



THE BOOK OR YOU DIE! Shut. Open. So, you don't like force. Okay then. Can you pretty please with ice on cheese let me shut the book? I'll take that as a yes. Shut. Open. Okay. Want more details? Yes? Good. It began on a Monday.

PART THREE. THE TRUTH. I was walking to school when Kingo, the bully, appeared. He was so mean I ran past him and went to class. I knew I was early so I had to wait a while, but eventually the teacher came so we headed to our desks. Our teacher gave us our maths assignment and we got to work. In the middle of our assignment Kingo threw something at me and I read it.

PART FOUR. THE MESSAGE. It said, 'Meet me at the sandpit tomorrow or you'll lose something important.' I was not going to go to the sand pit so I went home and wrote in my diary since it's the only thing that can keep my mind off things and can keep me happy. I wrote for 3 hours and went to bed.

PART FIVE. SADNESS. 'Morning darling. You're going to be late for school,' Mum said as she gave me a shake. I jumped out of bed, had breakfast, cleaned my teeth, got dressed and went to school. We had a pretty boring morning until recess. I was safe. Kingo had to stay in to do his work, so I went to the playground until the bell rang. When I went back to class I realised I'd left my diary on my desk! I'd left my diary on my desk while Kingo had been in the classroom alone. You guessed it. Kingo had rubbed out my diary. That's the truth. That's when my book, my favourite book, the book that made me feel happy while I was writing it, stopped being a book. So now you know. You can put down this book that isn't a book anymore. Goodbye. Shut. Open. GOODBYE! Shut.

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**Year 3-4 Runner-Up:** Frederick Tari [Albury Public School]

**Title:** *A Godly Teacher*

It was a normal school day in my normal life when a teacher that definitely was not normal came through the door of the classroom. I did not recognise him and thought he was a casual teacher but then I looked closely. He had dark black hair and pale skin. He wore a long flowing robe with scenes of people dying and being ripped apart embroidered on it. I could make out a person being eaten by a sea-serpent and another being turned to stone by a woman with snake hair and white robes. I figured he was a God because he said his name was Mr Hades. You might be thinking that his name just might be Hades but after that he said, "By the way, I am the Greek God of the underworld."

That freaked out a lot of students. But I did not freak out. I asked him what his favourite subject was and he said the one thing that proved he was a Greek god. He said, "My favourite subject is History."

Then I really freaked. But I calmed down a bit when he said, "I will not vaporise anybody unless you really insult me."

Then Smartypants Jones said, "How were the gods created then? If you get it wrong, we know that you're a phoney god."

Hades said, "Kronos the titan and Rhea the titan sired the first six gods. Hestia, Demeter,

Hera, Hades, Poseidon and Zeus. He ate the first five, which was all of them except Zeus, who escaped and cut Kronos up with his own scythe and made him vomit up the other gods."

Smartypants Jones said, "You're wrong! Poseidon did not get eaten by Kronos and Zeus did get eaten and Poseidon became the king of the gods."

With that, Hades vaporised Smartypants Jones. Everybody screamed as Smartypants Jones' ashes fell to the ground. It smelled like burnt toast in the room.

"Be quiet!" yelled Hades. Everybody became silent as Hades wrote on the whiteboard the day's lesson, *History of the Greek Gods*. Got to hand it to Hades though, he knew his stuff! He knew all the Greek gods and all of their parents, all of their relationships and all of their powers. When the lunch bell rang, we knew everything about Greek gods.

During lunch I did not see him anywhere. Maybe he went to the underworld for lunch.

Maybe I just did not see him. Either way, I never saw him again. One thing is clear, it certainly was a crazy morning!

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**Year 3-4 Highly Commended: Xander Tamaray [Trinity Anglican College]**

**Title:** *30 Days*

Flame and smoke lick the oxygen out of the air. Arrows rain down as screams echoed through the black charred sky. 30 days. 30 days of this war. The towers and barricades are crumbling, the stones falling onto the battleground covered in blood. I'm hiding in the husk of a dragon. As I dodge another arrow, a cloaked man ambles out of his own hiding.

I cry out for him to stop as another tsunami of black feathered arrows fall down on the land, stabbing the old man repeatedly. I cry out again, but this time we make eye contact. Suddenly, a dragon swoops down, splashing blood on my rags. I ran towards the man, ignoring the enormous reptile. Spraying fire, the dragon blocked my path with a wall of flames.

I slump down defeated. The tally marks on the bones and walls are hypnotic. Through the fire, I see the man kneel down with armies upon armies of the Enemy crowding around him, bows drawn. Charring myself, I walk up to the fire to get a better look. Hot tears roll down my cheeks as they lift their bows and pull the arrows back further.

With a horrified expression on my face, I ran through the fire. "I've had enough death in this life." I thought. Slowly, the man pulls out a sword. I could see the arrows slipping through the Enemy's fingertips. I crash into them as hard as I could, snapping their arrows in half. I could see the eyes of the man watering. What ever he was going to do, he had to do it fast. Suddenly, the dust kicks up. The jewels on the man's sword flash crimson as he lifts it up, crying out, before jabbing it back into the ground.

I'm blown away by the explosion and it looks like the armies were too. I crawl over to the man, covered in blood, his sword snapped and chipped. I start to cry. He puts out his hand, shaking. As he removes his hood, the words that I have been waiting for for 30 days come out. "I love you, my child." My memory is jogged as I hear those words. "Dad..." I cry. He puts his hand on my cheek softly. "Don't go, please! Stay with me!" Dad shakes his head, breathing quietly. "I love you." I say. But sadly, those were the last words he would ever hear.

I look around seeing only death and destruction. The body of my father laid gently into the ground. I remember it like it was yesterday. I was taken away from him, all wrapped in chains. I cry, at the fact that he's gone. Forever. Moments later, I give up. Stumbling out of my shelter, I hear the voice of my dad ringing in my head. I'm swarmed by the enemy forces, bows and wands out. I pick up the broken sword and with a blink of an eye, everything disappears.

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**YEAR 5-6 CATEGORY**

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**Year 5-6 Winner:** Melena Wallace [Trinity Anglican College]

**Title:** *Stories of the River*

The rocks trembled as the river, icy and clear, fought against its bounds, aching to run free. Animals of all shapes and sizes gathered, either watching freely or discreetly hiding among the tangled canopy of the trees. With one last groan, the rocks gave way, falling, falling...and being pushed away by the force of the river as it flowed past, finally free. The animals let out a collective roar, the noise ranging from an eagle's proud cry to a sloth's quiet gurgle. A curious monkey stretched out a furry arm, dipping it in the clear water and admiring the spray, dancing from the new waterfall. Reaching out deeper, the monkey scooped out a handful of tiny stones that sparkled in the warm glow of the setting sun. He let out a squawked of delight at what he found. Covering every single inch of each pebble was swirling writing, from all different hands with all different ideas. Slowly, the monkey lifted his gaze to follow the river, smoothly veering this way and that, with a sharp turn here and there. The horizon glowed, casting a warm light to flitter among the canopy of the trees, the Forest of Creativity a glowing, tangled beauty.

The monkey turned the stones around in his hands, the writing weaving into stories from a knight slaying dragons to a young wizard attending a school of magic to detective poking around at a murder scene. Stories, is what the rocks held, stories that weave words of all languages to make something extraordinary. The monkey now sat alone, the silver glow of the moon smiling down upon him. He stared down at one of the rocks in his palm, this one blank. But...it was calling to him, encouraging him. And he knew that that was *his* pallet, his story that was not yet written. So the monkey picked up a stick, slim but sturdy, and began to write.

Each stone, each rock and boulder and pebble, they represent *you*, Authors who are all different, yet the same, with minds that are different in every way but all share on passion. The shining river holding Authors of the past, present and future, a winding journey with an end nobody can see from any angle. Each and every stone is different, all with unique shapes, personalities and ideas. But in the end, we all connect to this river, our stories both fiction and non-fiction running side by side, clashing and dancing in ways unimaginable, unknown. No two stories are the same, just as no two stones are identical.

All in the Forest of Creativity.

The stories of the river.

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**Year 5-6 Runner-Up:** Imogen Wragge [Trinity Anglican College]

**Title:** *The Secret*

I knew no one was going to believe me. Why would they? After all, I am only 10 years old.

But I know what I saw. And no one can say that I didn't.

It started off as a normal day. I had woken up to a warm, sunny beautiful morning. it was my favourite type of day.

After a quick breakfast. I raced out to see my beautiful pony. I did not want to waste a moment of this stunning day.

Jasper seemed as keen as I was. I saddled him up and jumped up on his back, kicking him into a slow canter. We rode through the mustard-coloured paddocks and headed to the river.

Jasper and I both love it down there. It was always nice and cool in the shade.

I hopped off my sweaty little pony and lead him over to the edge.

As I was watching Jasper drinking in big gulps, I saw something in the river from the corner of my eye. I jumped and pulled Jasper back with me, then stared but whatever it was, it went back into the murky water.

Had I imagined something? Was the sun making blotches in front of my eye?

I tied Jasper to a tree limb and crept over to the water

If I really had to describe what I saw, it was this, but please don't call me crazy. With that first glimpse, it looked like it was a cross between a shark, a crocodile and a snake.

The colour is hard to say. It was a kind of muddy brown.

In some ways, I wanted to race back home and tell my mum and dad but at the same time, I knew I had to keep it a secret.

I sat on the muddy bank of the river and stayed there. I waited and waited for some time until I knew it was not going to come up again.

I heard Jasper moving around, tugging at his lead. It was time to go home.

I walked away from the river but I felt I was being watched. So, I turned around. It was there. It scrambled up the muddy bank and was walking very slowly like it was scared.

It felt like my feet were like concrete and my legs were like jelly.

Finally, I started to run. I quickly untied Jasper and scrambled onto his back. I kicked him in to a gallop.

We flew across the paddock, not stopping until we got back to the stables. My heart was going as fast as a racing car and both Jasper and I were breathing hard.

I needed to stop and calm down. I couldn't go back in the house like this. No one would believe me about what I saw.

But I knew I would have to go down there again and try to see what I saw before.

And in the meantime, I would just have to keep it to myself.

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**Year 5-6 Runner-Up:** Jericho Ellao [Albury Public School]

**Title:** *Star Diving*

When the world falls asleep, the Wanderers awaken. When our eyes close, theirs open. All around us, forever existing yet concealed, they dwell. Their home is the galaxy. Earth is their neighbourhood. Their hearts are made of pure magic. though their boats of starlight couldn't save them from our stormy seas, and

they became lost. The Wanderers wore suits of iron and copper crafted by the finest blacksmiths of an ancient diving age. They were once rich but poisoned with greed from the wealth of their profession; pearl diving.

On a dark and uncertain night, they sailed together seeking the most abandoned, dangerous, blackest area of the seven seas. They were determined to discover countless pearls and shipwrecks overflowing with ancient treasure. As they struggled their way through rolling waves, the Wanderers finally concluded their journey. Their boat drifted directly above the exact coordinates they hoped would fulfil their quest. They sought the shipwreck beneath the waves as they leaned over the edge of the boat, and as the storm died, they were able to peer more clearly into the depths of the soundless sea.

They could see bright lights glittering and exceptional; they presumed those were the pearls, and alongside them, a gigantic black shadow, a mysterious shape, spreading over the bottom of the sea, they were to find out what it was. The Wanderers prepared themselves to venture into the deep marine abyss. Together they took a deep breath, fearing that this might be their last. They looked at each other with doubt, before taking an enormous leap and falling amongst the vast creations of the under-world. An untold number of aquatic animals surrounded the Wanderers, and as they swam deeper and deeper down into the cold and dim waters of Earth, the pressure squeezed their copper and iron suits, though something was pulling them down to the darker parts of the seawaters: something big, the size of thirty warships crashed by their side, something... with tentacles! Trying desperately to wiggle themselves out of the compelling pull, the Wanderers found it too strong. Suddenly, a nameless, spherical figure rose from the dark. It had silver scales stronger than iron shields. Slimy tentacles dragged behind the monster's body; billions of rotten fishbones stuck to its oily, drooling lips. Then a great luminous, glowing eye blinked stupidly in the centre of the creature's head. It glared at them as if they had trespassed on its property, as if it were tempted to devour them.

The Wanderers stared at each other through their copper helmets helplessly, thinking that they were doomed. The large figure slowly lowered itself back into the dark and the weight of the monster pulled them down again, only faster. The pressure was cracking the glass on their helmets and crushing their suits, until the tiny space made breathing almost impossible.

Down, down, down they continued to descend. The pressure was unbearable. The world blackened. Then, in what seemed like hours later, they came to. The darkness of the deep was replaced by an electric atmosphere of stars and planets colouring a mottled landscape of trees and plants. They cautiously removed their helmets. The Wanderers were floating at the edge space, and at their fingertips, an untouchable treasure, more precious than pearls.

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**Year 5-6 Highly Commended:** Georgina Larsen [Trinity Anglican College]

**Title:** *Man in the shadows*

My hair stands on end, a shiver races down my spine and a lump rises in my throat.  
It's him...

I don't understand how he found me! My hands start to sweat. I panic. I'm hiding behind rusty shipping crates. Any slight move and he will find me.

Through the misty air I can see a dark figure, slowly creeping closer. I'm sure it's him. He's tall, has broad shoulders and long legs. It's past closing hours and there are no security workers here. It must be him.

He's been stalking me. He's hacked my phone, followed me home from school and this morning I found a creepy letter at my doorstep saying:

*Hello dear,  
I am sure that you would have noticed me by now.  
I know what you did. Now you shan't see the sun rise again!  
Don't let anyone one else know or you will regret it.  
X*

No one knows about this. I'm petrified that he will do something to me! He's getting closer. I'm shaking vigorously. What will he do when he finds me? Will he be aggressive and attack? Or even shoot me?

Now that he's closer I can clearly see him. It's definitely my stalker. My heart starts pounding against my chest. My breaths become short and loud. Scared that he will hear me, I shift my weight back onto another crate.

Boom! A rusty shipping crate falls to the ground. My heart stops and my stomach drops.

Should I sprint? I'm sure he would have the ability to outrun me, maybe even run as fast as lightning. A deep voice calls out, "You have no chance!"

I feel inside my back pocket, but it's gone. It would mean the world to me to have my phone now!

I'm starting to feel light headed and dizzy. I tiptoe backwards. Once more I bang into the rusty crates. Before long he is standing just one meter in front of me. He looks familiar, but I can't recall who he is. He takes a step forward. It's intense.

I start to think of all the things I could've done with my life. My eyes tear up. Will I be remembered as a good person?

The world seems to be going in slow motion. He takes another step towards me. We are now extremely close. I can hear everything, like I have a superpower. I hear his deep breaths, heavy and rapid. My eyes struggle to place the familiar figure.

Every beat of my heart is a hammer to my head. It just gets louder. It's overwhelming.

Why is he just standing there? Is he going to do something to me or just scare me? He reaches into a bag and grabs something out. I can't focus enough to see what it is. I feel cold metal against my temple, then I hear a click...

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**Primary Encouragement Award:** Ruby Fraser [Victory Lutheran College]

**Title:** *The Mirror*

The mirror was in the corner of the janitor's closet. Luke pulled out the key from his pocket. Luke pushed it in the slot of the mirror and chanted the words. "Tell me stories untold, let this land unfold." There was a flash of bright light and then he was gone.

It had been a week since Luke disappeared. He was Amy's reliable best friend and she was desperate for answers. Walking down the hall at school, she heard a sound coming from the janitor's closet. She opened

the door and saw an old key lying next to a mirror. Amy picked it up and slowly pushed the key into a slot in the mirror and it started glowing. She thought she could see something on the other side.....

The goblin walked up to his Master who was hidden in the darkness of the cave.

“Your Worship,” the goblin said. “Someone is trying to get through the mirror, they don’t know the chant, shall I let them pass?”

“They may have the key,” replied the Master. “Let them pass.”

A strange world poured out in front of Amy. It looked scary, but something told her this was where Luke was, so she started walking. Amy felt like she’d been travelling forever when suddenly someone called out to her.

“Over here!” Amy gasped. “Luke!” she cried as she ran over to him. “What are you doing here, where are we?”

“No time to explain” said Luke. “Do you have the key?”

“Uh”, Amy checked her pockets “Yes”.

“Good, let’s go back to the mirror, and get out of here” said Luke urgently.

Amy was tired by the time the mirror came into view, but she was still excited to see it.

“Come on!” she cried to Luke as she grabbed his hand. They were finally escaping, and she felt like a hero. Amy pushed the key in the slot then pulled it back out and waited.

Suddenly Luke said “No!” Amy turned slowly back towards him and her mouth opened in horror. Luke was gone and in his place was a demon with fiery red eyes and black horns.

“I cannot let you go” declared the creature, in a voice Amy did not recognise. “I am the ruler of this land and three years ago I went to earth in a disguise. I was there to capture humans as food for my people, but I lost the key back to my world. I finally found it but when I tried to return here the mirror malfunctioned, leaving the key in your world. Thank you for bringing it back but I cannot let you live.”

The demon lunged towards Amy who threw the key at him in terror! Suddenly a gem in the key started blasting tiny lights at him making him start to fade. “Amy, help me!” it pleaded desperately, but Amy didn’t help. She jumped through the mirror just as the demon made its final cry and disappeared.

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**Primary Encouragement Award:** Claudia Hocking [Trinity Anglican College]

**Title:** *Homeless*

The cold, icy winds seep through my tatty jumper, I have numbness everywhere but my heart. Next to a pole on a traffic packed street is my home, a newspaper wasteland. I try to hide as people briskly stroll pass. Sometimes our eyes meet, but all they do is turn away like they’re embarrassed to see me. My life is a living dump. I’m ignored every moment that I breathe. You know my life wasn’t always like this.

The strangest thing happened to me today, a little girl walking to school with her mother and sister looked at me with a smile on her face. She looked confused as to why I was there. I wanted to smile back but the fear of being caught stopped me.

It’s cold and wet as I crossed the street with my Mum and sister. My sister is jumping and splashing in the puddles as my Mum struggles to hold her hand “Lizzy please” said mum “we need to get to school”. As I crossed the street I noticed a woman sitting on a pile of newspapers, she was looking down like she was

trying to hide. Her face looked pale and skinny, like she hadn't eaten for days. Her hair was a mop of matted mess.

That night, as I lay awake on my newspaper wasteland, I wondered if she meant to smile at me. I wondered if I'll see her again tomorrow and I wondered if she'll smile again at me. I'm nervous that it was just a mistake and that she didn't mean to acknowledge me. The thought of that would be devastating. I long for a friend, someone to talk too, someone to care about me.

I lay awake in my cosy, pink, warm bed and I wonder about the homeless lady I saw today. I wonder if she has a family, a husband a daughter. I wonder why and how she got there. I try to picture myself in her shoes sleeping near a traffic packed street in the freezing cold.

Finally, as the sun starts to rise I quickly get dressed into my uniform. I have a sense of happiness that it's not cold and wet. As

I sit at the kitchen table eating my breakfast, I talk to mum about the homeless lady I saw yesterday. The biggest question we both had was how does a person get to the point of living on the streets. As we make our way to the crossing I'm so excited to see her.

I sit in the same spot as yesterday nervously waiting to see if the little girl walks by again. I see her in the distance. As we make eye contact, I can see her smile from ear to ear and I feel a sudden sense of relief. As the weeks and months pass we get a little more familiar with each other. I lived for her waves and smiley faces.

My mum offered her "Julia" a safe place to stay. Overtime, Julia went onto study and became an advocate for the homeless. I learnt a lot from Julia, she has brought so much to our lives. Sometimes the most simplest of things such as a smile can change someone's life. I would rather have empathy in my heart than hatred in my soul.

