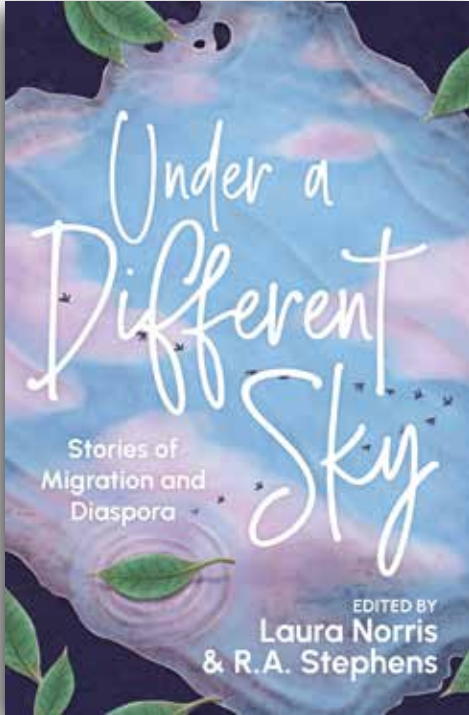

Teachers' Notes



UNDER A DIFFERENT SKY

Edited R. A. Stephens and Laura Norris

ISBN: 9781761113611

Reading level: 12+ years

BOOK SUMMARY

Under a Different Sky presents a collection of short stories drawn from personal experiences and family histories about the trials and triumphs of migration and diaspora.

These stories feature historical and contemporary narratives—including convict journeys, a refugee choosing a new school, the restoration of a family farmhouse, a schoolyard cultural exchange and flights to unfamiliar places.

This anthology explores the complex relationship between place and identity: how we are shaped by the landscapes we call home and what it means to live under a different sky.

Authors include Wendy Adams, Ruth Bonetti, S E Booker, Jacqui du Toit, Rosanne Hawke, Lellie Lopter, Edita Mujkić, Laura Norris, Linsey Painter, R. A. Stephens, E. Tan, E. J. Terry, Richard Yaxley and Julia Yu.

THEMES

▪ Diaspora ▪ Migration ▪ Cultural Identity ▪ History ▪ Home ▪

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**R. A. Stephens is available for talks and workshops.
Contact Rhiza Edge for more information.**

Under a Different Sky Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.



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EDITORS FOR UNDER A DIFFERENT SKY

R.A STEPHENS



Biography

R. A. Stephens is a teacher by day, writer, editor and publisher by night. She is passionate about the written word, what stories can do to take a reader to a new world and open our eyes to love, compassion, the bigger picture and much more. When not working, teaching or writing, she enjoys living in the country and spending time with her kids and cats.

Rochelle and Laura were also the editors of the short story collection: The Opposite of Disappearing

Foreward

As a teacher of psychology in high school, I love discussing cultural perspectives. The way each person sees the world is different but there are fascinating, specific differences based on the way one grows up and the culture they experience. Language and the understanding of language vary. While it might be an obvious consideration, it's very easy to forget in the moment. How we respond to social situations, what and how we eat, as well as the significance of different words, colours or even numbers, varies in different cultures. It's these similarities and differences that interest me.

Australia is represented by a wide array of cultures, with many people from a diverse range of countries regularly migrating here. We often then maintain connections to our roots. This collection was inspired by the desire to tell some of these stories. Stories have value. I asked each author to share the inspiration behind their story, whether it was based on real events, largely fictional or if it had a foundation in a specific culture.

I enjoyed compiling these stories, and while some experiences will resonate with different readers, I hope you learn something new. These stories include a range of experiences, including journeys across continents to Australia or visiting heritage from beyond. There are several modern stories as well as historical experiences. The ordering of the book includes contemporary stories at the beginning and historical pieces towards the end. I'd like to thank the authors who contributed to this collection by sharing their experiences.

LAURA NORRIS



Biography

Laura Norris studied Creative Writing and Literature at Griffith University. She is the owner of The Mad Hatters Bookshop, an independent bookstore in Manly, Queensland, where she can be found championing the incredible Brisbane writing community and throwing books at people.

Rochelle and Laura were also the editors of the short story collection: The Opposite of Disappearing

Foreward

As a mixed-race person, I have always been drawn to questions around migration and diaspora. Who gets to leave? Who gets to stay? What do we carry with us?

Reflecting on the stories in this collection, I'm struck by the ways the authors grapple with their own profound questions. How do we carry loss for not only people but places? How do we contend with different cultural expectations? How do we adapt to social environments outside our cultural toolkit? How do we connect with a culture we grew up outside of? What do we give up by leaving our homeland? What do we gain?

This collection is an exploration of not only migration and diaspora, but also the ways they shape our understanding of ourselves, our cultures and our identities. As you read these stories, I hope you reflect on your own experiences of belonging and consider the ways in which we all carry a piece of our home with us wherever we go.

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

This collection of stories cover the vast range of migration providing historical and contemporary contexts for why people move to Australia. The stories explore how individuals' cultural history doesn't always match their new cultural environment and how they navigate the disparity. Students will also explore what it means to live between two cultures and claim a range of identities.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 5

English, History

AC9E5LE01 - identify aspects of literary texts that represent details or information about historical, social and cultural contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

AC9E5LE03 - recognise that the point of view in a literary text influences how readers interpret and respond to events and characters

AC9HS5K04 - The reasons people migrate to Australia and the contributions of a diverse range of groups to the development of Australian society

AC9HS6K04 - The contribution of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society

AC9HS5K03 - the role of a significant individual or group, including First Nations Australians and those who migrated to Australia, in the development of events in an Australian colony

YEAR 6

History

AC9HS5K04 - The reasons people migrate to Australia and the contributions of a diverse range of groups to the development of Australian society

AC9HS6K04 - The contribution of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society

AC9HS5K03 - the role of a significant individual or group, including First Nations Australians and those who migrated to Australia, in the development of events in an Australian colony

YEAR 7

English

AC9E7LE05 - Identify and explain how characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives

AC9E7LE06 - Identify and explain how literary devices create layers of meaning in texts

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AC9E7LE07 - Create and edit literary texts that experiment with language features and literary devices

YEAR 9

History

AC9HH9K14 - The causes and effects of events, movements and ideas that contributed to change in Australian society 1750-1901

AC9HH9K16 - The experiences of a significant individual (such as an Afghan cameleers) and the contribution they made to Australian society

AC9HH9K18 - The role of different individuals and groups in shaping national identity and building a multicultural nation

AC9HH9K03 - The causes and effects of European contact and extension of settlement, including their impact on the First Nations Peoples of Australia

AC9C9K05 - The nature of cultural diversity in Australia and why understanding it supports cohesive societies

AC9C9S01 - Analyse different perspectives and evaluate issues related to civic inclusion (e.g. recognition of minority groups, including migrant labourers)

YEAR 10

English

AC9E10LE05 - Analyse how the choice of narrative structures, language features and literary devices shapes meaning and influences audience response

EXPANSION ON CURRICULUM LINKS

Curriculum: Asian content, culture, customs

General Capabilities & Cross-Curriculum Priorities

Intercultural Understanding: Empathy towards non-English-speaking migrants and appreciation of cultural diversity; Identity, belonging, cultural displacement; Experiences of racism and resilience; Challenging stereotypes

Critical and Creative Thinking: Interpreting historical context, narrative structure, symbolism; Ethical Understanding & Personal and Social Capability - respect for marginalized individuals, recognising hidden histories; Fairness, empathy, inclusion; Moral reflection on how newcomers were treated.

Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia: Exploring India-Australia migration links

Sustainability: Camels as sustainable transport in arid environments; Human-animal relationships and working with, not against, nature.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures: Supports comparison of migrant narratives with Indigenous cultural histories and connection to land; Cameleers often worked on Country and

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alongside Indigenous communities.; Opportunity to acknowledge overlapping histories of marginalisation.

Personal & Social Capability: Emotional regulation (quiet approach to the camel); Loneliness, homesickness, hope.

Literacy: Historical narrative structure; Figurative language (dust storm, shadow, scent).

TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING

- What do you know about cultures other than your own?
- Have you moved or do you know someone who has moved from another country?
- What do you think is a cultural identity? How do you think it is shaped?
- Have you ever been the new kid in school? How did it feel to be different?

AFTER-READING

- How do the authors encourage the reader to see the world from another person's perspective?
- What themes are common in all of the stories?
- How has knowing these stories changed how you see migration?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WHAT REMAINS BY E.TAN

- How does Troy's relationship with grief evolve over his trip to Singapore?
- How do you think Troy's mother's cultural identity shapes his own?
- What role does grief play in surfacing issues of identity and belonging in Troy?
- In what ways is Troy's journey to Singapore significant?
- Troy views his mum as 'Banana' and his dad as 'pretend Banana.' What do you think he means by this?
- Troy's mum says: 'I never think of myself as Chinese until I look in the mirror.' What does this reveal about her sense of identity? How does this differ from Troy?

FENCES BY JACQUI DU TOIT

- What were three things that led Jess to feel further like an outsider at her school?
- What do you think Lachie felt after hearing Jess' presentation? Do you think he will act differently in the future?
- What does 'Fences' say about vulnerability and sharing your story?

WHEREVER I LAY MY HAT BY RICHARD YAXLEY

- What assumptions did Ms Gard-Bright make about Shandana's culture? How did Shandana challenge those assumptions?
- What is the significance of Shandana stating 'I am from Bendoola'?
- How does the author explore themes of intergenerational violence and the ongoing impact of war, through Shandana's family?
- Why does Shandana 'become nervous' when Ms Gard-Bright announces her 'brilliant idea'?
- What does Ms Gard-Bright mean when she says that documentaries are 'good for you'?
- What is the general response of the class to Ms Gard-Bright's idea? Are they genuinely interested? How do you know?
- What does Maisie Wilson's 'claim' suggest about her attitude to the class activity?
- How does Ms Gard-Bright demonstrate her ignorance of the world, and the lives of people from other countries?
- Why, at the end of the story, does Shandana insist that she is 'from Bendoola'?
- Review how Ms Gard-Bright is described throughout the story. How do these descriptions add to our knowledge of her character?
- Why does the author choose to include a detailed story about the village where Shandana's parents lived, and what happened there?
- How does the author mock or satirise Ms Gard-Bright and her teaching?

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LUNCHBOX TRADES BY JULIA YU

- What does 'Lunchbox Trades' say about people's reactions to difference?
- What role does food and cooking play in Evelyn's connection to culture?
- How does Ms Zimmerman help Evelyn on her journey?
- How is food portrayed in the story? What role does it play in terms of symbolism and plot development?
- The act of consumption is an underlying theme in the story. As the world becomes more globalised, we are progressively exposed to new and different cultures. We consume foods just as we consume different cultures. How do we consume respectfully? Where do we draw the line between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation?

FEELING THE HEAT BY SUSAN BOOKER

- What strategies does Clare use to avoid being the target of the bullies?
- How does Jessie and Anna's kindness make a difference in Clare returning to school?

A QUESTION OF BELONGING BY LINSEY PAINTER

- What does returning to Papua New Guinea teach Stina about 'belonging'?
- How does this story explore the theme of expectation versus reality?
- What does Stina learn from her relationships with Dr Francie and Mary?
- At the beginning of the story, a man at the airport asks Stina where she's from. Why does she lie? Have you ever felt that you don't know where you belong?
- What kind of tree does Mary teach Stina to climb when they were kids? What other event takes place in that same tree?
- What special objects or things in nature do you remember from the last place you lived? Did you say goodbye to them when you left?
- What does Dr Francie reply when Stina asks where Dr Francie's home is?
- What does Stina discover about belonging when she's talking with Raymond, the man with the snake bite, at the end of the story?

SEARCHING FOR SORAYA BY ROSANNE HAWKE

- What similarities does Soraya notice in Jackson's experience that remind her of her own?
- Do you agree that stories keep us alive inside? Or not? How can remembering her family members be life-giving for Soraya now she is nearly 18?
- Why do you think girls from countries like Afghanistan wear scarves on their heads? Ask a classmate who wears one or research.
- Do you think if Soraya wore a scarf it would make a difference to Jackson?
- In what ways are Soraya's family and customs important for her? Give an example from the story.

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-
- In what ways have Soraya and Jackson helped each other?

MOVING HOME TO FINLAND BY RUTH BONETTI

- How do you think Carl felt about moving to Finland at the start of the story versus the end of the story? What changed?
- How were Carl's optimistic goals and expectations to renovate the family farmhouse changed by the reality of seeing inside? How did he recalibrate to overcome disappointment.
- How did Carl mature and grow through meeting and getting to know many relatives? What aspects did he discover in himself through discovering heritage as family history gave fresh perspective and self knowledge?
- Carl grew up hearing stories of his family fighting Russian oppression of Finland; paranoia has been passed down through generations of genetic memory. After his trepidation on arriving to spend some weeks living next to 'the bear next door,' how did he evolve into embracing the possibility of moving to live in Finland, which would entail conscription and even warfare?
- Carl feels an affinity with his namesake, Karl who Australian relatives dismiss as the black sheep—even, as an embarrassment. He hears that Finnish family consider Karl a hero for being an activist against oppression. How does this fresh perspective change his fear of 'the bear next door' and thus, future plans?
- An internet real estate listing of Carl's family homestead showed photographs and a low price that fostered dreams of buying and renovating it. What reality checks lowered such hopes and how did he come to consider more feasible options?

MINA BY E.J TERRY

- What effect did Mrs Mary O'Grady have on Mina's confidence?
- What was the significance of Jaimee and Mina's friendship in the story?
- How did Mina show resilience and courage to continue?

A DIFFERENT SKY BY LAURA NORRIS

- What leads the narrator to return to the 'big house'?
- Why does he assume Marshall is mocking him?
- What role does his mum play in shaping his behaviour and decisions, even though she isn't present?
- How is shame presented, and how does it influence the narrator's actions?
- Why is the story written in second person ("you")? What effect does this have on the reader?

1. Childhood Memory and Recollection:

- Discuss how memory and recollection can evolve from childhood to adulthood.
- How do our childhood memories shape our understanding of ourselves?
- Can you think of a memory from childhood that has changed over time?

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2. Shame and Decision Making

- Examine how shame influences the decisions of the narrator
- Examine how shame can be a positive or negative force in examining the narrator's behaviour
- How does shame impact the narrator's ability to form relationships?
- Can you think of a time when shame influenced your actions?

3. Mixed Race/Cultural Upbringing

- Consider how the narrator's mixed race identity affects his worldview and sense of belonging
- What role does cultural identity play in shaping identity?
- Can you think of a time when your cultural identity differed from someone else's?

A NEW SCHOOL BY EDITA MUJIC

- Have you ever experienced being "new" somewhere? How did it feel?
- How does the writer use internal thoughts (e.g. questions like "What if my English is not good enough?") to build tension?
- What challenges does Marko face during the scholarship tests?
- What do you think is the biggest challenge for people who arrive in Australia from a country with a different language and culture?
- Why do you think Marco's dad said that speaking another language, even imperfectly, is an advantage, not something to make fun of.
- Why do you think 'The English Pronunciation Inspector' made fun of Marco's incorrect pronunciations of certain English words?

THE QUIET CAMELEER BY LELLIE LOPTER

- What is the significance of Abdul saying, "they see the value of the beasts, but not the hands that guide them?"
- How does Adjib represent quiet strength? How does Adjib show courage during the dust storm?
- Identify examples of imagery in the story. How do they help build the setting?
- The camel is not angry, only afraid. How does this change the way the cameleer responds? What does this suggest about understanding behaviour in others?
- The cameleer uses calmness instead of force. What does this tell us about different types of strength?
- How might the cameleer feel arriving in a new country where he is treated differently? What helps people feel like they belong?
- Why do you think stories like this are important for understanding Australia's past? Whose stories are often left out?

ASSISTED BY R.A. STEPHENS

- What does Harriet's reaction to being listed as a "single female" reveal about her feelings? How is this different to modern times?
- Why might the journey to Australia be both daunting and exciting?
- What does the story suggest about opportunities for women in the 1800s?
- What role does marriage play in Harriet's future plans and aspirations?
- What challenges might Harriet face after the story ends?

ONE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE BY WENDY ADAMS

- How did becoming a lad initially represent freedom for Molly?
- What lessons does Molly draw on from Granny Law?
- What was the outcome of revealing her true identity to the guards?
- Compare and contrast life for girls and boys now, compared to Molly's time. What is the same? What is different? What makes you wonder?
- An inference could be made that Molly was unlike other girls of her time. Where is the proof?
- Imagine the story was told from Mrs Chandler's point of view. How would she describe Molly?
- What happens to Molly once she arrives in New South Wales? Make a prediction using your prior knowledge and inferences from the text.
- While on the convict ship, Molly made a promise to always find happiness no matter what the future held for her. What does that tell you about her character?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

GOODBYE POEM

Sometimes we don't think to say goodbye to special places and objects, like our old bedroom or the treehouse in the backyard or a favourite park at the end of the street. Take time now to write down places and objects that were special to you that you've had to leave behind.

You can write a goodbye poem or keep the list in a special box of mementos.

WHAT'S SPECIAL TO WHERE YOU LIVE NOW?

It takes time to settle into a new place. If we open ourselves up to new places and people the new place can become our home. Can you think of two things that you especially like about the place you live in now? Brainstorm it or share it with a friend.

CLASS TRAVEL MAP

Where have you lived? Have everyone in the class put together a map.

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How many different places have you lived in? List them along with one special memory you have of that place.

WRITE A SHORT STORY OF YOUR CULTURE.

Use one of the stories as inspiration to write a fictional story based on your own history or culture. You might need to ask parents or grandparents and research more about your own family history.

FAMILY TREES

Think about your family as a whole and all the connections within them. Create a family tree.

STORY SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

THE QUIET CAMELEER BY LELLIE LOPTER

Adjib Khan was a real person. He was born in India in 1872. He travelled to Australia to undertake work as a cameleer in South Australia and New South Wales. He settled in Broken Hill, the location of NSW's first Mosque which was built in 1887. The simple wood and iron structure remains as a protected historical site and museum. It is Australia's oldest, and only surviving outback mosque that was built by cameleers. Adjib Khan, the quiet cameleer passed away in Broken Hill on 28th May 1949. He is buried facing Mecca.

Writing Activities:

Rewrite the dust storm from the camel's perspective.

Diary entry from the cameleer on his first night in Australia.

Sensory writing: describe the dust storm using all five senses.

Drama Activities:

Role-play the moment of the bolt and recapture.

Explore body language: fear vs calm.

Inquiry Task:

Research Afghan cameleers and map their routes across Australia.

Investigate how camels are used in Australia today.

STEM Links:

Why are camels suited to desert environments? What physical factors assist them?

Compare camels vs horses in arid travel.

Research

The cameleers were instrumental in opening inland Australia (transport, telegraph lines, exploration).

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Many were from regions including India, Afghanistan, and present-day Pakistan.

They experienced racial exclusion (e.g., White Australia Policy, social segregation)

AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE BY WENDY ADAMS

Most of my story is true, but history doesn't record the name of the boarding house where Molly worked after the death of her beloved Granny Law. Therefore, Mrs Chadler, the odious George and the timid Morag are all figments of my imagination. George was a useful character, as I was curious how Molly obtained the boy's clothes in a school for girls. Some records say she took the name James Burrow, and others suggest James Borrow. I chose Borrow as Grantlee Kieza, my primary source of information used it.

The horse with the longish tale, John Hughes who identified it, the prison where Molly was imprisoned, and its location are all factual. The courtroom scene was based on truth, including the hanging judge Justice John Heath and the two fellow convicts sentenced with her: Sarah Bull and Tom Jones. Molly's death sentence was also factual, but was later commuted to seven years' transportation.

Molly's determination to keep her identity secret is factual as is the command by Captain Arthur Phillip that convicts be clean before being sent to New South Wales. It's also true that Molly became a minor celebrity when her secret was revealed. The ship that brought her to New South Wales is true, and so is her declaration, recorded in a letter to her aunt, to find happiness despite the challenges she was to face.

My story recounts only the beginning of this extraordinary life. Mary married a man of her choosing, a remarkable feat in a time where women had little autonomy. She was a mother of seven children, and on the death of her husband, controlled his many and varied enterprises. At one stage, she was the wealthiest woman in Australia and was renowned for her business acumen and philanthropy. She's the woman on our \$20 note and is a significant individual who shaped the development of events in the colony.

LUNCHBOX TRADES BY JULIA YIU

This story touches on common experiences kids of diaspora have which include things like trying to fit in by eating what everyone else normally eats, feeling out of place and stuck in between an in-group and an out-group. Food constitutes the core of many, if not all cultures. I want to pose a question which maybe you can use if you find it relevant: What role does the food mentioned throughout the story play in developing and pushing the story forward?

WHAT REMAINS BY EUNICE TAN

Research Chinese History.

In the story Troy mentions that his mum's 'great-great-great grandfather, or something like that, migrated from China to Australia to work in the goldfields in the 1850s'.

You can find out more about the experiences of the Chinese miners in the 1850s from these links:

<https://mhns.wa.gov.au/stories/general/chinese-goldfields/>

<https://www.historyskills.com/classroom/year-9/chinese-australian-gold-rush/>

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ASSISTED BY R. A. STEPHENS

Research assisted immigration

Assisted Immigration program 1832–1850s. Over 350,000 people came to Australia with a common agreement between the Australian and English governments. These people were told it was an opportunity for work and freedom with images that suggested a healthy lifestyle and work for everyone. And trade that could be sent back to the UK. Assisted immigrants travelled from Britain to Australia in large numbers in the 1800s. The trip to Australia took around three months.

Find out more about this time period and why people came over. Here are some links to start with.

<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/assisted-migration-introduced>

<https://www.chisholm.edu.au/about-us/caroline-chisholm-education-foundation/caroline-chisholm>

<https://www.portrait.gov.au/people/caroline-chisholm-1808>

<https://dictionaryofsydney.org/media/4319>

<https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/immigration>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

E. TAN

E. Tan perfected the art of escaping into the pages of a novel early in her life. When she placed runner-up in The SMH Short Story Competition as a teen, her passion for reading expanded to include scribbling stories in an old notebook. Storytelling's ability to educate and transport readers inspired her to complete an Honours Degree in English Literature and a Master of Creative Writing. Identity, belonging, family, faith, and loss are recurrent themes in her writing, and her achievements include a Commonwealth Broadcasting Association production of her short story 'In Transit' for the Commonwealth Short Story Competition.

JACQUI DU TOIT

Jacqui Du Toit is a teacher and emerging writer based on the Gold Coast, Australia. Originally from South Africa, her writing explores the intersections of migration, language, and belonging. *Fences* is her first short story and competition submission, inspired by real experiences of those close to her. Jacqui teaches in distance education, supporting senior students completing the QCIA. She is passionate about embracing neurodiversity, supporting young people, and telling stories that build connection and empathy. She is a wife, mum and chocolate lover.

RICHARD YAXLEY

Richard Yaxley lives in Brisbane. His novels include *This Is My Song* (winner of the Prime Minister's Literary Award and the ACU Book of the Year), *The Happiness Quest* (CBCA Notable), *A New Kind Of Everything*, *Harmony*, *Leonardo Forever* and *Something Somewhere*. Richard is a past winner of the Queensland Premier's Literary Award and the QWC-Varuna Fellowship for Established Writers. He is a writing mentor who regularly presents workshops and has judged the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and the Queensland Literary Awards.

JULIA YU

As a young creative with a Chinese heritage, Julia Yu is driven by the transformative nature of storytelling. Julia is an emerging writer and an artist drawn to the space between imagined futures and contemporary realities. Currently, she is studying Professional Writing & Communication and Law at UQ.

SUSAN BOOKER

Susan Booker is a passionate writer whose portfolio spans various genres, including social justice and historical fiction. In 2025, Susan presented her short story *Uprooted* at the HerStory Festival in Sydney, drawing upon her formative experiences working in a hospice as a teenager. Her work, *Endings*, which addresses the complexities of life-limiting illness, was published in *The Raven Review* (Fall 2025 edition). Susan's short story, *Submerged*, is featured in the 2026 anthology *If Found, Please Return*, published by Hawkeye Books. The story examines themes of post-natal depression. Susan resides in Brisbane with her family and multitude of rescue animals.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ROSANNE HAWKE

Rosanne Hawke has authored children's and young adult books for thirty years. She has also been a teacher, aid worker/missionary in Pakistan and the UAE, and a lecturer of Creative Writing in Tabor Adelaide. Her books explore cultural and social issues, history, mystery and kindness. She often writes of displacement, belonging, reconciliation and tells stories of children unheard. Titles include *Taj and the Great Camel Trek*, *Beyond Borders* series, *Pepper Masalah* series, and *Flying Blind* which won the 2024 YA Caleb Award.

RUTH BONETTI

Ruth Bonetti's career in classical music became a passport to the world. Destiny led her to Sweden and Finland where she researched her grandfather's story and those of Finnish relatives, resulting in her award-winning *Midnight Sun to Southern Cross* trilogy (historical biography/memoir). Her passion is to chronicle fighters against oppression. Ruth's many publications (by Oxford University Press and her own imprint Words and Music) cover both music and historical biography; her dual perspectives are encouraging confident performance of words and music, and the healing of historical trauma through song and literature.

LINSEY PAINTER

Linsey Painter loves to write stories that explore joy and courage in the face of life's challenges. She and her husband live in Far North Queensland, with their three rambunctious boys. Linsey's picture book, *We'll Still Be A Family* is about moving overseas. Her fantasy short stories appear in a number of different anthologies. Growing up overseas and travelling is something that fuels Linsey's love of writing stories set in exciting locations.

LAURA NORRIS

Laura Norris studied Creative Writing and Literature at Griffith University, where her short story, *Dancing with Knives*, was published in the annual student anthology, *Talent Implied 2019*. She was a co-editor of the short story collection *The Opposite of Disappearing*, where she wrote the titular story. She is a co-owner of The Mad Hatters Bookshop, an independent bookstore in Manly, Queensland, where she can be found championing the incredible Brisbane writing community and throwing books at people.

EDITA MUJKIĆ

Edita Mujkić is an award-winning author and a National Ambassador for the Refugee Council of Australia. Born and raised in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, she fled her war-torn birthplace in May 1992, with her two children. They reunited with her husband 600 days later, in the UK. They moved to Melbourne in 1994, and still live there. Her memoir, *Between Before and After*, about the escape from besieged Sarajevo, was shortlisted for the international 2024 Memoir Prize from Memoir Magazine, was the runner-up Hunter Davies Lakeland Book of the Year 2023 (UK) and awarded the Bookends Prize for People & Business (UK).

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ELIZABETH TERRY

Elizabeth Terry has lived most of her life in Melbourne, where her school and university days were spent dreaming of being anywhere other than a classroom. She fondly recalls her few years in London in her early 20s where she began songwriting. On return to Australia and after a corporate career she began writing short stories, usually with an eccentric twist, many humorous, a few thrillers, time-warps and a horror story or two.

In 2020 Elizabeth published a collection of mysteries and quirky tales. Her wry sense of humour has ignited a love of writing children's stories which all carry the message of diversity and the acceptance of differences. She has written a novel set in London and her story *Mina* is based on her great-aunt, a renowned singer who migrated from Russia in the early 1900s.

KELLIE COFF

Kellie Coff is an international award-winning author and illustrator. Publishing under the pseudonym and registered trademark *Lellie Lopter*, Kellie's stories encourage children to think big, to feel deep, and to laugh out loud. Kellie isn't afraid to write about big feelings and tricky topics. She is also a direct descendant of Adjib Khan, the quiet cameleer depicted in this story. Kellie champions children's literacy through her free little libraries project, the Author Pen Pals Program, the PLCC Author Backpack Project, and the Incognito Art Show.

R. A. STEPHENS

Rochelle Stephens writes under R. A. Stephens. She is published in both educational and trade markets. Her *Riz Chester* series included *The Fingerprint Code* which was shortlisted in the Speech Pathology Awards in 2024. She completed her Master of Editing and Publishing with a thesis exploring middle fiction for teens and is passionate about motivating young people to read with relevant and interesting stories. Rochelle started the Rhiza Shorts list of teen stories for young adults who are busy or reluctant readers. She has contributed two titles for the list: *No Dress, No Idea* and *Six Take One*. She loves introducing Maths to young readers as seen in her two picture books, *Apples Not Orples* and *Connected*, which explore maths for kids in alternate ways.

WENDY ADAMS

Wendy Adams is a former primary school teacher and mother of four. Her middle-grade novel *Quit Calling Me Stumblemore* secured a place in the Tasmanian Writers and Illustrators Mentorship Program (2025), and her short story *One Imperfect Heart* won the Rose Francombe Short Story Award (2025). Wendy is the independent author of a middle grade novel, *Call the Wild Sea* (2023), and has a short story published in the anthology *Through Their Eyes* by Rhiza Press.