



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary
(ages 9-13)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Intercultural Understanding; Ethical Understanding; Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Sustainability; America

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analyse society and attitudes to multiculturalism and individuality
- Develop critical and creative thinking
- Analyse how language and writing evoke mood, tone, tension and characterisation
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

- Multiculturalism
- Society
- Spirituality
- Family
- Friendship

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

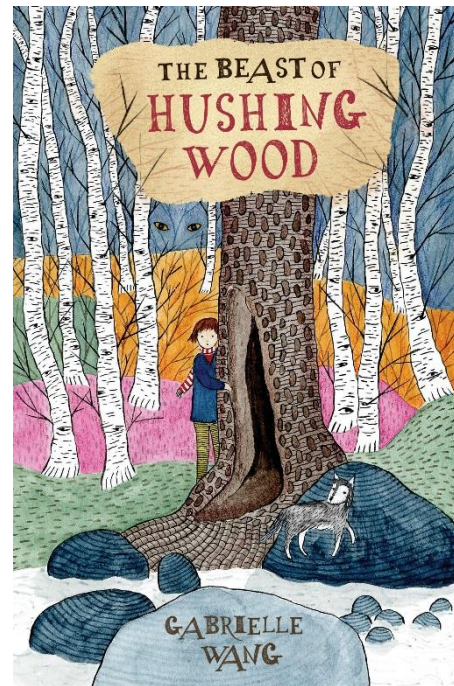
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The Beast of Hushing Wood

Gabrielle Wang

PLOT SUMMARY

Ziggy Truegood lives in a tiny town deep in Hushing Wood, where strange things are happening. The townspeople are fighting, Ziggy feels like something is hunting her, and her beloved woods have become dark and hostile. When exotic Raffi and his grandfather arrive in town, Ziggy finds herself strangely drawn to them. But are they there to save Ziggy, or are they the hunters?

A powerful magic realism story about Ziggy Truegood, a young girl who has a premonition that she will drown on her 12th birthday.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Wang is an author and illustrator born in Melbourne of Chinese heritage. Her maternal great grandfather came to Victoria during the Gold Rush and her father from Shanghai. Her stories are a blend of Chinese and Western culture with a touch of fantasy.

Gabrielle's first children's novel, *The Garden of Empress Cassia*, won the 2002 Aurealis Award, was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and was a CBCA Notable Book. *The Pearl of Tiger Bay* was shortlisted for the 2004 Aurealis Award and *The Lion Drummer* was a Notable Book in the 2009 CBCA Book of the Year Awards. *A Ghost in My Suitcase* won the 2009 Aurealis Award, was a CBCA Notable Book, was shortlisted for the 2011 Sakura Medal and received a Highly Commended in the 2010 Prime Minister's Literary Awards. Her first young adult novel, *Little Paradise*, also received a Highly Commended in the 2011 Prime Minister's Awards. Gabrielle's picture book *The Race for the Chinese Zodiac* (2010) illustrated by Sally Rippin and Regine Abos was a Notable Book in the CBCA Awards for 2011 and shortlisted for the 2011 YABBA and WAYBRA awards. Her latest books are part of the highly successful 2011 Our Australian Girl series published by Penguin – *Meet Poppy*, *Poppy at Summerhill*, *Poppy and the Thief* and *Poppy Comes Home*. Gabrielle is an ambassador for the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge.

The Wishbird, published in 2014, was a CBCA 2014 Notable Book and was shortlisted for the 2014 Australian Book Design Awards, Yabba Awards, Kroc Awards, Koala Awards, Cool Awards and Crystal Kite Award.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Gabrielle says:

The seed for this novel began in 2014 while I was visiting Morocco. This country and its people so captured my imagination that I knew one day a novel would emerge. The journey of writing a novel, however, takes years and one has to be patient. An idea can never be forced.

A year later, I was sitting in a beachside café and began to write a short story. It rolled off the pen without any planning, as stories often do, as if they are born in another place and are there for you, or anyone else who is around, to record. It was a fable called *The Dragonfly that Laid an Emerald*. This later

became the fable at the heart of *The Beast of Hushing Wood*.

When I was young I felt like an outsider. I'm Australian-born Chinese. Growing up in the sixties in Melbourne where there were very few Asian faces in the street made me self-conscious about being different. As a result, most of my novels are about belonging and fitting in. In *The Beast of Hushing Wood*, Ziggy Truegood is unlike anyone in the township of Dell Hollow. She wears pants when all the females wear dresses. She explores the woods when everyone else is afraid of them. Raffi Tazi is also different, an outsider, a foreigner. In my mind he comes from Morocco, although I never mention an actual place.

Place or setting is important when I write a story. It's the first thing I think about. Being visual I need to visualise my characters acting out their lives.

The woods – I have always loved this word and the imagery it invokes. I'm taken back to childhood, to fairytales read to me by my mum, to places of enchantment, to the Magic Faraway Tree. Choosing the woods as a setting meant that *Hushing Wood* could not be in Australia. Australia has forests and bush and scrub. It had to be somewhere in the northern hemisphere. Being unfamiliar with the woods I needed to go and spend time, there so I went to the Berkshires in USA. I learned that if leaves turn over to reveal their silver undersides there will be a storm. I learned that the rows of holes on the trunk of a tree were made not by insects but by woodpeckers. I dined in a log cabin by a stream full of brook trout. I saw deer and a bear with her two cubs. I saw hummingbirds and chipmunks and a groundhog that lived under the house where I stayed. Instead of eucalypts there were oak, birch, sycamore and maple that bled real maple syrup. I breathed the woods, walked them, listened to the sounds they make. I was staying with a friend in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and visited a school there, which formed the basis for Dell Hollow Elementary. Everything from that research trip fed the story.

Many young people feel like outsiders at some time in their lives. I wrote this book for myself and also for them. In the end, there is a theme that may allow the reader to understand that what they are going through is only one small part of a big picture. Ziggy is able not only to fully realise her otherness while living in harmony with the straight-laced townspeople, she is able to use that otherness as a



bridge to help the whole community be more in harmony with the diverse world outside. Similarly, a period of intense distress may provide the conditions for the development of inner qualities that otherwise would never come to fruition. If I hadn't felt like an outsider in my younger years, a stranger in my own land, I would not be writing novels today.

WRITING STYLE

1. What is the novel's writing style? Consider how and when information is revealed, particularly through the use of Ziggy's thoughts and observations. How effectively does this contribute to the novel's storytelling?
2. How do the illustrations contribute to the story. Do you think they are effective? Are there any spots in the book where you felt they were/weren't needed.
3. How were you affected by the dream sequences throughout the story? Do you feel it was too strong a beginning to the story, or did it spur you on to find out more?
4. What do you feel was the role of the Prologue in this story. Did it spur you on to read the story? What would have been the effect of starting the story at Chapter 1?
5. What did you think of the ending? Was it the best ending for this particular story? Why?/Why not?
6. Did you feel the Final Chapter was necessary to satisfy the reader's curiosity? Why?/Why not?
7. How does the book's title relate to its content?

Activities

1. Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different character's perspective, such as Raffi, Grandpa or Petal.
2. Draw a couple of alternative illustrations in the book where you think they were needed.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover design – what do you think the front cover might reveal about the story? What kind of emotion is it evoking?
2. Examine the importance of the back cover blurb in captivating the reader. Do you feel it has been successful in peaking your interest? Why? Why not?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Setting

Dell Hollow is a small town somewhere in America. Hushing Wood is not in Australia. Australia has forests and bush and scrub. It had to be somewhere in the northern hemisphere. Being unfamiliar with the woods I needed to go and spend time, there so I went to the Berkshires in USA.

Questions

1. How did the author use the setting to evoke atmosphere?
2. How does the setting of this story affect the characters and the events that take place?
3. How is it obvious that the setting is not Australian?
4. How does the author use the setting to reveal Ziggy's character to us?

Activities

1. Write a scene using the setting to set an atmosphere for the story (eg a storm for menace, or perhaps a lovely summer day might be menacing in some way?).
2. Write a scene showing a certain place in the world without actually saying where it is.

Characterisation

Characters in the book include: Ziggy, Mrs Truegood, Miss Cubby, Petal, Big Bobby, Grandpa, Raffi, Raffi's grandfather, Mystic, Kalila.

Questions

- How is Ziggy different from the rest of the townspeople?
- How is Raffi and his grandfather different?
- Why are the townspeople hostile towards strangers? What are they afraid of? Is this a common trait in today's society?
- What does Ziggy's mother learn/how does her character change in the end?

Activities

1. Make a list of questions for each child to fill out: eg what does your family eat, weekend family activities, what do they wear, what are your hobbies, do you have grandparents/siblings, rules/principles/beliefs. Compare how different each family is.



2. Bring something in to school that is special to your family and unique to your family. Share it with the class and discuss why this makes your family different/unique.

THEMES

Family

In this novel, Ziggy is struggling to reconcile her parents and the attitudes of her mother towards leaving the town.

Discussion

- What is the overall message in this book about family? Give some examples of why you think that.
- What are the important things that define family versus friendship?
- What does Ziggy's mother realise in the end? Why has she changed her mind about leaving the town?

Friendship

Ziggy's friendship with Petal, Raffi and Big Bobby Little are pivotal to the book.

Discussion

- How does Ziggy's adventure affect those friendships?
- Why does Petal reject Ziggy and turn to Stella?
- Why does Big Bobby understand Ziggy and is more accepting of Ziggy than Petal?
- What do you see as the most important characteristics of a good friend in this story?

Multiculturalism/Individuality/Society

Racism and narrowmindedness are pivotal to this book, especially the attitudes towards Ziggy, Miss Cubby, Ziggy's family and Raffi and his grandfather.

Discussion

- What is the overall message in this book about multiculturalism? Give some examples of why you think that.
- What is the overall message in this book about being different and acceptance? Give some examples of why you think that.

- How is the society of Dell Hollows depicted in the novel? Why is it like this? How does it change?
- Why is the town afraid of people who are different?
- What is the message about being different and learning to fit in?

Spirituality

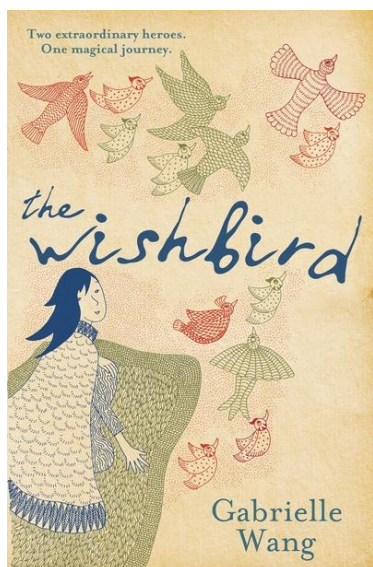
Ziggy feels a connection to Raffi's world and his philosophy about spirituality. What is this philosophy?

Discussion

- What is the overall message in this book about spirituality?
- What is the message in the story about the dragonfly and the boy?
- Discuss the main themes in this novel and how the author uses Setting/Family/Characterisation to develop this message.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

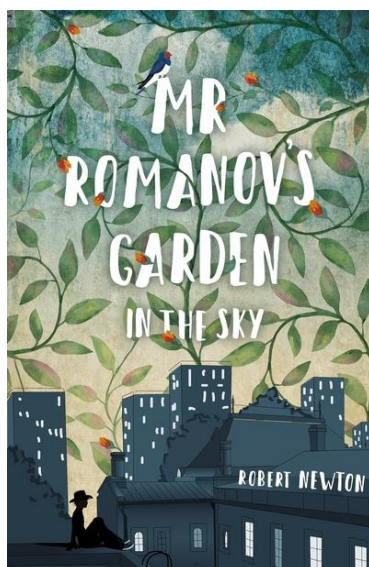


The Wishbird
by Gabrielle Wang

Why this story? Read it as another example of creative writing and using setting as a character.

Oriole's beloved Wishbird is dying and she must leave the Forest to save him. But in the City of Soulless there is danger everywhere. Can Oriole and Boy save Soulless and the Wishbird, or will the city's darkness prove too great even for magic?

Teachers' resources available.



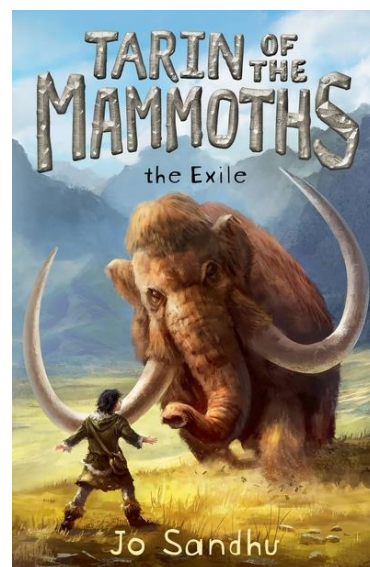
Mr Romanov's Garden in the Sky
by Rob Newton

Why this story? Read it as another example of being different and learning to fit in.

Living in the commission, Lexie is left to fend for herself. Her mother is mostly absent, out searching for something to help her forget the tragic death of Lexie's dad.

But then, after witnessing the aftermath of a shocking incident, Lexie finds solace in the most unlikely of places – in a troubled old man called the Creeper. A chance, life-saving encounter on the commission's roof seeds a friendship between the two and when they enlist the help of Lexie's friend Davey, the three set off on an epic journey; one that will change their lives and the lives of those around them.

Teachers' resources available.



Tarin of the Mammoths
by Jo Sandhu

Why this story? Read it as another example of individuality and learning about acceptance.

Tarin longs to be a hunter, but his twisted leg means he is feared and bullied. After a disastrous mishap, Tarin is forced to leave his family and travel alone across wild, unknown land to save the Mammoth Clan. Battling the hostile and savage Boar Clan, a deadly illness, and treacherous terrain with twins Kaija and Luuka and their wolf cubs, Tarin realises that if they are all to survive he must conquer his greatest fear – his true self – and embrace the magic that is hiding within him.

Teachers' resources available.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
The Beast of Hushing Wood	Gabrielle Wang	9780143309178	5+	\$16.99		
Mr Romanov's Garden in the Sky	Robert Newton	9780143309307	6+	\$17.99		
When We Were Two	Robert Newton	9780143566830	5+	\$17.99		
The Wishbird	Gabrielle Wang	9780143307525	5+	\$14.99		
Tarin of the Mammoths	Jo Sandhu	9780143309376	6+	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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