspects of young love and growing up than trying to make social statements and token remarks about homosexuality.

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## Religion

Religion is discussed in a few different ways in this set of books. In *One Step at a Time* (Jolly & Heinrich, 2015), the local Buddhist monks pray for the elephant Mali's recovery. The book includes beautifully hand-coloured lino prints as illustrations of a Buddhist temple, monks dressed in orange robes, and traditional symbols of Buddhism like the lotus flower. Felix, the main character in *Soon* (Gleitzman, 2015) is Jewish and lives with other Jewish refugees in the burnt out buildings and ruins of post-WWII Poland. Although the war is over, Felix is still afraid of his Jewish heritage being discovered from the native Poles bitter about the war and blaming the Jews for it.

Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, is also addressed in some of the other novels. The prose novel *Sister Heart* (Morgan, 2015) tells the story of a young Indigenous Australian girl stolen from her family and renamed with the Christian moniker, 'Annie.' A preacher accompanies 'Annie' to her new home for Indigenous children far away from her real home, using Biblical stories about Jonah and Jesus to try to control her behaviour on their long journey. The implications of suicide in the lens of Christianity are explored a bit in *The Pause* (Larkin, 2015), particularly as one of the protagonist's best friends (the one who is not gay) is described as a devout Christian. In *The Flywheel* (Gough, 2015), Delilah pursues a relationship with Rosa who has not come out to her family as being a lesbian and who is quite concerned how their strict Catholic values will impact their response to her.

## Language

Language was an issue in a book with immigrant asylum seekers and one of only two books with Indigenous characters. An interesting example is in the older reader *Cloudwish* (Wood, 2015) where the mother of the protagonist is a Vietnamese immigrant still dealing with the psychological effects of the difficult journey she, her husband, and sister took by boat to Australia many years ago. Vân Ước's mother has never been able to learn English very well and Vân Ước has had the same experience with learning Vietnamese. Her mother sadly notes the different relationship she will have with Vân Ước compared to that she had with her own mother due to their language barrier. Vân Ước thinks, "The two of them represented an irreconcilable cultural split. Distance between them was inevitable" (Wood, 2015, p. 226). In *Sister Heart* (Morgan, 2015), the Indigenous children are forced against their will to learn English and forget their home language, but the older ones vow they will never forget. It is an empowering secret among them.

## Class

In the model of Kimmel, Garrison, and Forest (2012, p. 2-3) studying cultural constructs in children's literature, researchers noted common markers of class, including clothing, housing and education, and the treatment of these subjects in the sample. Clothing was definitely a marker for one's socioeconomic class for the female protagonists in *Star of Deltora* (Rodda, 2015) and *Cloudwish* (Wood, 2015). Vân Ước, the protagonist in *Cloudwish*, who is studying on a scholarship at an affluent private school, is often put down by the other girls because of her clothes. One goes as far as accusing Vân Ước of stealing a cardigan that is quite lovely and fashionable by the girls' standards.

Another marker of class notable in this sample is the difference among characters with regards to housing. Note these two extremes: 1) the three siblings in the Picture Book *Perfect* (Parker & Blackwood, 2015) playing around their large home and reading together in their comfortable beds before falling asleep to bedtime stories, and; 2) Pip in the Younger Reader *Run, Pip, Run* (Jones, 2015) who is homeless, finds a bed wherever she can, and hides outside a window at a school 'eavesdropping' in order to learn. Pip's example brings up the issue of education access as exemplified by Vân Ước on a scholarship at her private school and also that of Delilah in *The Flywheel* (Gough, 2015) who drops out of school to take care of her family's business while her father is away. Vân Ước makes remarks throughout the book expressing her anxiety and stress in maintaining the scholarship, noting that she "always had to be on best behaviour because of the scholarship" (Wood, 2015, p. 81). Class emerged as an interconnecting theme in the previous work analysing cultural depictions in the Batchelder Award-winning books (Kimmel, Garrison, & Forest, 2012, p. 2-3) and was noted as an underlying construct in this sample, as well as often being connected to other constructs like immigration, language, and race/ethnicity/nationality. This is clearly evident for Vân Ước.

### **Race/Ethnicity/Nationality**

The model from Kimmel, Garrison, and Forest (2012, p. 2-3) combines these three constructs because they easily become intertwined, especially when we are talking about issues of forced and voluntary immigration and asylum seeking, nations' names and changing national boundaries. These constructs are noted more specifically when characters are being marginalised due to their membership into a certain race/ethnicity/nationality. Instances of discrimination are reflected in the books with regards to Indigenous peoples in both *Sister Heart* (Morgan, 2015) and *Freedom Ride* (Lawson, 2015), the 'Turks' in the WWI book *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (Bogle & Whatley, 2015), the changing national boundaries in *Soon* (Gleitzman, 2015) after WWII and even the animal races in the fantasy novel *Star of Deltora* (Rodda, 2015). Race/ethnicity/nationality was a strong underlying theme in those books but not addressed or tackled openly as they did not have much to do with the stories in general, except in regards to Indigenous Australians.

### **Indigenous Australians**

Any discussion of Australian literature must include the study of Indigenous voices. While many of these books were set in Australia, only two of the twenty-four books in the sample had any mention of Indigenous perspectives. Both of these books dealt explicitly with Indigenous issues. As previously noted, *Sister Heart* (Morgan, 2015) was a beautiful novel written in poetic verse about the Stolen Generation of Indigenous children in Australia, taken from their homes and families and placed on reservations until they were old enough to work, 14 years-old in this book. *The Stolen Generation* affected Indigenous families throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries and social effects on Indigenous people persist today. *Freedom Ride* (Lawson, 2015) was the only other title incorporating Indigenous voices. This story is set in a small Australian town in the 1960s during some of the beginning fights for civil rights for Indigenous peoples.

It is clear that Indigenous themes were underrepresented in the 2016 Short Lists. This could be due in part to a dearth in books with Indigenous themes published or submitted to the award committee to be judged. However, it seems with so many books set in Australia, there would be more inclusion of Indigenous issues in those as well.

**... a dearth in books with Indigenous themes published or submitted to the award committee ...**

### **Immigration**

Instances of this last construct did not reflect the personal immigration experience of these two researchers – one being the first generation of Irish immigrants to Australia and the other immigrating from the US to Australia via a working visa. In these stories, immigration was explicitly about the forced removal or *Flight* (Wheatley & Greder, 2015) from one's home country to escape war, violence and persecution often due to membership to some of the other cultural constructs mentioned like religion and race/ethnicity/nationality. *Flight* (Wheatley & Greder, 2015) is specifically about this journey, while the children in the stories *Suri's Wall* (Estela & Ottley, 2015), *Soon* (Gleitzman, 2015), and *Ride, Ricardo, Ride* (Cummings & Devries, 2015) are navigating their new worlds, as refugees of war in orphanages or camps, without the comfort of their own families and their own homes enjoyed by young characters in some of the other books like *Perfect* (Parker & Blackwood, 2015), *My Dog Bigsy* (Lester, 2015), and *The Cleo Stories* (Gleeson & Blackwood, 2015).

Most instances of immigration are included within the Older Readers and Picture Book categories, although discussed more openly in the Older Readers. These titles take a more political tone of the issue, making them great springboards for discussions with young adults about this critical issue heavily present in Australia and around the world. In *Cloudwish* (Wood, 2015), Vân Ước's English class has a free writing session she uses to discuss a recent article she read about new government legislation on 'boat people' like her parents. She thinks:

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*How dare this government describe asylum seekers who arrived by boat as 'illegals,' deliberately misinforming the electorate? . . . This country had turned into a country that didn't care about its humanitarian responsibilities. What had happened? As she wrote she tried to evoke the fear and desperation that people must feel in order to risk travelling in this way, imperiling themselves and their family (Wood, 2015, p. 8-9).*

This issue is especially close to Vân Ước, given her parents' arrival from Vietnam by boat in 1980 when they were granted asylum by the Australian government after the fall of Saigon. During the national anthem's singing at a school assembly with the local Member of Parliament, *The Pause* protagonist Declan casually notes his classmates' silence with "the verse that goes, 'For those who've come across the seas, we've boundless plains to share'" (Larkin, 2015, p. 182). Their silence was a tamer version of the student council's original idea to replace the verse with "For those who've come across the seas, we'll lock you and your kids behind razor wire" (Larkin, 2015, p. 183). Nonetheless, despite this theme garnering attention in the Older Readers, it is not part of the main storyline and featured as more of a characteristic political stance for this young generation of Australians.

## Significance

Using this approach to the books on the 2016 Australian Book of the Year Short Lists allows for a critical eye to be extended over the books selected and to examine dominant (or not) cultural themes present in the books. This allows questions to be asked about how contemporary community concerns like immigration are addressed through literature for children and to critically examine the portrayal of various groups like Indigenous Australians within the community both through their presence and their absence. In doing this analysis, we are able to explore the books as a mirror through which society can be reflected.

In the 2016 Book of the Year Short Lists, many diverse themes were addressed including physical disability and mobility issues, suicide and mental health, survivalist orphans of war, homeless children, empowered young females, even vegetarian piranhas and zombie bunnies. The conversations about asylum seekers and refugees some books on this list can spark are important and welcome, especially for the audience of older readers they are targeting. The need for more Indigenous themes and content is obvious, not merely as token portrayals, but as authentic and culturally accurate depictions if these lists are to truly represent Australia.

**Editor's note: This is a refereed article.**

## Children's Books

Blabey, Aaron (2015) *Piranhas don't Eat Bananas*, Gosford, NSW: Scholastic Press, Scholastic Australia.

Bogle, Eric & Whatley, Bruce (2015) *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Cohen, Sigi & Foley, James (2015) *My Dead Bunny*, Newtown, NSW: Walker Books Australia.

Cummings, Phil & Devries, Shane (2015) *Ride, Ricardo, Ride*, Gosford, NSW: Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia.

Estela, Lucy & Ottley, Matt (2015) *Suri's Wall*, Hawthorn, VIC: Penguin Random House.

Gleeson, Libby & Blackwood, Freya (2015) *The Cleo Stories: A Friend and a Pet*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Gleitzman, Morris (2015) *Soon*, Hawthorn, VIC: Viking Books, Penguin Group.

Gough, Erin (2015) *The Flywheel*, Richmond, VIC: Hardie Grant Egmont.

Jolly, Jane & Heinrich, Sally (2015) *One Step at a Time*, Adelaide, SA: Midnight Sun Publishing.

Jones, J.C. (2015) *Run, Pip, Run*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Larkin, John (2015) *The Pause*, Hawthorn, VIC: Penguin Random House.

Lawson, Sue (2015) *Freedom Ride*, Newtown, NSW: Black Dog Books, Walker Books Australia.

Lester, Alison (2015) *My Dog Bigsy*, Hawthorn, VIC: Penguin Random House.

McKinlay, Meg (2015) *A Single Stone*, Newtown, NSW: Walker Books Australia.

Morgan, Sally (2015) *Sister Heart*, Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Press.

Murray, Martine (2015) *Molly and Pim and the Millions of Stars*, Melbourne, VIC: Text Publishing.

Parker, Danny & Blackwood, Freya (2015) *Perfect*, Richmond, VIC: Little Hare, Hardie Grant Egmont.

Rees, Leslie & Cunningham, Walter (1946) *The Story of Karrawingi the Emu*, Sydney, NSW: John Sands.

Rodda, Emily (2015) *Star of Deltora: Shadows of the Master*, Gosford, NSW: Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia.

Ronojoy, Ghosh (2015) *Ollie and the Wind*, North Sydney, NSW: Random House Australia.

Wakefield, Vikki (2015) *Inbetween Days*, Melbourne, VIC: Text Publishing.

Walker, Anna (2015) *Mr. Huff*, Hawthorn, VIC: Penguin Random House.

Wheatley, Nadia & Greder, Armin (2015) *Flight*, Kew, VIC: Windy Hollow Books.

Wilson, Tony & Wood, Laura (2015) *The Cow Tripped Over the Moon*, Gosford, NSW: Scholastic Press, Scholastic Australia.

Wood, Fiona. (2015) *Cloudwish*, Sydney, NSW: Macmillan Australia.

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## Appendix A. Basic Characteristics of Short List Books

Short List	Title	Author (Illustrator)	Publisher	Format & Genre	Protagonist Gender & Age	Setting	Summary
Early Childhood	<i>Piranhas Don't Eat Bananas</i>	Blabey, Aaron	Scholastic Press, Scholastic Australia	PB- Fantasy	Animals- no age	Nondescript (Amazon River in South America)	Brian the piranha tries to get his friends to eat fruit instead of humans.
	<i>My Dog Bigsy</i>	Lester, Alison	Penguin Random House	PB- Fantasy	Animals- no age	Regional Australia	Bigsby the dog runs through his home and yard playing with other animals.

	<i>Perfect</i>	Parker, Danny (Blackwood, Freya)	Little Hare, Hardie Grant Edgmont	PB- Contemporary Realism	3 small children	Regional Australia	A perfect day and evening in the country for a groups of small children,
	<i>Ollie and the Wind</i>	Ronojoy, Ghosh	Random House Australia	PB- Contemporary Realism	Boy, upper primary	Nondescript island	The wind keeps stealing a boy's toys until he gets a kite and they play together.
	<i>Mr. Huff</i>	Walker, Anna	Penguin Random House	PB- Fantasy	Boy, upper primary	Nondescript city (urban)	Little boy Bill wakes up sad and is followed by a rain cloud all day until he realises it is a sadness within him he needs to deal with to feel better.
	<i>The Cow Tripped over the Moon</i>	Wilson, Tony (Wood, Laura)	Scholastic Press, Scholastic Australia	PB- Fantasy	Animals- no age	Nondescript farm (rural)	A cow is determined to jump over the moon in this prequel to the nursery rhyme, 'hey diddle diddle.'
<b>Older Readers</b>	<i>The Flywheel</i>	Gough, Erin	Hardie Grant Edgmont	Novel- Contemporary Realism	Girl, Teen	Contemporary Sydney	A coming of age story as a lesbian teen struggles with running her family's café, being bullied at school, and a new relationship.
	<i>The Pause</i>	Larkin John	Penguin Random House	Novel- Contemporary Realism	Boy, Teen	Contemporary Sydney	In a moment of pure anguish and despair, Declan jumps in front of a train but is given a glimpse at what his life could have been if he took a pause.
	<i>Freedom Ride</i>	Lawson, Sue	Black Dog Books, Walker Books Australia	Novel- Historical Fiction	Boy, tween	1960s Regional Australia	During the civil rights movements of the 1960s, racial tensions intensify in a small conservative country town in regional Australia as seen through the eyes of a young boy.

	<i>Inbetween Days</i>	Wakefield, Vikki	Text Publishing	Novel- Contemporary Realism	Girl, Teen	Regional Australia (Victoria)	A teenager struggles with family, love, and growing up in a small rural Australian town.
	<i>Cloudwish</i>	Wood, Fiona	Macmillian Australia	Novel- Contemporary Realism	Girl, Teen	Contemporary Melbourne	A first generation Vietnamese Australian teen works hard at school to keep her scholarship with the goading of her parents and despite a wish for the most popular boy in school to notice her which gives her more trouble than she anticipates.
	<i>A Single Stone</i>	McKinlay, Meg	Walker Books Australia	Novel- Fantasy	Girl, Teen	Fantasy	Chosen as the leader of the girls sent to gather the harvest to feed her small village, Jena begins to question her dystopian world.
<b>Younger Readers</b>	<i>The Cleo Stories: A Friend and a Pet</i>	Gleeson, Libby (Blackwood, Freya)	Allen and Unwin	Novel- Contemporary Realism	Girl, lower primary age	Contemporary Suburban Australia	Cleo plays around the house on a rainy day with her imaginary friend and decides her family should get a pet.
	<i>Soon</i>	Gleitzman, Morris	Viking Books, Penguin Group	Novel- Historical Fiction	Boy, 13 years-old	Poland post WWII	A boy hides with other refugees in post WWII Poland as they all try to rebuild their lives after the war.
	<i>Run, Pip, Run</i>	Jones, J.C.	Allen and Unwin	Novel- Contemporary Realism	Girl, 10 years-old	Contemporary Sydney	A resourceful and positive young girl makes her life on the street after her caretaker is hospitalised.
	<i>Sister Heart</i>	Morgan, Sally	Freemantle Press	Poetic verse- Historical Fiction	Girl, upper primary age	Regional Australia- Stolen Generation	A young Indigenous girl is forcibly taken from her family and sent to a school for Indigenous children

						where the kids find solace together in the memories of their past and Indigenous traditions.
	<i>Molly and Pim and the Millions of Stars</i>	Murray, Martine	Text Publishing	Novel- Fantasy	Girl, upper primary age	Contemporary Regional Australia A young girl living alone with her mother who uses plants for healing and is 'unusual' finds her mother turns into a tree and must rescue her before she is chopped down.
	<i>Star of Deltora: Shadows of the Master</i>	Rodda, Emily	Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia	Novel- Fantasy	Girl, early teens	Coastal city of Del (fantasy place) Britta has the opportunity to be an apprentice with the Trader Rosslyn against her family's wishes and at the risk of revealing her true identity.
<b>Picture Book</b>	<i>Ride, Ricardo, Ride</i>	Cummings, Phil (Devries, Shane)	Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia	PB- Historical Fiction	Boy, upper primary age	Europe, WWI-II era A little boy loves riding his bike around home, reminiscent of a small Mediterranean village, until it is invaded by 'shadows' that destroy his home and family.
	<i>My Dead Bunny</i>	Cohen, Sigi (Foley, James)	Walker Books Australia	PB- Contemporary Fantasy	Boy, upper primary age	Nondescript Contemporary Western setting A boy buries his pet bunny but he comes back to life as a zombie and wreaks havoc on the boy and his family.
	<i>Flight</i>	Wheatley, Nadia (Greder, Armin)	Windy Hollow Books	PB- Historical Fiction or Contemporary Realism?	Mother, Father and baby boy	Sandy desert landscape (Middle East?) A family flees from their home in the night and find a new home in a refugee camp.
	<i>One Step at a Time</i>	Jolly, Jane (Heinrich, Sally)	Midnight Sun Publishing	PB- Contemporary Realism?	Boy, upper primary age	Burma jungle A young Burmese boy Luk takes care of his baby elephant Mali after she is injured from a landmine and

						learns to use her new leg.
<i>Suri's Wall</i>	Estela, Lucy (Ottley, Matt)	Penguin Random House	PB- Historical Fiction or Contemporary Realism?	Girl, upper primary age	Nondescript	Suri, the tallest child at an orphanage on a cliff, lies to the other children about a beautiful town and landscape below, while a war torn scene plays out to the reader.
<i>And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda</i>	Bogle, Eric (Whatley, Bruce)	Allen and Unwin	PB- Historical Fiction	Adults	WWI Turkey and Australia	These are the words of Eric Bogle's moving and well known Australian song made into a picture book. The theme is about the damage and futility of war and the pride and bravery of those who participate.