

# Voiceworks

Issue 116: Pluto



New fiction, nonfiction, art & comics from young Australians



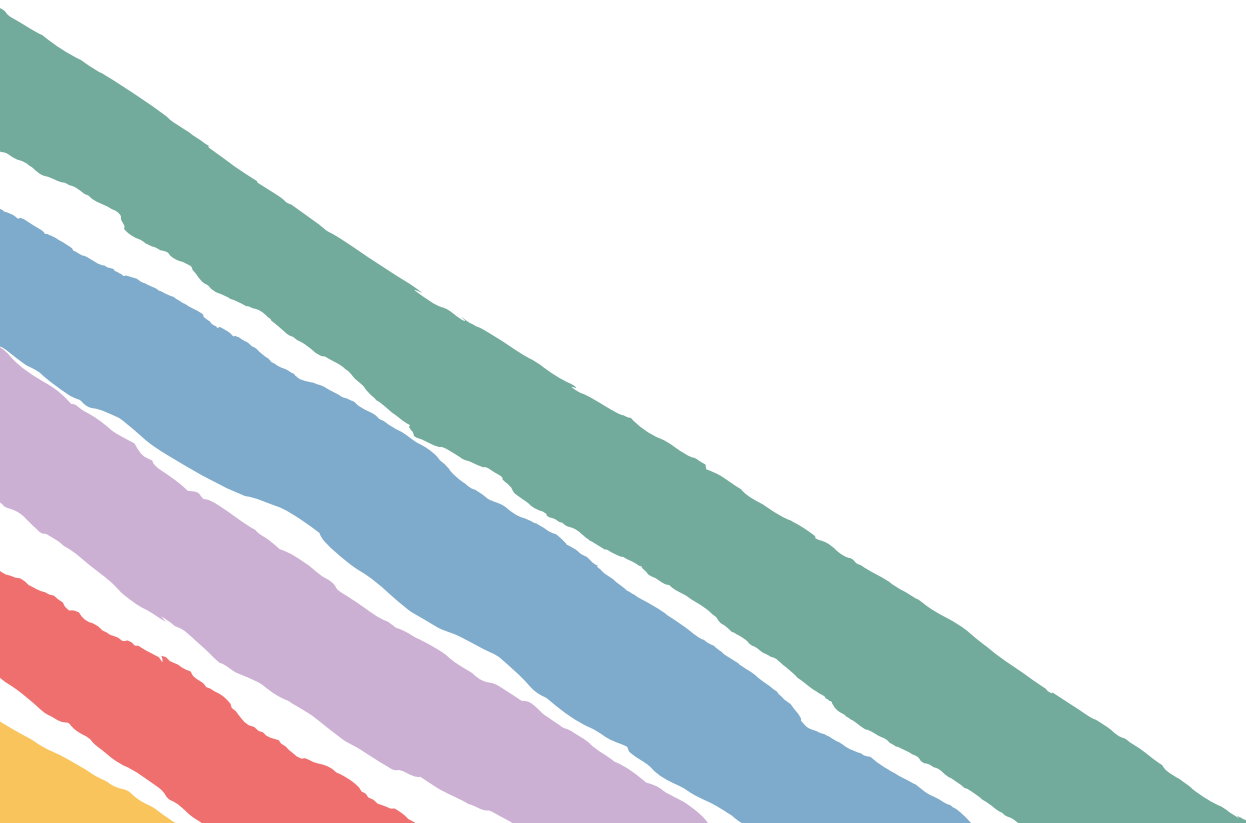
Based at the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, Express Media is a national organisation providing support and development opportunities for young Australian writers.

For the past 30 years, Express Media has been developing, supporting and promoting young writers through workshops that develop skills, through opportunities for constructive feedback and publication, and through awards and programs that recognise excellence.

Voiceworks is our flagship publication; a national literary journal featuring exciting new work by young writers. It is a unique opportunity for young writers and artists under the age of 25 to publish their poetry, short stories, comics, illustrations and drawings, as well as to receive feedback on their submissions. Voiceworks is produced entirely by people aged 25 and younger. Issue number #116 is themed “Pluto”.

This resource was prepared by Rafael Ward, current Schools Program Producer and can be linked to the Australian Curriculum and its Content Descriptors for Year 9 level English (identified by AC codes) and general capabilities.

You may wish to differentiate these activities to suit higher or lower year levels or to more closely match your state’s curriculum. For more information on the Australian Curriculum, visit [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au).



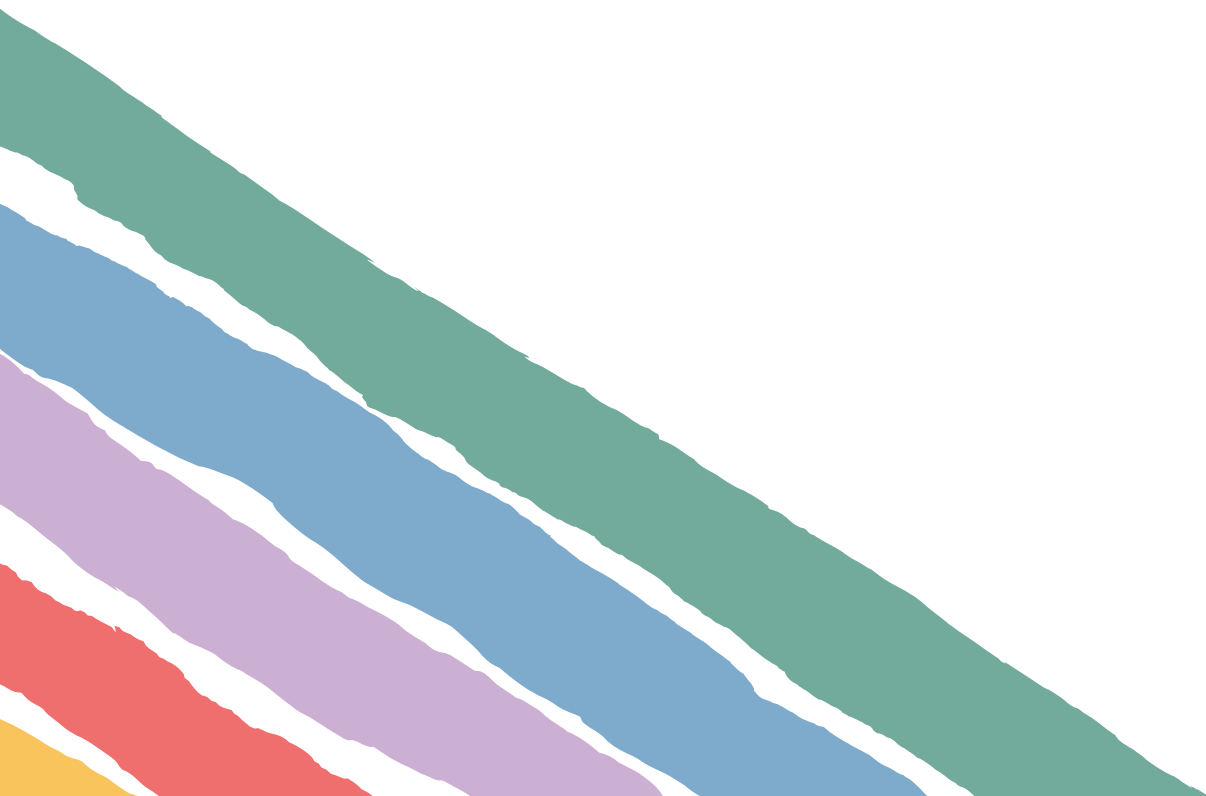
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# Learning Outcomes Possible From These Exercises:

By participating in the following activities and crafting original work through these exercises, students will be able to:

- Analyse and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning (**ACELA1560**)
- Explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (**ACELY1745**)
- Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (**ACELT1633**)
- Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (**ACELT1637**)



## Graphic Art



'Don't Point at the Moon' is by Lilian Yu Wen Cao, #116 Pluto p.78

In her artist interview, Lilian Yu Wen Cao discusses the nature of belief and using autobiographical details to influence your work. 'Don't Point at the Moon' is about a childhood memory where her grandpa shared this strange superstition: Don't point at the moon or a fairy will cut you behind your ear while you're sleeping. As a family that was isolated from the Chinese-Australian community, she never knew if this was an actual Chinese myth, or just something her grandpa made up. Regardless of any truth, the saying stuck with her like a physical scar, and was something that gave her a connection to her later long-distance family.



### Class Discussion: Belief

Most students will have their own beliefs imparted upon them by friends, adults (or older siblings looking to exploit gullibility). This discussion is to help them start reflecting on the nature of belief, and the things they believed, or perhaps still do!

If your class is talkative, teachers can lead a discussion based on the following questions (if students prefer to work by themselves or in pairs, they can answer the questions in their books).

- What's a list of the things you used to believe but now don't? Which was the strangest or most unique belief?

- Do you remember the moment you uncovered the truth about these beliefs?
- How did you feel? For Lilian it was a bit like “a small truth I exhume on my own”
- Are you a gullible person? What makes someone more or less gullible than others?
- Did you ever make up something yourself that you told someone? Did they believe it?
- What is the purpose of certain sayings or wives tales? Are there any that you think are true? (“an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” “Step on a crack, you’ll break your mother’s back.” for eg.)

### Warm-up Task: Make up a saying

Students to spend 5/10 minutes making up a saying. They should initially aim for believability, and then if there’s time (or as an extension task), they can make one as ridiculous as possible.

Take some of these as examples (can also quiz students which they think are real, and which are made up)

- Cowards may die many times before their death
- Don’t fish for a shark with your hands, fish for hands with a shark.
- Do not teach your Grandmother to suck eggs
- Even a worm will turn
- Feed a cold and starve a fever
- He who sups with the Devil should have a long spoon

(hint, they’re all real!)

### Graphic Art Task

Inspired by the opening page of ‘Don’t Point at the Moon’, students are to show the metamorphosis of one thing to another over six panels. It doesn’t have to be thematically similar, the link can be opaque or creative, but the aim is to show a clear change between the first and last object.

Consider how different elements are incorporated in each panel. For example, in the third panel of Lilian Yu Wen Cao’s work, notice the wavy lines and how they are fleshed out into the ear shape, and how the only trace left of the moon itself is the small cut to the right of the ear in the final panel.

If stuck for ideas of what to transform, students can use items in the classroom, or a favourite object that they know well.

# Nonfiction

*When things get bad enough to consider actually leaving Lebanon, we decide to actually leave Lebanon and stay with my paternal grandmother in Syria. We cannot fly (I think because the airport is closed) and so we hire a man with a white minivan to transport fifteen people (my aunts and uncles and cousins and grandmother come with us too) to Aleppo. Mum asks the man with the minivan to pick us up at 9:30 and when he accidentally arrives an hour early, we happen to already be ready—my mum's a sucker for overpreparation. We head out at 8:30 and fifty minutes after we cross the border, it gets bombed and shut down. No one else can move from Lebanon to Syria.*

(‘Carmen, Hassad, and Every Dream I’ve Ever Had’ by Lujayn Hourani #116 Pluto p.12)

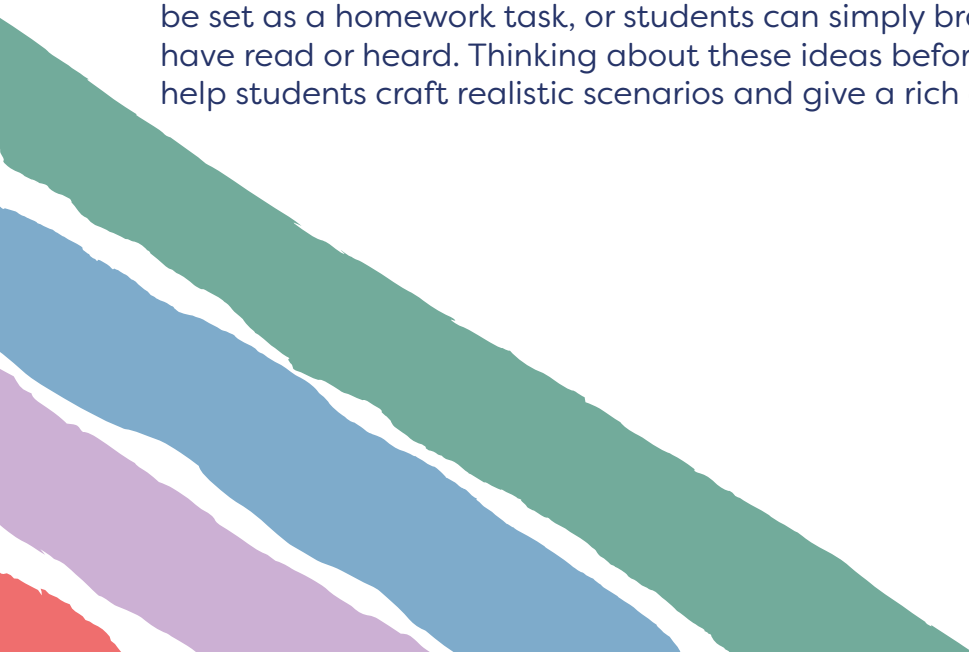
In her nonfiction story, Lujayn Hourani uses the difficult circumstances in Lebanon as a backdrop for an exploration of Islamic dream-reading, astrology, and popular television shows. It is a piece of coincidences and portents, where seemingly arbitrary decisions have life-changing consequences.

## Writing research: The Near Miss

*We tell the story of the drive from Beirut to Aleppo and the conversation spirals towards friends and family who should have died but didn't because they a) took their boat out further than expected b) didn't go to work c) snorkelled deeper than they were supposed to.*

There are countless stories out there of improbable survival, and they are always an intriguing mixture of coincidence, chance, faith, and the always enticing near-miss.

If it's possible to do research in class, students can use the internet to find other real-life stories of near-misses or lucky escapes. If online research isn't possible, it can be set as a homework task, or students can simply brainstorm from stories they might have read or heard. Thinking about these ideas before attempting the next task can help students craft realistic scenarios and give a rich and tantalising backstory.





## Writing Task: A Different Life

Students are to use their own experiences but in this creative non-fiction exercise, will be able to explore how things could have been different for them.

**Step 1.** Write a list of 5 events that changed your life. It could be moving schools, getting a sibling, or starting a new hobby. They don't have to all be major, however, and could be as simple as sitting in a different seat on the bus one day and making a new friend.

**Step 2.** With each of the 5 events, write in dot points how your life would have been different if this event had not occurred. Think about it in the long term too, especially the flow-on effects. For example, if you missed going on a holiday, you might never have started learning a new language, and the stress of not catching the plane could have contributed to your parents' divorce.

**Step 3.** Using each of these 5 events as scaffolding for a paragraph, write about what your life would have been like, how it would have been different, and the kind of person you might have become. It's a near miss that any of these things occurred, let alone all five of them, to shape who you are now.

# Schools Program

Express Media works with teachers and students in secondary schools to build essential literacy skills, develop young people's voices and support them to achieve their creative goals.

Express Media's workshops bring writing to life and equip students with the tools to tell their stories and express what matters most to them.

Developed in accordance with Australian Curriculum standards, our workshops focus on specific areas of writing, editing and publishing to support classroom learning and empower students to pursue their own creative potential.

As emerging writers themselves, our tutors know firsthand what it takes to animate the writing process for young people. Aside from engaging with high-quality workshop content, students get huge personal benefits from the mentorship of our talented crew. Workshops are available on demand in **Poetry, Nonfiction, Short Fiction, Graphic Narratives** and **Creating Your Own Publication**.

## FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES

contact our **Schools Program**

**Producer Rafael Ward** on

03 9094 7889 or

[education@expressmedia.org.au](mailto:education@expressmedia.org.au).

For more information about our Schools Program, head to:

[expressmedia.org.au/programs/schools/in-school-workshops/](http://expressmedia.org.au/programs/schools/in-school-workshops/)

## MEMBERSHIP

### Schools Program Membership

**\$75 per year**

- We believe that young people reading the published work of their peers is a powerful act. It expands their sense of potential and can be the galvanising force needed to put their own pens to paper. As a Schools Member, you'll receive four print editions of Voiceworks, with the knowledge you are supporting the development of young Australian writers across the country.

To sign up, or find out more, visit  
**[expressmedia.org.au/membership](http://expressmedia.org.au/membership)**

# MEMBERSHIP

If you're aged 13 to 30 with an interest in writing, reading, or storytelling, become a member of Express Media and subscribe to Voiceworks to access opportunities to develop, share, and publish your writing. Plus, you'll receive invites to launches, events and workshops and join a community of young writers across the country!

## Express Media Membership

\$25 per year includes:

- A subscription to the monthly Express Post newsletter packed full of the latest writing and publication opportunities
- Unlimited submissions to Express Media's publications, prizes and fellowships
- Unlimited access to Express Media's courses, workshops and events
- A PDF version of the latest issue of Voiceworks delivered to your email inbox each quarter

Add a print subscription to Voiceworks for just \$50!

To sign up for an Express Media Membership visit [expressmedia.org.au/membership](http://expressmedia.org.au/membership)

We offer joint memberships with writers centres across Australia – find the membership suitable to you in your state via our website.

## Voiceworks Subscription (4 issues)

\$60 per year

The best way to get involved with Voiceworks is to read it! Each issue is stuffed to the gills with a varied selection of work by remarkable young writers and artists. Over the past year, our pages have been filled with stories about moon-visiting dogs and hidden queer identities; essays about Maltese prickly pears and murderous kookaburras; poems about clones and teenage gorgons; and comics about intimacy and the Dutch Golden Age.

Sign up for an annual subscription to get four issues a year delivered straight to your door.

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