

**Teachers' Notes**  
**based on original notes by**  
**Eve Recht**

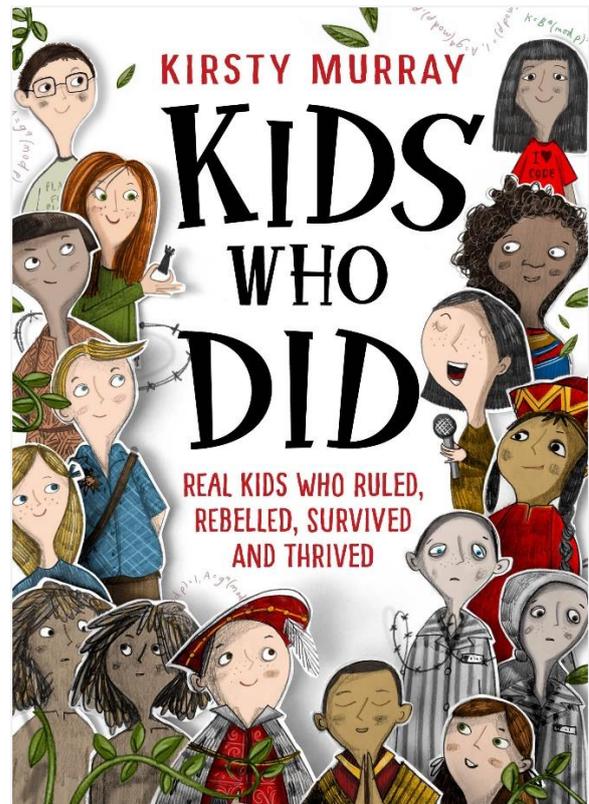
**KIDS WHO DID**  
**by**  
**Kirsty Murray**

ISBN 9781760524470

**Recommended for readers aged 8 – 14 yrs**

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## INTRODUCTION

*Kids Who Did* is a collection of 40 true stories about young people who have faced problems and tough situations with courage. The stories range over historical periods and geographical locations, but with a large number set in the last 100 years, up to 2018. They are written in a straight forward, pacy and relatable style, linked by commentary passages from the author which set out the theme of a chapter or introduce or comment on individual stories. The content is very powerful: the treatment of the stories is honest without being negative or depressing. This is about real kids making a real difference in the adult world.

All parts of the book express the idea that courage is something everyone can find in themselves. The kids featured in the book are not necessarily famous and sometimes their courage was expressed in simply surviving. The book explores many types of courage, but particularly the courage of following one's heart and acting with kindness to all people and living things.

All students will find inspiration in these stories and will discover things about the world that they have not previously known. Students can't help but reflect on their own beliefs and behaviours.

The book is based on an earlier work by the author, *Tough Stuff*, first published in 1999, still in print and in use in schools up to the time of this new edition. *Kids Who Did* revises some of the old stories and replaces a few with eleven new stories, generally of modern-day kids who are making a difference.

These teachers notes are an updated version of the notes prepared by **Eve Recht** for the earlier edition.

## USE IN THE CURRICULUM

The aim of these notes is to enrich the experience of reading *Kids Who Did* by offering starting points for reflection and discussion, writing, research and action. Included are individual, group and class activities, and a range of writing tasks for different purposes and different audiences. Almost all the activities sit well in the English curriculum, but some are valuable for drama and art, SOSE, religious education/ethics or personal development. For this reason, the book is especially useful in the cross-curriculum primary classroom.

Being non-fiction, the Introduction and end matter are essential parts of the book, which supports the analysis of informational texts. They explain the author's motivation and suggest resources and further reading and include an index.

### **The notes fall into two parts.**

#### **Whole book activities and discussion points**

Having read most or all of the book, students consider general ideas and themes that arise from the book as a whole or investigate books and writing in general.

#### **Chapter by chapter activities and discussion points**

Through activities and discussions linked to a particular chapter, students are encourage to develop understanding and empathy and analysis and presentation skills. They explore each chapter by engaging in a wide variety of tasks.

### **Listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks include:**

- listening to music and song, watching films and TV shows, interviewing and listening to others
- discussion, brainstorming, individual and group work, interviewing, persuasive speaking, presentations to the class and whole class presentations to a variety of audiences

- research, discussion, using tables to compare and contrast, mapping locations, analysis of parts of a book, study of writing and story-telling genres, working with newspapers
- re-writes based on varying points of view, personal writing, writing poetry, commendations, articles and scripts, producing posters and drawings

## WHOLE BOOK STUDY

### KIDS AND COURAGE

**Courage:** the quality of mind that enables one to encounter difficulties and danger with firmness or without fear; bravery (Macquarie Dictionary) From the Latin word *cor*, meaning heart + the suffix -age, meaning that which belongs to or is related to.

'...I picked the stories for this book because each of these children has shown incredible courage. The word 'courage' comes from the Latin word *cor* (heart). These kids faced some of the toughest challenges that any human being can confront, yet they stayed true to their heartfelt beliefs. Whether they lived or died, thrived or simply survived, the children in this book help us to understand the true meaning of courage.' (from the author's Introduction)

Courage can be facing a charging bull or surviving against all the odds, speaking out for what you believe in or doggedly putting one foot in front of the other when there seems to be nothing else possible.

- What does courage mean to you?
- Which kid in *Kids Who Did* touches your heart most? Do you know why?

### CONNECTING STORIES

Throughout the book, and at the beginning of each chapter, there are sections in bold type.

- Why are they in bold type?
- What role do they play in the book?

Discuss recording *Kids Who Did* as an audio-book or presenting it on stage.

- How would these sections be distinguished from the individual kids' stories?
- How would you distinguish each kid's story from the other stories?

Humans have been telling stories much longer than they have been writing them down.

- In what ways does this book reflect oral story-telling?

### INSPIRING KIDS THROUGH BOOKS

Kirsty Murray wants to offer inspiration and hope to children through her telling of true stories about real kids around the world and through history.

- Do you find *Kids Who Did* inspiring?
- Any stories in particular?

Other writers choose to inspire their readers by inventing and telling fictional stories.

- Are there particular stories/books/novels that have especially inspired you?
- Inspired you in what way?

Look at the way that different styles (genres) of book offer inspiration and challenge, ways of understanding our world.

- Compare historical novels (e.g. *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr), humorous stories (e.g. *Two Weeks with the Queen* by Morris Gleitzman), books of reminiscences (such as *Sun on the Stubble* by Colin Thiele), 'science fiction' (e.g. *Galax-Arena* by Gillian Rubinstein, *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin), and re-creations of past events (e.g. *Children on the Oregon Trail* by A. Rutgers van der Loeff).

### **DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER?**

Do you think the cover of *Kids Who Did* is a good one?

What do these elements of the cover suggest to you?

- the title
- the drawings on the front cover
- the design on the back cover
- the sub-title: *Real kids who ruled, rebelled, survived and thrived*
- the back-cover blurb
- the colour scheme

### **SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF**

Write about something that you have done which made you feel good about yourself.

It might be something that no-one else knows about or that seems like a small thing to other people, but is important to you. It might be something special that you did to help someone in your family or your street, something that you said to someone, or something you *didn't* say. It might be something that you have done lots of times, or something that you have only ever done once. It might have been physically really hard, or not physically demanding at all.

- You could start with a sentence like 'I am really proud of the time when ...'
- Make a class book of *Proud* stories

### **KIDS IN THE HEADLINES**

#### **Collecting stories of kids and courage**

Read some recent newspapers carefully, looking for stories about kids, and especially kids doing something special or extraordinary or tough.

You could collect a range of stories over a period of time.

- In what way are the stories similar to stories in *Kids Who Did*, and in what ways are they different - in both content (what they reporting) and style (the way that the pieces are written)?
- Are front- page news reports different from stories reported in other sections of the paper (e.g. lifestyle pages or education pages)?
- How are photographs used? Cartoons?

### **In the kid's own words**

Take one current newspaper story and re-write it from the child's perspective, in his or her own words. This will probably change the piece entirely, so that it no longer looks like a newspaper article. It will probably look much more like one of the pieces in *Kids Who Did!*

- You could make your own class collection: *Kids Who Did* for kids in the news.

### **History as a news report...**

Take one of the historical stories in *Kids Who Did* and rewrite it as a newspaper article (e.g. front page news: 'Genghis Khan reaches Beijing' ... or a feature/background article: 'Temujin the Ironsmith lives up to his birthright' ... or even a 'soft news' piece: 'Family life in Genghis Khan's army').

### **... or on TV**

In small groups, adapt any of the newspaper ideas above for TV - as the lead story on the six o'clock news, a feature on a current affairs program or as part of an infotainment program.

Present your group's TV segment to the class, modelling your presentation on real-life TV programs of the same genre.

### **IMAGINING AND ACTING THE PART**

Work in groups to change some of the stories into short plays. Some already have a lot of dialogue and action (e.g. Billy and the bull or Helena and Stephania's story).

- In your groups talk about what is special about the kids - and the adults - and what qualities you want to portray (quick reflexes, persistence, courage, brilliance ...).
- You might use props, or choose a particular location to perform your play, or you might like to dress in particular colours.

You could perform your plays to another class, with possibly a narrator or linking character introducing each story.

Another challenge could be to act the same story, about the same kid, to different audiences, e.g. prep or kinder kids, parents, people in the local old folks' home.

### **POEMS AND PICTURES**

Choose one of the important attributes of the kids in *Kids Who Did* and write a poem - it could be an acrostic poem about either one of the kids, or the quality itself.

- Choose from COURAGE, PERSISTENCE, BRAVERY, DOING IT TOUGH, SPIRIT.

Use a large piece of paper as a window and draw what one of the kids might see out of that window, e.g. looking out from the poorhouse, living behind the false wall in Helena and Stephania's house, the view from the Tower of London.

- Or draw the view looking in through a window.

Use one colour only (or one colour and black) to draw or paint about one of the children's feelings e.g. Ruby Hunter living in the children's home, Eileen Joyce's joy at having piano lessons.

### **CONNECTIONS AND CONTRASTS**

Compare how Ruby Hunter and Eileen Joyce left home as kids.

Compare the life of Billy Sidis with the life of Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron. Both were famous for being 'different': how did that difference change people's behaviour towards them?

Look at the deaths (or assassinations) of Iqbal Masih, the Princes in the Tower, Kaspar Hauser, Hector Pieterse in Soweto. What do they have in common?

The Dalai Lama and the children in the 'Survivors' chapter were also at risk of being killed — was it for the same reason?

Discuss the idea of exile - the Dalai Lama lives in exile in India, Ruby Hunter was exiled from her family and home, Jews were exiled to concentration camps or Siberia during World War II.

- Write a poem called 'Exiled' or 'In exile'.

### EPITAPHS

Read the inscription on Hector Pieterse's gravestone (page 101). Write the inscription for the gravestone of one of the other children e.g. Iqbal Masih or the young princes imprisoned in the Tower.

### ACTION RESEARCH: NETWORKS AND THE WEB

One way to sum up this book is 'Never underestimate the power of a kid'. Or, as the author says at the end of the final section, 'Every Kid Can': *Everyone is the hero of their own story and every kid has a chance to make a difference.*

Link up with other kids around the world by contacting the organisations listed on page 202.

- Send an e-mail expressing support for your chosen cause.

Ask at your local scouts or church or youth group how you can become involved and be a kid with power.

## CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

### RESCUERS

#### **Words and concepts to explore:**

bravery, persistence, safety, first aid, awards, citations, adrenaline, heroism

Children who win awards for bravery receive a certificate with a citation on it. This says what they have done for others that was so special and so brave. Imagine that the class is to give Helena and Stephania an award and must draw up a citation.

- Work in groups to decide what the citation should say and what would be the best way to present it.

How do you think the various 'saved people' felt about what was happening to them?

- Rewrite the Billy and the bull story from Billy's dad Greg's point of view. You could write a blow-by-blow account, or Greg's thoughts about it later.

### WHIZ-KIDS

#### **Words and concepts to explore:**

genius, prodigy, intelligence, gender, freak, encouragement, talent, nature vs nurture, coding & apps, tournament

If you could choose, what one gift or talent would you like to have? (Would you like to have one at all?)

Find out about the history of chess, and the origins of such terms as 'stalemate' and 'checkmate'.

- Have a go at the old how-many-grains-of-rice problem. (If you give me one grain of rice for the first square on the chessboard, two for the second, four for the third, eight for the fourth, 16 for the fifth, 32 for the sixth, and so on, do you have enough rice in your kingdom to pay me?)
- Can you solve the problem with a calculator? Do you think George Bidder or William Sidis could solve it?

George Biddis was at first unable to read and write and only knew the numbers up to 999. He became a successful engineer after adults recognised his talent and helped him to get an education.

- Without an education, what path do you imagine George's life would have taken in the 1800s?
- The Polgar sisters were home-schooled by their parents. Would you enjoy being home-schooled? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages, in your opinion?

In groups, come up with a problem that you think can be solved using information technology.

- Imagine you are entering a science competition that will help you develop your idea. Write a summary of the problem and outline your solution.
- Has anyone in your class learned how to write an app? Can they help with your problem?

Gitanjali Rao and Emma Yang gained international support and sponsorship for their ideas by entering science competitions.

- Find out about what sort of competitions you might enter if you were interested in coding, engineering or robotics. The following link outlines some international competitions in STEM: <https://www.idtech.com/blog/ultimate-guide-to-stem-competitions-events>

## FERAL KIDS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

communication, autism, feral, survival, protection

Do you think you could go bush and survive? What might you miss the most: a roof over your head? plentiful and easily obtained food? friends to talk to?

Do you think the French villagers or the Reverend Singh believed they were 'saving' the feral children? Would Victor or Amala or Kamala have felt the same way as the people whose lives were saved in Chapter 1, 'Rescuers'?

These are stories of sadness and deprivation, absence of identity and lack of connection. They are also stories of good intentions and sheer physical toughness.

- Write a poem called 'Wild and Mysterious' that captures some of the qualities of these wild kids, or that expresses your feelings about them.
- Spend an hour (or a whole day if you can) without talking to anyone: family or friends or teachers. How does it feel? Can you make yourself understood?

## RULERS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

prophesy, tribe, empire, military, conquer, invade, exile, isolation, invasion, resolution, coronation, trust, regent, sanctuary, prayer, reincarnation

On a map of the world, locate Mongolia, and the vast lands that Genghis Khan conquered and ruled.

'On balance, Temujin had it better than some of the other kid rulers we read about in *Kids Who Did*.' Do you agree?

At the age of 12 (the age Prince Edward was in 1483), would you be able to tell if your relatives were plotting against you? How would it feel to be locked away by family that you had hoped you could trust?

Watch the film *Seven Years in Tibet*, about a young Austrian man who meets the Dalai Lama in Tibet around the time of World War II, or *Kundun*, a film about the life of the Dalai Lama.

Research what has happened in Tibet since the Dalai Lama went into exile. Present your findings to the class in writing or orally.

## REBELS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

vision, quest, mission, reclaim, resistance, volunteer, conquer, crusade, passionate, oppression, apartheid, shrine

Listen to a recording of Archie Roach singing the song he wrote about the stolen generations: 'They took the children away'.

'You'd never get kids today to go on a crusade - or their parents either.'

- Do you agree? Why/Why not?
- What is it about Kirsty Murray's writing that makes the whole undertaking of the crusade so believable and understandable?
- Research the Children's Crusades, and find out how they were different from the adult crusades. (You might like to read *Pagan's Crusade* by Catherine Jinks.)

A French student slogan of the 1960s was 'Be realistic, demand the impossible.'

- In what ways did Hector Pieterse and other Soweto students live up to this slogan?
- Ask your parents and older friends about student protests in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s.

Find out what has happened in South Africa since Hector Pieterse's death.

What do you think about the school student demonstrations that began in 2018, calling for action on climate change?

## SUPERSTARS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

gifted, luck, celebrity, child prodigy, working conditions, family finances , the arts

#### **Dream come true**

You are granted your wish to be a sports star or a famous film and television actor! Tell us about your particular gifts or talents and what you want to achieve with them.

#### **Interview of a lifetime**

What questions would you like to ask one of these superstars? Imagine that you are an ace reporter about to interview Yehudi Menuhin before one of his final concerts, or Shane Gould as she watches today's champion swimmers on TV.

#### **'Shirley, you're in Trouble!'**

Watch an old Shirley Temple movie. Can you see the star quality behind the tight curls and the dimples and the cute songs? Do you think Shirley Temple would make it as a child star today?

Write a play called 'Shirley, you're in Trouble!' You could write it in the burlesque style of her early comedies, or as a fan-mag style story about how poor Shirley Temple is locked inside her Hollywood mansion...

#### **Feel the love**

Listen to a recording of Yehudi Menuhin playing classical music or jazz. Can you hear his love of music in his playing?

## BATTLERS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

inhumanity, human rights, unions, persecution, cause, bonded labour, child labour, slavery, dignity and respect, homelessness, charitable organisation, emergency services

Make a table of similarities and differences between the lives of Robert Blincoe (in nineteenth-century England) and Iqbal Masih (in modern-day Pakistan). Consider as many aspects of their lives as you can, and then compare the various aspects of their lives with your own life.

Iqbal was 'a passionate speaker and a crusader for human rights'. Imagine what Iqbal might have said if he visited your school.

- How would you have responded to him?
- Write an article for your school newsletter about Iqbal and his beliefs.

**Can kids make a difference?** What do you think it takes to make a difference? - look at Craig Kielburger and the students of Broad Meadows Middle School.

What makes a persuasive speaker? Discuss this in groups, then

- practise speaking as persuasively as you can, on a topic you feel passionate about, to your friends, your class, or your family.

'Everyone is equal. And everyone deserves to be treated equally, with dignity and respect'. This was said by Cassidy Strickland, who was first moved to provide food for the homeless when she was just 8 years old. By the time she was in Year 10, she had been instrumental in setting up other services.

- What things do you think are necessary to enable a person to live with 'dignity and respect'? Do these things vary from country to country?
- Read pages 149-154 and list all of the services that grew out of Cassidy's first volunteering work at the local community kitchen.
- Discover what local services you could volunteer at.
- Many organisations run special services at Christmas time which require the help of volunteers. Can you find three of them?

## SURVIVORS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

holocaust, survival, hope, partisan, concentration camp, civilians, revenge, war, spirit

Some people think that children shouldn't be told, or don't need to know, about the horrors of war, and especially not the details of the Holocaust – the Nazi persecution and murder of six million Jews.

- What do you think?

Many people now in their seventies and eighties have been directly affected by World War II, as victims of the Nazis or as soldiers fighting in Europe or Asia; as civilians left behind to manage the farms and keep the factories running while the soldiers were away fighting; or as children whose parents were killed in the war.

- Ask an older person that you know to tell you about their war.

Think about different types of courage. Re-read the scene on page 179 where Joseph, on behalf of the thirteen Jews, says, 'Run away, don't die with us,' and Helena replies, 'No, we can't go.'

- In what different ways were both Joseph and Helena being brave?

Think about refugees - people who have been left homeless and stateless by wars or natural disasters. Refugees seek refuge - shelter and safety - first of all.

- What other needs might they have, once they have made it to safety?

## CLIMATE WARRIORS

### **Words and concepts to explore:**

global warming, climate change, pollution, fossil fuels, carbon dioxide, environmental protection, activist, campaigning, ocean 'gyres', experimenting & designing, TED talks, funding and sponsorship

Unlike many of the other kids in this book, the kids in this chapter all discovered they needed to campaign for their cause. They became *activists* and spread their ideas by clever communication.

One part of clever communication is having catchy names for organisations and campaigns, such as Ocean Clean-up; Bye Bye Plastic Bags; One Island, One Voice; Bali's Biggest Beach Clean Up; Plant-for-the-Planet; Stop Talking, Start Planting.

- Brainstorm some changes that need to be made in your local or state area and pick one issue to work on. (It doesn't have to be an environmental issue.)
- Think up some catchy names for your campaign.

They all found the internet was a great resource for researching and for communicating.

- Use the internet to research about your issue.
- What other individuals or groups can you find on-line who share your opinions and want to do something, too?

Some people, like Boyan Slat, manage to wage successful campaigns on their own, with just some expert help, but most find success in numbers.

- How did the Wijsen sisters and Felix Finkbeiner get their message out?
- What did other kids bring to their campaigns?

But even with thousands of supporters, the adults in authority may not listen.

- What tactics helped these young people to get adults to listen to them?

Some adults and charitable or United Nations organisations also helped these kids.

- What experts or organisations could your campaign reach out to?

Plan your group's campaign.

- Give yourselves a name.
- Define your target aims and audience.
- Choose the actions most suitable to achieve your target.
- Develop some campaign materials. These can be on-line using the school intranet or printed material such as handouts, booklets, posters and banners.

OR

In groups, research one of the organisations listed on page 202.

- Give a class presentation about that group.
- Design some materials that will tell your community about the work of these groups.

## OTHER BOOKS BY KIRSTY MURRAY

In addition to some recent picture books for younger children, Kirsty Murray has written the following historical novels for readers aged from 9 – 13 years old.

### ***Market Blues.* A&U, February 2001**

A timeslip adventure novel about a boy who goes busking at the market and finds himself transported back to a century ago.

### **The Children of the Wind Quartet**

Tells the stories of four courageous young people, Bridie, Billy, Colm and Maeve, born many years apart. Yet their action-packed life stories are inter-linked, beginning in 1840s Ireland and ending in present-day Australia.

### ***Bridie's Fire.* A&U, November 2003**

The tale of a fiery Irish girl who leaves Ireland to find a home for herself in goldrush Australia.

### ***Becoming Billy Dare.* A&U, December 2004**

Follows the life of a feisty Irish boy who runs away to Australia and finds his vocation as an actor in the colourful theatres of Melbourne, around the time of Federation.

***A Prayer for Blue Delaney. A&U, September 2005***

Follows the outback adventures of orphaned Colm, who runs away from the cruelties of Bindoon Boys' Home and goes in search of a family of his own. Set in the 1950s.

***The Secret Life of Maeve Lee Kwong. A&U, September 2006***

Where do you turn when your family is tragically torn apart, your close friends fall away, and your long-lost father is out of reach? Where do you fit when you're part Irish, part Chinese, part Australian? A warm-hearted story about teenage life in Australia now.

***The Four Seasons of Lucy McKenzie. A&U August 2013***

A gripping time-slip adventure set in a hidden valley. 11-year-old Lucy travels across the river of time to fight fires, battle floodwaters and discover the meaning of true friendship.

***Zarconi's Magic Flying Fish. A&U, March 2006***

An exciting story of discovery, change and identity, with all the drama of life under the big top.

She has also written novels for older teenage readers:

***India Dark. A&U August 2010***

A strong and vivid novel based on the fascinating true story of a group of young Australian performers - children aged from seven to seventeen - who toured Asia and India early in the twentieth century before mounting a strike against their manager and precipitating a sensational court case.

***Vulture's Gate. A&U August 2009***

It is 40 years into the future and the world is in turmoil. A plague has destroyed humans' ability to conceive females, or so Callum thinks until he meets Bo. A page-turning adventure unfolds as the pair rely on each other to survive a dangerous journey to a safe haven in the city of Vulture's Gate.

***Walking Home with Marie-Claire. A&U, October 2002***

A story about the friendship between 12-year-old Pauline ('PJ'), and a daring, unpredictable new girl, Marie-Claire, whose instinct for adventure leads them both into trouble.

***The Year It All Ended. A&U, September 2014***

A novel about the impact of war on those left behind, set in Australia and Europe in 1918-19.

In 2014-15, Kirsty co-edited a collection of stories for teenagers with two Indian editors, Payal Dhar and Anita Roy:

***Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean. A&U, February 2015***

A ground-breaking intercontinental collection of speculative stories, in both prose and graphic novel form, with contributors from India and Australia including Isobelle Carmody, Margo Lanagan, Nicki Greenberg and others of similar calibre.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

### **KIRSTY MURRAY**

Kirsty Murray is the author of eleven novels for children and young adults. Her books have won numerous awards, including the WA Premier's Award and the NSW Premier's History Award. She has been a Creative Fellow of the State Library of Victoria and an Asialink Literature Resident in South India.

Kirsty loves history, especially stories from history about Australian children and their incredible adventures. She loves to write the kinds of books about Australia that she never found when she was growing up. She lives in Melbourne in a house full of books and spooky puppets

