



# Unboring Exploring Teachers Notes

Written and edited by young Australians

Featuring a story by Sally Morgan

Published by 100 Story Building  
in January 2021

## SUMMARY

*It all began with a Zoom meeting gone wrong. A team of Year 5/6 students, gathering online to discuss their plans to create a book, were suddenly sucked into their devices because of a sinister virus wielded by nefarious computer pirates. Can they save the stories they selected and emerge with a completed book? And how do their dogs fit into this whole thing?*

So begins *Unboring Exploring*, a collection of adventure-themed stories, poems, and other exciting features written and edited for children by children. Created through 100 Story Building's Early Harvest program, the book is the culmination of a yearlong project undertaken by students in schools across Victoria. After curating the collection from submissions by their peers, our fearless team of Year 5/6 editors created a wraparound editorial story, a Choose Your Own Adventure that runs throughout the book, a series of adventure survival tips, and more!

Featuring an original contribution by bestselling author Sally Morgan and illustrations by professional artists who were paired with each submission, *Unboring Exploring* is a one-of-a-kind anthology that promises to delight and enthrall every reader.

## THEMES

The key theme for each submission in the book is Adventure, but each young author featured in the book puts their own spin on the subject. Other important motifs include:

- Perseverance and personal growth
- Heroism and bravery
- Cautionary real-world tales
- Fantastical journeys and discoveries
- Heists, escapes, and betrayals
- Victory against the odds
- Friendship and forgiveness



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## BACKGROUND

This book is the product of 100 Story Building's flagship Early Harvest program. Every year, a panel of fifteen young editors in Year 5 and 6 form an Editorial Committee. They commission cover art and illustrations, curate the story collection from submissions by their peers, and make all the creative decisions involved in putting together the book. Throughout the process, they are guided by publishing industry professionals — including authors, designers, artists and marketing experts.

In 2020, 100 Story Building supported teachers from four schools across Victoria to develop narrative writing units and strategies that integrated with the program. Bestselling children's writer Rebecca Lim hosted a pair of video sessions sharing advice and thoughtful answers to student questions. And 100 Story Building facilitators guided students through workshops on writing and editing the perfect Adventure tale.

130 young authors submitted finished stories for consideration. From these, the Editorial Committee (who were meeting virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic) selected the 14 standouts published in this book, delivered feedback to everyone who submitted, and rounded out the collection by commissioning children's author Sally Morgan to contribute a story.



Rebecca Lim author video



The 2020 editorial team in a Zoom meeting





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## WRITING STYLE

The short stories and poems in the book span many different styles, from breathless first person narratives in the present tense to past-tense third person epics. Some of the young authors employ literary techniques like non-linear storytelling, unexpected twists, or in-depth character arcs. The book is also full of confident world-building approaches that establish each story's unique setting. The sheer variety of styles helps convey that this is a celebration of young people's writing and that the possibilities are endless.

## AUTHOR MOTIVATION

The young authors featured were all participants in the year-long Early Harvest youth publishing program, and were supported in their creative process at several points along the way:

- With the support of 100 Story Building staff, classroom teachers developed new curricular units that guided students through narrative writing via authentic professional processes of creating and editing their work.
- Bestselling author and editor Rebecca Lim remotely advised each participating class on the ins and outs of writing a thrilling adventure story.
- Students were very keen to have their work published, and their creations were revised over and over until they were in tip-top shape for submission to our Young Editorial Committee.
- The young editors (a committee of students in Year 5/6 representing each participating school) were motivated to create a book that achieved the following reader experience:
  - Readers should feel inspired, engaged, and excited to find out what's going to happen next.
  - Readers should feel a "rollercoaster of emotions" and experience a variety of different styles, settings, and plotlines.
  - Readers should be able to visualise what's happening and imagine themselves inside the world of each story and poem.



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## MARKETING PROMOTION

*Unboring Exploring* was published by 100 Story Building in partnership with Hardie Grant Egmont. In addition to in-store promotions at various booksellers, we offer school discounts, especially when purchasing more than one copy for a class or library. Meanwhile, we have undertaken a comprehensive marketing push amongst the professional contributors and supporters of the book, including Rebecca Lim, Andy Griffiths, Tony Wilson, Oliver Phommavanh, and Maxine Beneba Clarke as well as all the illustrators involved.

## STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES

- Rather than a traditional Table of Contents, this book features a “Map of Contents.” As a class, discuss how this changes the reader experience: does it change the way you feel you can read the book? Bonus: make a “Map of Contents” for another book that you love!
- The book’s Editorial story was written by young editors during the COVID-19 lockdown. Ask students to carefully read it and identify themes or plot elements that might have been inspired by real life. This is also an opportunity to have an in-depth discussion with students about their experience during lockdown, or to prompt them to write their own fantastical version of what life was like during that period.
- The humorous ‘101% Serious Never-fail Adventure Survival Tips’ feature is hardly a complete list! Ask students to create and illustrate their own lists on that same topic.
- The “Best Lines from Our Treasure Trove of Tales” section is an exciting collection of inspiring excerpts. Have students pick their favourite and discuss why they’re drawn to that one, and then have them create a story that contains that line!





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## STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES (cont.)

- The book's Choose Your Own Adventure story has many options and many endings – and the only reason we didn't include more is because we ran out of space on the pages! Luckily, you and your students won't have that problem, so challenge your students to create a new branching storyline from the same starting point. As an ICT tie-in, students can try out the free Twine computer application, which allows you to use basic coding to create text-based video games or Choose Your Own Adventure stories. They can put their new storylines in this format and test out each other's!
- For a designer, creating a collection like this can be a challenge because the illustrations and written pieces are all so different. What design elements do you notice that help tie the book together (ie dragons, arrows, mountains)? And while we're on the topic of design, notice the different sentences that have been highlighted with their own graphic style. How does this change the feeling you get when reading it? As a bonus activity, have students add emphasis in this same way to a story that they've written!
- Ask students to choose one of their favourite illustrations from the book and then challenge them to write or tell a whole new story based on that!
- Setting quest: This book is full of fantastical and faraway settings. Have students identify all of the different settings in the book, and then discuss which setting they would like to visit for their own adventure - and why? Ask them to point to specific things from the text that appeal to them, and then compare and contrast the story setting with the world we actually live in!
- The editors were very careful to include a full-page acknowledgment of country at the beginning of their book, and consulted with several local Aboriginal experts about the appropriateness of using a personalised version instead of a more standard formal acknowledgment they'd seen used elsewhere. Discuss as a class – and then workshop your own acknowledgment that honours your local First Nations groups in a way that connects with what's important to your class.