

**Teachers' Notes**  
**by Lindsay Williams**

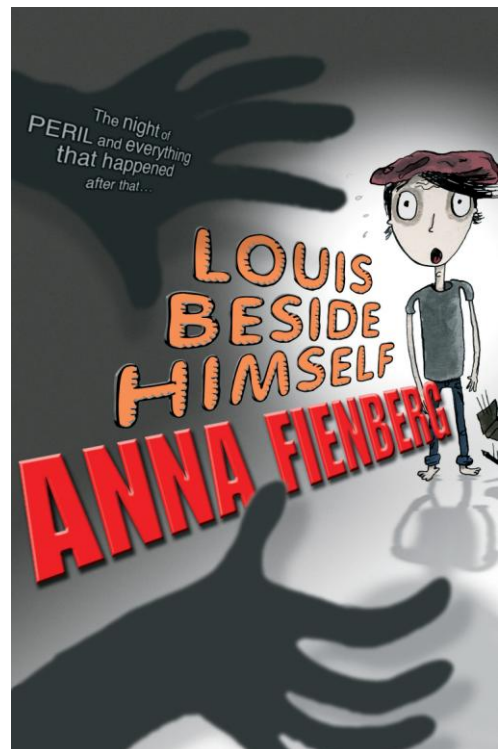
**Louis Beside Himself**

by  
**Anna Fienberg**

ISBN 9781742379944  
Recommended for ages 8-12 years

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Introduction .....	2
Activities – Pre-reading .....	2
Activities – During reading .....	5
Activities – After reading .....	9
Other resources .....	12
Further reading .....	12
About the writers .....	13
Blackline Masters .....	14



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## Introduction

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### PLOT SUMMARY

Louis's best mates, Singo and Hassan, are into basketball and skateboarding, and his dad is into arm-wrestling. Dad wants to build Louis up with wrestling moves like the Walls of Jericho or the Five Star Frog splash, but Louis is better at flexing words than his muscles. This summer Louis is put to the test, starting with a Paralysing burglary, and ending with the night when Louis comes face to face with Peril. It's a larger-than-life week when the friends hide a runaway girl named Cordelia in the backyard tent; Dad falls for Doreen; and Louis tries the Top Roll Move on a big burly burglar and reunites Cordelia and her mum just as the tent explodes into a burning star.

This is a well-crafted, humorous story that explores the power of words and the meaning of courage. It is about a child trying to discover his own identity as he struggles with the demands of his relationship with his father and friends. Along the way, there is a quiet challenging of stereotypes (e.g. gender and race/religion) and our treatment of refugees.

### LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: ENGLISH

Louis beside himself is particularly suitable for children 10-13 years old, i.e. mainly upper primary students. Consequently, these notes have been prepared to connect with a range of content descriptors in Years 5 through to 8, especially those related to the Literature strand, for example:

- Activity 1 encourages students to explore the role of humour in establishing tone in stories (Year 8).
- Activity 7 will encourage students to make connections between their own experiences and those of characters (Year 6).
- Activities 20 and 21 are designed to give students the opportunity to create literary texts and experiment with language features (common to all Year levels).

In addition, the *Australian Curriculum: English* expects that students will begin to analyse and evaluate differences and similarities between texts from Year 6. Consequently, some of the activities and worksheets in these Teacher Notes deliberately mirror those that were developed for *Darius Bell and the crystal bees* by Odo Hirsch, a book suitable for a similar age bracket (see [http://www.allenandunwin.com/\\_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781742376837.pdf](http://www.allenandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781742376837.pdf)).

In the spirit of the curriculum, these activities move between an emphasis on Language, Literature and Literacy. For example, Activity 16 has a focus on a particular use of Language, the grammatical resource of elaboration. Activities 3 and 8 deal with aspects of Literacy, specifically reading comprehension (i.e. predicting and inferring).

Finally, although many of the activities are designed to encourage a close study of the novel, many focus on appreciating literature. Although the novel can be used very effectively to explore the art and craft of reading and writing, don't forget to stop sometimes and 'smell the roses'. Let students just enjoy the novel, laugh at the adventures of Louis, revel in the joy of words used well, and share what they like (and dislike) about the story.

The activities below are organised according to the pre-reading, during reading and after reading stages.

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## Activities - Pre-reading

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### ACTIVITY 1: TELLING HUMOROUS STORIES

The novel contains many humorous scenes. Before beginning to read, the teacher and then the students can share an anecdote about a funny event in their lives. Emphasise that telling these stories is optional and students should demonstrate respect and sensitivity towards each other.

### **Discuss:**

- Does everyone find the same thing funny? Why? Why not?
- Why do we sometimes laugh at events that might be quite painful or embarrassing to someone else, e.g. walking into a door?
- What is the purpose of humour in stories?  
[Possible answers: To relieve tension; to help us bond with particular characters; to help us see the absurdity in a situation. For more information on the purpose of humour in children's literature, see <http://www.jenimawter.com/pdfs/Humour%20in%20Literature.pdf>.  
Note: This article is for teacher reference.]

### **Extension:**

- a) The students' anecdotes could be compiled into a class anthology.
- b) As students read the novel:
  - Share humorous moments. Read them aloud.
  - Discuss why some people may or may not find the same scenes funny.
  - How is the humour achieved? What techniques are used?
  - Discuss the purpose the humour serves in the novel.
- c) One or more of the anecdotes could be used to demonstrate the difference between the short story genre and anecdote (see Activity 20).
- d) Read students a short scene from the novel about Louis's Dad, e.g. related to his obsession with WWE wrestling on pages 1-3. As relationships with parents is another feature of the novel, students could also be asked to share weird and wonderful stories about their own parents/caregivers.

### **ACTIVITY 2: FRONTLOADING CONTENT**

Brainstorm what the students know about the sport of wrestling, especially World Wrestling Entertainment. Watch the following YouTube video of a match featuring a character called The Undertaker (mentioned on page 1 of the novel): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wg4xOJrI9XI>.

**Although the violence in this video is cartoon-like, teachers should preview carefully before use.** As a class, discuss: Is this sport more about serious competition, entertainment or some blend of the two? Why do people become obsessed with this 'sport'? What aspects of the 'sport' might people dislike?

### **Extension:**

Students can find out more about the sport of wrestling. Here are some starting points for internet research:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_WWE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_WWE)
- <http://www.wwe.com/>

### **ACTIVITY 3: MAKING PREDICTIONS**

Have students study the outside of the book. Encourage them to examine the images closely, read the blurb and make connections to other books they have read, including books by Anna Fienberg (the Tashi series will probably be the best known). They should also examine the sketches of Louis (front cover) and his friends (opposite the imprint page). Then, ask them to make predictions about the book using Blackline Master 1 at the end of these notes. This could be completed individually or in pairs or small groups. As well as encouraging students to tap into their prior knowledge, this activity will also allow the teacher to monitor where students

might have problems as they begin reading and, therefore, where further preparation may be required.

**Extension:**

In groups, compare the images of Louis and his friends. The table below may assist.

Aspects of image	Louis (title page)	Boy with skateboard	Girl with basketball	Boy with basketball
Hair				
Eyes (shape and use of shading)				
Mouth (shape)				
Clothing				
Objects associated with character				
Actions				

**Students discuss:**

How are you, the reader, being invited to think about these characters? Are your images initially positive or negative? Why? How might this affect your reading of the novel?

**ACTIVITY 4: ASPECTS OF FIENBERG’S STYLE IN *LOUIS BESIDE HIMSELF***

As students begin reading, they may be confused by the words that appear in italics and a capital letter, even when there is no (seemingly) logical reason; *Reverie* on page 3 and *Phenomenon* on page 4 are the first two examples in the novel. To assist students, draw their attention to the top of page 5 where Louis writes: "...I like words. I respect them enormously, the way other people respect money in the bank, or mountain climbing. If you're like me...then you can open a word bank account. You don't need a salary or personal references to start one; you just need to get yourself a notebook and a new pen that won't run out in the middle of an excellent word.' In class, continue reading to '...And you, Bobby Thornton, should learn to use your words instead of your fists!' on page 6.

Turn to page 242 and skim through Louis's word bank. Locate *Reverie* (page 245) and point out that the italics and capital indicate words in this word bank. Now, look for *Phenomenon*. Note that it can't be found. However, the meaning is given after the word is used on page 4. Thus, words in capitals and italicized in this way are words Louis would add to his word bank, but they may be defined in the text itself.

**Extension:**

- a) Students could use words defined only in the body of the main text to start their own, personal word bank.
- b) Watch 'The Power of Simple Words' on the TedEd website: <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-power-of-simple-words>. Compare this advice with the way Louis uses language.
- c) Using the resources available at <http://www.wordle.net/>, students create a word cloud of their favourite words from this and other books. These can be displayed in the classroom.

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## Activities - During Reading

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### ACTIVITY 5: LANGUAGE JOURNAL

As students read the novel, they should collect examples of their favourite lines and sentences in a reading journal. In particular, the novel is rich in imagery, e.g. note the use of metaphor and simile in these extracts:

- 'But look how well-built my vocabulary is!' I say, flexing a few well-chosen adjectives.' (page 8)
- 'The dread was a stranger who was becoming familiar. It almost had shape and smell, following me wherever I went like a stray animal, nosing at me, shaming me, *dread-full*'. (page 114)
- 'You can watch the fire for ages, it's like the sea, always moving, telling stories if you listen well enough.' (page 139)
- 'I entered the park as the last light was fading to a gold trace beneath the clouds, like the line of light under a closed door.' (page 168)

Students share these with others in the class and discuss: Why do particular lines appeal to you? What effect does this have on your reaction to characters and events in the novel?

#### **Extension:**

Create a word wall in the class of some of the favourite words and phrases. Do a search in Google Images for examples of word walls in other classrooms.

### ACTIVITY 6: STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES 1

As students read the book, stop from time to time and read aloud favourite scenes from the story. Discuss what is appealing about the extract.

#### **Extension:**

Instead of just reading the scenes aloud, turn the scene into a short play and perform it. The mini-plays could be performed for other classes or younger students.

Alternatively, students could prepare a Reader's Theatre script, practise their scene and perform it. For more information: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre-172.html>.

### ACTIVITY 7: STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES 2

On page 2, Louis writes: 'I was reading *Gus Attack* for the twenty-sixth time. Gus has lived under my pillow since fourth grade, and he used to come with me like a teddy when I stayed at friends' houses. When I'm an old man, completely dead and kaput like the Undertaker, I might even be buried with him.'

The teacher shares with the students books s/he fell in love with – and any stories associated with the book. Then, students can talk about any story they have loved as much as Louis loves *Gus Attack*.

#### **Extension:**

Organise a display of favourite class books for the library. The display could be accompanied by anecdotes and brief bios of the students who chose particular books. As a variation, this could be created as an on-line 'display'.

### ACTIVITY 8: INFERRING - PUTTING NAMES TO SKETCHES

As you begin to read the book, return to the sketches on the page opposite the imprint page. Students should identify which of the following characters each sketch represents:

- Singo
- Hassan
- Elena
- (• and Louis, of course)

Students should discuss: What are your reasons for making these identifications? Does everyone agree? Why? Why not? How are the sketches supported by the verbal descriptions? What extra information is given to you about these characters?

### ACTIVITY 9: FOCALISATION

In simple terms, *focalisation* is a literary term which refers to the person (*focaliser*) through whose eyes we experience the events and characters of the story. It is slightly different from point of view, because a character's point of view can be communicated to the reader via the focaliser. The concept is crucial to understanding narrative and can be introduced in a basic manner using *Louis beside himself*.

Read the first chapter and, with the students, identify through whose eyes we view the story. After identifying Louis, point out that he is a first person narrator – making it easier to identify him as the focaliser. Now, discuss the implications of using Louis by reading closely the section from 'Come on, Louis...' (page 1) to '...flexing his biceps while he waits for you to leap?' (page 2). Through direct quoting, the reader is provided the point of view of Dad. However, as the reader hears and sees Dad through Louis's ears and eyes, the father's behaviour may be interpreted as somewhat threatening and close to bullying: Louis makes it clear he'd rather be reading *Gus Attack* and he mocks his father's view that he never knows when he'll need fighting skills. (At the top of page 3, he states that his father's voice gave him 'such a fright').

#### **Extension:**

- a) As students read the book further, discuss the effect of Louis being the focaliser as the story unfolds: How does this influence the way the reader interprets characters and events?
- b) Try re-telling or re-enacting some important events through the eyes of other characters. Discuss how the use of a different focaliser might encourage the reader to respond differently to various events and characters.

### ACTIVITY 10: ORIENTATING THE READER AND ENTERING THE ORDINARY WORLD

In this novel, the hero is Louis. He undertakes a journey common to fictional characters from innocence to experience: he begins lacking courage (or at least the confidence to act courageously) to eventually gaining this courage after a number of trials. This growth is reflected in the relationship he has with his father at the beginning (meek and almost servile) to one of greater equality and respect. The catalyst for the growth is the arrival of Cordelia in his life.

In order for the hero's trials and eventual transformation to have an impact on the reader, the opening chapter of novels frequently introduce the reader to the ordinary world of the hero, the way the world is now, before he sets forth on his adventure. Read chapters one to five and ask students to list what they find out about the main character and his world. Consider the sort of world he lives in and what about it may need to change.

Finally, the first part of the novel must set up what will be at stake for the hero once the major complication arises. Identify and discuss the relative importance of Louis's:

- relationship with his father
- love of words
- relationship with Hassan, Elena and Singo.

#### **Extension:**

- a) Many stories, including this one, follow what is known as the Quest structure (or the Hero's Journey). Find out more about this structure, starting here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quest>. Discuss: Why is this structure so common? Who is the hero in this story? What is his quest? Use Blackline Master 2 (at the end of these notes) to trace the quest as it unfolds in this story. Later, compare the use of the Hero's

Journey structure in this novel with another novel such as *Darius Bell and the crystal bees* by Odo Hirsch.

- b) Discuss any parallels they identify between Louis's life and their own.

### ACTIVITY 11: FORESHADOWING AND GRADUAL RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Chapter One finishes with the following paragraph: 'But before we go there, you need to know some more stuff about my family and my friends, who all happened to be near but far at what felt like the most *Perilous* event of my life.' Then, at the end of Chapter 3, Louis mentions the Peril again, but this time adds that he 'could have been slain, torn to shreds, and beaten to a bloody pulp' (page 24). However, it is some time before the reader discovers exactly what the peril is. Discuss: Is the Peril the burglary in Chapter 6, or is that just a minor Peril that comes before the main one? If so, what is the main peril Louis faces? What is the purpose of the author foreshadowing events to occur later in the story? Are there other examples of this? [Examples include: the Phenomenon mentioned on pages 24 and 30; the curse mentioned on page 34. In addition, Fienberg withholds the information that the burglar is a girl for as long as possible – see page 53-56 onwards. This revelation, of course, makes Louis feel even worse; discuss reasons for this.]

### ACTIVITY 12: THE COMPLICATION

The main problem arises in Chapter 6. Read the chapter and note the difference between the way Louis and the 'burglar' behave. Discuss:

- What is the significance of Louis losing his words: 'I couldn't find my voice. I couldn't find my words' (page 59)?
- What does the burglary reveal about Louis? Could this be considered a major complication in the story? What is at stake in terms of his own self-image, his relationship with his father and friends? Why is this significant – refer back to Activity 10?
- How does the female burglar's behaviour help reveal Louis's weakness? [She acts with daring and courage; he intends to act bravely, but freezes and loses his voice.]
- How does her reaction to him (see the final paragraph on page 60) summarise his main problem?
- The burglary proves to be a narrative vehicle for introducing two more complications. What are these? See Chapter 7 (the need to protect Cordelia from Jimmy) and Chapter 8 (the need for Louis to lie to his father and, therefore, put their relationship at risk).
- In terms of the quest on which Louis (reluctantly) embarks, what is the 'prize' he hopes to win? [The prizes might include: self respect, the approval of his father, the respect of his friends, Cordelia's safety. Notice that these are not tangible, concrete rewards such as money.] Draw students' attention to the name of Louis's school principal on page 6 and what he has to say about the use of fists and words.

### **Extension:**

After reading the whole book, discuss how the various threads of the story have come together.

### ACTIVITY 13: THE INMOST CAVE

In Quest stories, the hero always comes close to failure. Before achieving victory, he (or she) will reach a dark point where things seem hopeless. Often, the darkest point is a physical or metaphorical cave of some sort. Ask students to identify the inmost cave in *Louis beside himself* – see the last paragraph of Chapter 16, page 182: 'We listened to the heavy tread up the hall...then a man as tall and wide as a built-in wardrobe filled up the kitchen doorway.' Read also Chapter 17. **Discuss:**

- In what sense is the kitchen a cave?

- Why is this a dark moment in the story, a moment when the hero (Louis) could fail and the potential prize is at risk?
- How does Louis effect his escape? Re-read pages 190-196 from 'I rubbed the back of my hand' to 'I straightened my spaghetti legs and stood up'. Notice that he finds his words again and *they* help him solve the problem – not brute force. Then, in Chapter 18 (page 197), his friends (allies) arrive.

#### ACTIVITY 14: THE ROLE OF ENEMIES

On the way to success, the hero usually faces enemies and part of the pleasure of reading Quest stories is in seeing the enemies finally vanquished. However, as computer gamers will know, there is usually a Boss – the major, most powerful enemy to beat.

**Discuss:** Who are Louis's enemies in this book? Can one of them be identified as the Boss? How does Fienberg use language to encourage readers to dislike this character? How does the story unfold so that the enemy is vanquished in the most satisfying manner? What does Louis gain by vanquishing the enemy?

#### ACTIVITY 15: BEGINNINGS, ENDINGS AND THEMES

The first chapter of a novel does more than orient the reader to the setting and major characters. Often, it also highlights the main concerns of the book and foreshadows the central message. For example, ask students to consider the contrast that is set up in the first couple of pages:

<b>Physical Power</b>	<i>versus</i>	<b>The Power of Words</b>
<i>represented by</i>		<i>represented by</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dad's love of wrestling</li> <li>• Dad encouraging Louis to learn wrestling manoeuvres in case of trouble</li> <li>• Singo and Hassan's prowess in their chosen sports</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louis's love of <i>Gus Attack</i></li> <li>• The word bank</li> </ul>

As students read the book, ask them to find other examples of how these two, contrasting powers are represented; add to the table above. [Note: Make sure the students do not miss the reference to the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* on page 134.]

**Discuss:** What is most highly valued at the beginning? In the end, do words or physical power win? What is a possible message in the way the story ends? How does this compare with what Mr Mainprize says: 'Life is all about communicating. Life is a never ending emergency. You must say what you mean to the people you care about in the short time you have allotted. And you, Bobby Thornton, should learn to use your words instead of your fists!' (page 6).

#### **Extension:**

Brainstorm different ways the story could have ended, e.g. Louis remains lost for words and his friends overpower Jimmy; the police arrive on a tip-off to arrest Jimmy before Louis can prove himself; Louis's father discovers Cordelia in the tent and solves the problem; Louis realizes that words will not be enough and resorts to violence to deal with Jimmy. In groups, rewrite the ending or prepare a performance of an alternative ending.

**Discuss:** How does the different outcome change the message of the story?



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## Activities - After Reading

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### ACTIVITY 16: USE OF ELABORATION

*Elaboration* is a grammatical term that means one clause expands another by elaborating on it (or some portion of it) by restating it in other words, specifying in greater detail, commenting or exemplifying. Research has demonstrated that this is one of the features evident in student writing that is highly valued; in other words, to do well in English at school and in demand writing tasks like NAPLAN, students must be able to use the grammatical resource of elaboration.

Fienberg uses this resource extensively in *Louis beside himself*. Here are three examples from page 114. The symbol (=) indicates that the words that follow (underlined) elaborate on the words before the symbol (also underlined).

- As the bus rumbled closer and closer to my house, my dread grew. (=) I'd never really felt anything like it. The dread was a stranger who was becoming familiar. It almost had a shape and smell, following me wherever I went like a stray animal, nosing at me, shaming me, dread-full.
- There was Hassan's house, (=) the pale grey fenced embroidered by climbing jasmine. The blinds were down in the front windows, the newspaper still poked out of the letterbox.
- It was Elena's mother's birthday, and Elena wanted to get some cannoli – (=) sweet tubes of pastry filled with chocolate cream or ricotta – from a special Italian deli.

Collect further examples of elaboration and give students practice in using this resource.

### ACTIVITY 17: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING CHARACTERS

Explain, model and provide guided practice in the use of Double Bubble Maps. See, for example:

[http://www.wappingersschools.org/cms/lib01/NY01001463/Centricity/Domain/108/Double\\_Bubble.pdf](http://www.wappingersschools.org/cms/lib01/NY01001463/Centricity/Domain/108/Double_Bubble.pdf).

Ask students to compare and contrast the hero of different novels, e.g.:

- Tashi and Louis, both characters created by Anna Fienberg
- Louis (from *Louis beside himself*) and Darius Bell (from Odo Hirsch's novels *Darius Bell and the glitter pool* and *Darius Bell and the crystal bees*)
- Louis and J.K. Rowling's character Harry Potter (in the early years).
- Cordelia and J.K. Rowling's character Hermione Granger.

In groups, discuss questions such as:

- Which character is your favourite? Why or why not?
- Which character is the most heroic? Why or why not?
- Which character do you find the most realistic? Do you know anyone like this in real life?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages of using these characters as a role model for your own life? **Note:** Students could use a T-chart to answer this question: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/tchart/>
- Why are many of these heroes male? What female heroes do you know of?

### **Extension:**

Imagine there is to be an awards ceremony for the best fictional hero (in a children's book) of all time. Write a letter to the Awards Committee nominating the hero you would choose and putting forward your arguments. Remember to structure your letter and the argument logically:

- **Greeting:**

Dear...

- **Introduction:**

B = Background and attention grabber

A = Argument (thesis)

M = Main Points

- **Body:** Expand on your main points in P.E.E.L. paragraphs, i.e.

P = Point in a topic sentence

E = Elaboration on and explanation of your topic sentence

E = Examples and evidence to back up your point

L = Sentence linking back to the argument (thesis).

- **Conclusion:**

Restate your argument

Summarise your main points

Make a call to action (i.e. to nominate your character)

- **Complimentary Close:**

Yours sincerely...

### **ACTIVITY 18: DEBATING THE NOVEL'S IDEAS**

Students can debate some of the issues arising from the novel, including the following:

- a) The pen is mightier than the sword.
- b) When big problems arise, seek help from a trusted adult.
- c) White lies are never okay.
- d) Exposure to violence on television and in sport encourages children to act violently.
- e) Stories can help change the world.

### **ACTIVITY 19: CREATING POSTERS**

After analyzing the visual design elements of some real-life posters, students work in small groups to design a poster based on an issue arising in the novel, e.g.

- The power of words
- The top ten tips for parents
- Tips on what children can do when they face serious problems
- Showing respect for all people
- The contribution of immigrants to Australian society.

The following websites may be a useful starting point for tips on poster design:

- <http://clt.lse.ac.uk/poster-design/>
- <http://www.bj2design.com/web-graphic-design/poster-examples.html>

### ACTIVITY 20: CREATING A NEW STORY

Create a new story for the character of Louis. At the end of the novel, there are a few events mentioned that might prompt ideas, e.g.

- Cordelia transfers to Louis's school.
- Doreen and Louis's Dad have become very friendly.
- The fate of Anne's boyfriend is left partially unresolved; we don't know if the police catch him or not, for example.

Students could brainstorm complications that might arise from these situations.

Most likely, students will be writing short stories. If that is the case, they should not try to come up with a plot as complex as a novel. Their attention will need to be drawn to some of the qualities of short, short fiction (i.e. compressed narratives), e.g.

- They take a slice out of a character's life – a life changing or crisis moment.
- The plot involves a complication that can be largely resolved in ten to twenty minutes of real time.
- The story starts *in medias res* (in the middle of the action)
- The setting is generally one place only.
- There are only one or two main characters.
- Inside the main characters' head, s/he may (briefly) remember earlier events and/or predict future events.

As preparation, the teacher may model this type of story by taking one critical episode in the novel (for example the burglary on pages 53-57) and showing how it could be converted into a self-contained story. When writing, students should attempt to mimic Fienberg's style, including the inclusion of word bank words, similes and metaphors, gentle humour, and elaboration.

### ACTIVITY 21: CREATING A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Read and analyse extracts from some stories that have appeared in both novel and graphic novel form, e.g. *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, *Stormbreaker* by Anthony Horowitz and *Horrendo's Curse* by Anna Fienberg. After modeling and joint construction, students should then work in groups to create a graphic novel of an extract from *Louis beside himself*. The sketches at the beginning of the book of Louis, Singo, Hassan and Elena can be used as a starting point. When finished, share these with other groups and publish them (for example on the school website or in the library). On completion, discuss how telling a story in prose was different from creating a graphic version.

As preparatory reading, teachers may find the following book useful: McCloud, S. (1994). *Understanding comics: The invisible art*. New York: Kitchen Sink Press/HarperCollins. More information can be found here: <http://scottmccloud.com/2-print/1-uc/index.html>. Have a good look around while you are visiting his website.

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## Other Resources

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For more information on Anna Fienberg, visit:

- <http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=312&author=5>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna\\_Fienberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Fienberg)
- <http://www.sydneywriterscentre.com.au/podcast/annafienberg.htm> [This is a podcast of an interview with Anna Fienberg and includes a transcript.]
- <http://www.puffin.com.au/contributors/anna-fienberg> [For a link to books by Fienberg, but not in the Tashi series.]
- <http://www.randomhouse.com.au/authors/anna-fienberg.aspx> [Teachers may be interested in Fienberg's first book for adults.]

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## Further Reading

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Here is a starting point for more books featuring assorted child heroes:

- Armstrong, R & White, J. (2005). *Safe from harm*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.  
[A fascinating, multilayered picture book about a child who is slapped by his parents and runs away.]
- Crew, G & Woolman, S. (1994). *The Watertower*. Flinders Park, SA: Era Publications.
  - Fienberg, A., Fienberg, B. & Gamble, K. (2004). *There once was a boy called Tashi*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.  
[This is a beautifully illustrated Tashi picture book.]
  - Gaiman, N. (2003). *Coraline*. London: Bloomsbury.
  - Hirsch, O. (2011). *Darius Bell and the crystal bees*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.
  - Hof, M. (2011). *Against the odds*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.
  - Selznick, B. (2007). *The invention of Hugo Cabret*. New York: Scholastic.
  - Snicket, L. (1999). *A series of unfortunate events: The bad beginning*. New York, New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
  - Turner, E. (1894). *Seven little Australians*. [Current publisher unknown]  
[This is a classic Australian book written for children.]

Check out the digital, multimodal story, *Inanimate Alice*, in which the main character is 8 years old (in the first installment):

- <http://www.inanimatealice.com/>

In addition, read about real-life child heroes:

- <http://www.chinastategies.com/lithero.htm>
- <http://myhero.com/go/directory/page.asp?dir=child>

Here is a link to stories about indigenous heroes in the context of colonial Australia:

- <http://www.ghatlas.com.au/content/aboriginal-heroes-episodes-colonial-landscape>

For a non-fiction collection of 'true stories about kids and courage', read:

- Murray, K. (1999). *Tough Stuff*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin

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## About the writers

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### ANNA FIENBERG

Anna started writing stories when she was eight, but never imagined being an author. She studied psychology, fascinated by the dark world of dreams. After university, she began freelance writing, with a short story for *Woman's Day* and an interview with Mel Gibson for *Cosmopolitan*. But then she scored the best job in the world. 'Working for *School Magazine* was a treat,' Anna says. 'I couldn't believe you could get paid for sitting back comfortably in your chair, cappuccino in hand, reading over a thousand books a year. Heaven!' Of course, as an editor she also had to write reviews and articles, stories and plays. One of those stories for *School Magazine* later became her first book.'

Author information sheet available from:

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=311&author=5>

### LINDSAY WILLIAMS

**Lindsay Williams** has been an educator for 30 years, currently teaches pre-service English teachers at the University of Queensland, has an educational consultancy business and is completing a PhD through the University of New England. He has written the two-volume *English Teaching Survival Manual*, on-line resources for Screen Australia's digital learning site, the curriculum package for the ACTF's *Lockie Leonard* series, and teacher notes for other Allen and Unwin publications, including Odo Hirsch's *Darius Bell and the glitter pool* and the sequel *Darius Bell and the crystal bees*, *Worldshaker* by Richard Harland, *Jameela* by Rukhsana Khan and *Yellowcake* by Margo Lanagan. Lindsay has been a member of a number of committees advising on state and national curriculum and is a past-Vice President of the English Teachers Association of Queensland (ETAQ) which presented him with The Peter Botsman Memorial Award for contributions to quality English education in Queensland. His website is [www.englishteacher guru.com](http://www.englishteacher guru.com).

## Making Predictions


Study the outside of the novel, look closely at the images and read the blurb. What connections to your own experiences and other books can you make? Flip through the book without reading it closely. Then, using the chart below, make predictions about what you are about to read.

Aspect of book	Predictions
<p><b>Genre and purpose</b>                      What type of writing does this appear to be? For what purpose do you think it was written? Why would you read it?</p>	
<p><b>Subject matter</b>                      What do you predict the book will be about?</p>	
<p><b>Role and relationships</b>                      Who is the writer? Have you read anything by her before or heard anything about her? In particular, have you read any of the Tashi stories? If so, what can you expect from a book about Tashi?                      Who does the audience for this book appear to be?</p>	
<p><b>Mode and medium</b>                      Will this book rely on words alone to tell its story?</p>	
<p><b>Structure</b>                      Given the genre, how do you expect this piece to be structured? What are the common stages for this genre? What will this mean for the way you read this piece?</p>	
<p><b>Language*</b>                      Given your predictions about the genre, subject matter and roles and relationships, what can you expect about the language used, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of linking words and phrases</li> <li>• vocabulary</li> <li>• types of nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives</li> <li>• person (first, second, third)</li> <li>• punctuation</li> <li>• spelling?</li> </ul> <p>What might this mean for the way you read this book?</p>	

## Tracing the Hero's Journey

In the retrieval chart below is a simplified version of the archetypal Hero's Journey that lies at the heart of most extended narratives (see [http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's\\_journey.htm](http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm) for much greater detail).

As you read the book, explore how closely Louis's journey as hero (it is on him that the story focuses) matches the archetypal journey. In the right hand column, students can trace the development of Louis's relationships compared with the trajectory of the plot. Compare this to another character, for example Darius in *Darius Bell and the crystal bees* by Odo Hirsch.

Hero's Journey - plot		Progression of Louis's relationships (especially with Cordelia and his father)
<p>Louis in the <b>Ordinary World</b></p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		
<p><b>Call to adventure</b> and <b>Refusal of the Call</b></p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		
<p><b>Meeting with the Mentor</b></p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		
<p><b>The Extraordinary World</b> – meeting with trials, allies and enemies (the Shadow)</p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		
<p><b>The Inmost Cave</b> – the darkest moment</p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		
<p><b>Escape</b></p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		
<p><b>Return to the Ordinary World</b> with the <b>Prize</b></p> <p><i>Events in story:</i></p>		