

Voiceworks

Issue 117: Hum



New fiction, nonfiction, art & comics from young Australians

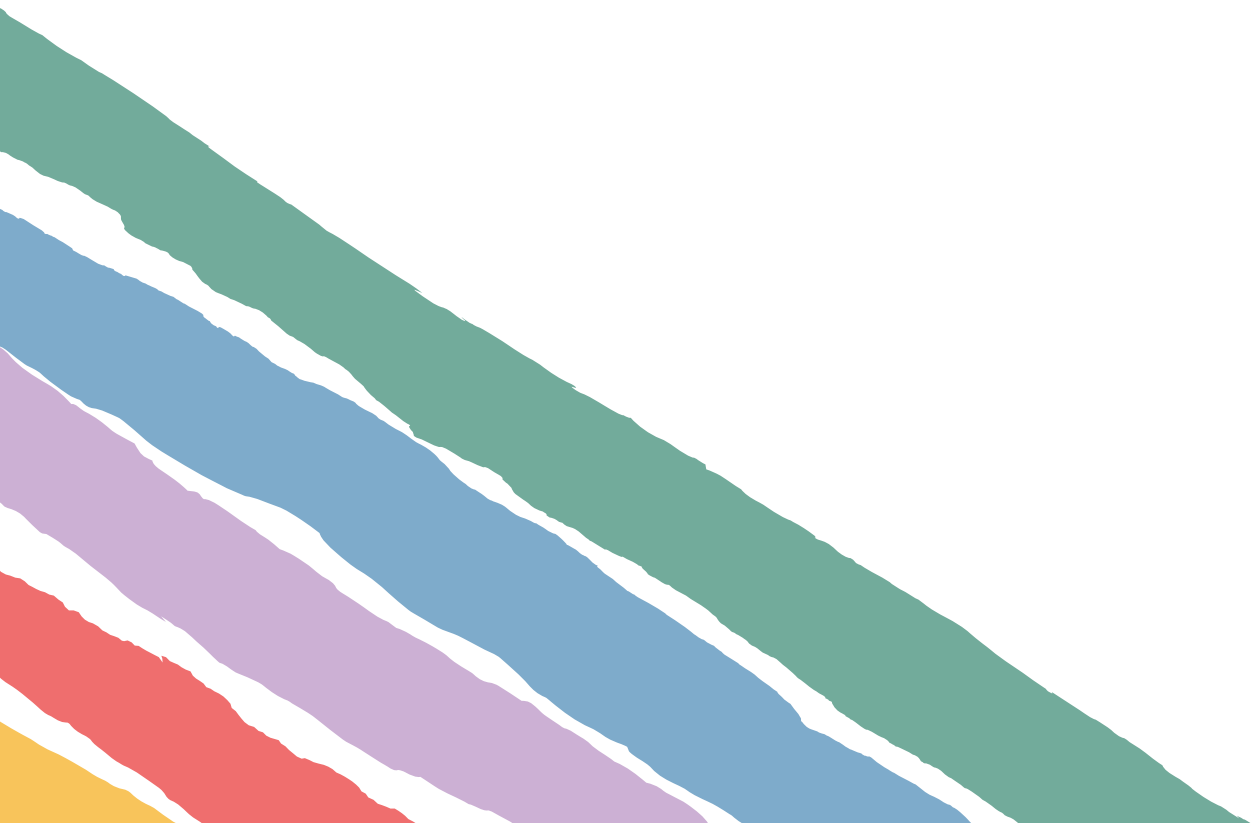
Based at the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, Express Media is a national organisation providing support and development opportunities for young Australian writers.

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 #117 is themed “Hum”.

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.



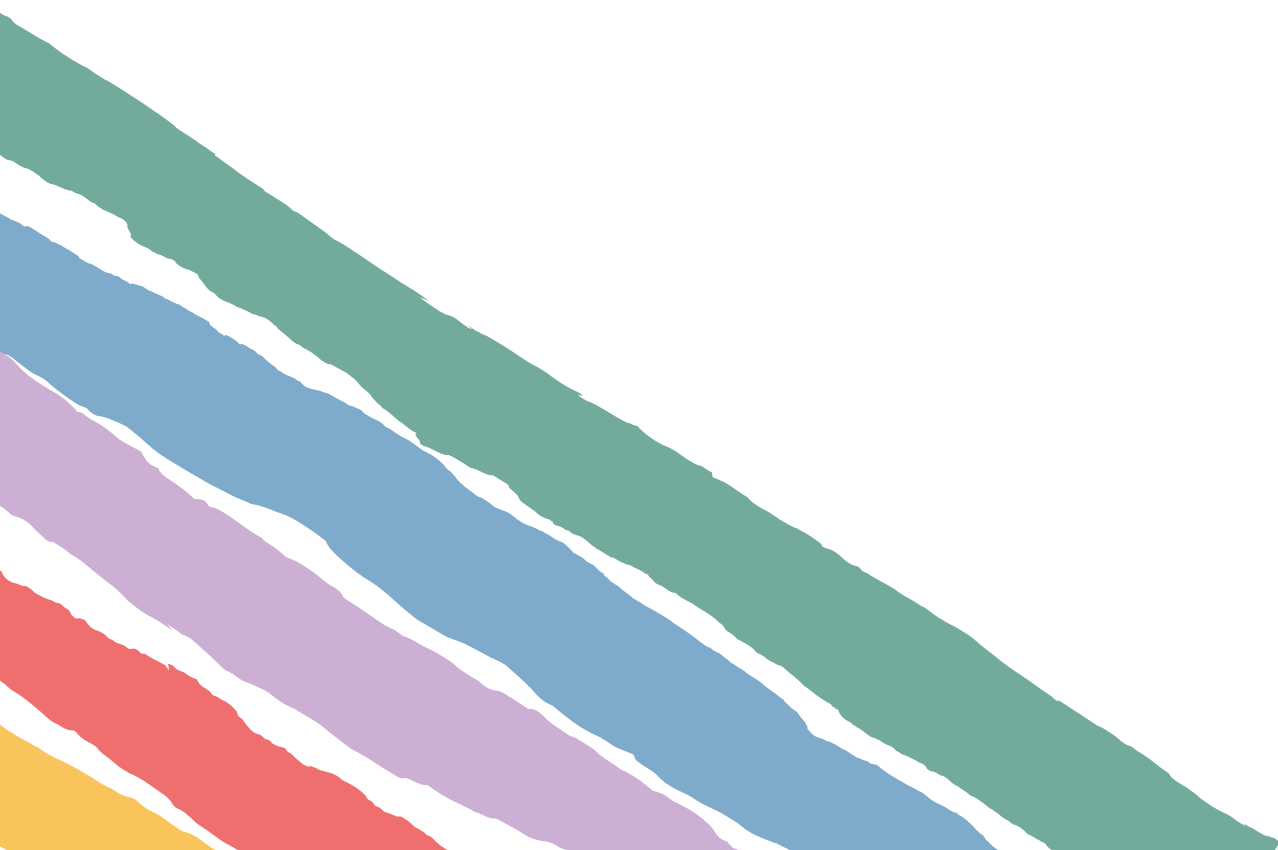
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Learning Outcomes Possible From These Exercises:

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

- Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts **(ACELT1772)**
- 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)**
- Analyse and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning **(ACELA1560)**
- Understand that roles and relationships are developed and challenged through language and interpersonal skills **(ACELA1551)**
- Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts **(ACELT1633)**



Poetry

Aubade to My Mother Humming in the Kitchen, Janiru Liyanage, #117 Hum p.64

Like a strange tune, she hovers over the stove
frying eggplants—hibiscus bloom,
great fists of smoke and their orbiting
she fries eggplant and hums the song she fell
in love to—the one she heard when she
fell in love with my dad, singing:
Kaulu piyan path wahanna
she hums into her past
where lanterns hang from trees
the air is dense with music as
teenagers cluster like prayer beads,
lights haloing the ground
back then, my father smiles with all his teeth
back then, my mother opens her mouth
and it fills with air
I've been told my father called my mother
and played a song over the phone
I've been told my mother dissolved into happiness
like smoke—quiet as pond foam, she hums along
to the radio—my mother
finds the song on YouTube and
we listen to it over fried eggplant
my mother, who knows nostalgia is a
well-intentioned wound
my mother, who searches the lawn
for flowers and thumbs them to a book,
(thumbing moments to time) she gives each one a name:
hospital note & foxglove,
photograph of us & hibiscus
my mother, with bleach-white rice stuck
to her lips
I've been told when she was pregnant
with me, I'd kick so hard
she'd hum to the rhythm of my feet against her stomach,
she'd stay up all night and fall in love
over and over again

Writing and Poem study - Aubade

If students have done a little study already of different forms of poetry, this could be a good moment to introduce Aubades and their features, (a morning love song, sometimes about lovers separating at dawn, or the feelings associated with daybreak) as well as some famous Aubades - (The Sun Rising, John Donne. Or Aubade, by Philip Larkin). Comparing Janiru Liyanage's poem as a 14 year old writer to some of these older works could lead to interesting discussions on the difference in experiences, or the human element in these poems.

Warm-up task - Items of Contrast

Inspired by the contrasts within the poem, students should pick some everyday household items and put them together to create unlikely and inspiring pairings.

Egs:

Band aids and bottle-tops

Dishwashing liquid ice cream

Students can feel free to be experimental with the items chosen and their significance. There can be an underlying tone or message, or it can just be a funny contrast. Aim to find five different pairings.

Guiding Questions -

What do these two items mean together that is more than the sum of their parts?

What do they hint about the world around them that they are found together?

Students can choose their favourite to share with the class.



Writing task

Students are to use one of the five pairings as a title for a poem. The kind of contrast will give a hint to the tone of the writing (for example, “hospital note & foxglove’ sounds like a lot darker or melancholy piece than “photograph of us & hibiscus”).

For an added challenge, students can try making it into an aubade themselves, using similar themes or references to the morning in some way.

Alternatively, if the five examples they’ve written don’t seem to work in that way, students can instead use their contrasts to make a simile or metaphor.

For example, “Their friendship was unlikely, bubbly and toxic - dishwashing liquid ice cream.” or “He had secrets in him, like the messages written underneath the bottle-tops he found in the band aid cupboard.”

Fiction

Extract from 'Hecate', Gillian Hagenus #117 Hum p.82

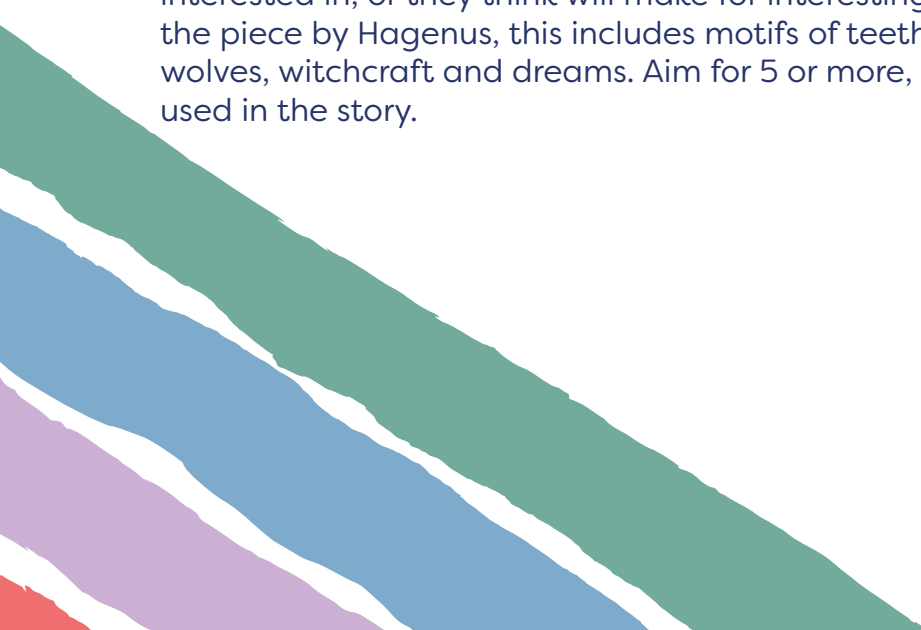
Mama is outside burning rosemary. The wolf we caught this morning is hanging from the tree by one leg. He was making a racket before, but now he is quiet and very still. His eyes are open and staring at me and I can see in them his little demon hound starting to form. Mama says we aren't supposed to get wolves out this way, but they come for her because Mama is special.

The forest looks like ghosts today. All the trees have got naked like Mama sometimes does when there's a full moon and they are stretching their limbs up to the sky and wailing like the wolf did. There are leaves all over the ground around our shack and I want to go out and lie in them and crunch them in my fists, but Mama likes me to stay inside when she is burning rosemary, so I watch through the window.

Mama's got small runes painted on her face that she says are for making things stronger. I want to have runes too, but Mama says I need to stay pretty. She says they'll trust me more if I'm pretty. Mama is planning to send me to the town tomorrow so I can plant the teeth for her. Once the teeth are planted, the purge can begin. Mama says the people in the town are evil so we are going to get rid of them. She tells me stories sometimes, because she says they are important to remember. She says that the townspeople used to hunt our ancestors. We are the last ones left. I like that we are special. Mama says Daddy was evil. He disappeared last year and when I asked Mama where he went, she said he's in my tummy.

Warm Up Exercise

In preparation for the writing task, students are to generate a list of motifs that they might like to include in their next fantasy story. This could be things they are interested in, or they think will make for interesting recurring images in their piece. In the piece by Hagenus, this includes motifs of teeth that repeat frequently, but also wolves, witchcraft and dreams. Aim for 5 or more, though they don't all have to be used in the story.



Discussion - Fantasy details

When exploring a fantastical theme, it's often effective to describe things in a new way, so as to add an extra element of the surreal to the world that you've built. This can be seen in several circumstances throughout, Hecate, for example:

I know that when my stomach gurgles at night, it's Daddy's tears whirling around.

She asks me more questions that I don't answer and then she is taking me to her car. Her hand is soft like feathers.

Mama is sobbing and Daddy's voice is low and sounds like stones scraping on the sidewalk

The house is pale pink, tall and thin like a skeleton.

These are ways of describing objects that you wouldn't immediately think of. Not many people see a house and think of a skeleton, but that added weirdness brings believability to the world of the narrator who lives an eerie existence of bones and teeth.

Writing Task - Combining Myth and Reality in the Family

For those who don't know the reference in the story, Hecate was the goddess of magic, witchcraft, the night, moon, ghosts and necromancy (and many of these elements can be seen in the piece by Hagenus in various forms). There are also strong links of motherhood and mothering in Hecate mythology, as she assisted Demeter in her search for Persephone, guiding her through the night with flaming torches, and then became Persephone's minister and companion in Hades.


Note that it isn't necessary to be aware of these details to enjoy the story, however it might have helped the creation of the piece.

In this next task, students will choose from a list of mythological figures and write a story imagining they have a family member who is one of these figures (or descended from).

Possible options:

1. Zeus (King of the Gods)
2. Hera (Goddess of heaven / the seasons)
3. Poseidon (God of the sea)
4. Demeter (Goddess of the harvest and the nurturing spirit)
5. Ares (God of war)
6. Hermes (God of communication/ the messenger)
7. Hephaestus (God of fire/the forge)
8. Aphrodite (Goddess of love and beauty)
9. Athena (Goddess of wisdom)
10. Apollo (God of music/ the sun)
11. Artemis (Goddess of hunting)

Keep in mind there's plenty of other options, and students aren't restricted to Greek mythology either. Encourage them to do their own research on the stories surrounding their chosen figure, and carefully consider how their mythology might be weaved into the narrative or affect the lives of their characters. Aim for stories with more complexity than Percy Jackson retellings which instead explore the strangeness and uniqueness of the fantasy world rather than getting too caught up in how cool godlike powers would be ;)



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.

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.

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For more information about our Schools Program, head to:
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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!

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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.

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