*Trust Me Too*
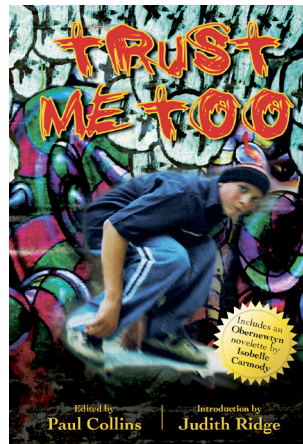Edited by Paul Collins

# About the book

*Trust Me Too* is a wonderful collection of Australian writing that features the work of 57 authors, most of whom work in the YA area. The book is divided by genres, including adventure, science fiction, horror, and many, many others. This provides teachers with the opportunity to build a unit around one particular area of fiction or to even look at the idea of genre itself. With such a wide range of styles and voices, this collection could also work very well as the central text in a wide reading or "reading circles" program. There is truly something for every student in your classes here. There are challenging stories that will take the strongest English students into new territories and simple engaging stories that might provide the magic spark for the reluctant readers.

# About the authors

Where does one start? There are writers at the beginning of their careers like Jack Heath, who starting writing his first novel at 13 and veterans such as Isobelle Carmody who have been entertaining young readers for more than 25 years. There are plenty of familiar names such as Leigh Hobbs, the creator of Old Tom, and Phillip Gwynne whose *Deadly Unna?* has been a popular set text in secondary school classrooms. The table of contents is literally a who's who of Australian YA writers so it is likely that your students will immediately be reassured when they spot one of their favourites. The idea is that they then discover new writers and follow up by reading a novel or two. A quick scan of the fiction section in the school library will likely reveal many of these names.

# Teaching *Trust Me Too*

This collection provides a real opportunity to build a unit of work around reading and/or writing. The structure, which divides the stories by genre, means that teachers can introduce students to a particular type of story with a view to a writing assignment or further reading.

For a reading unit, the collection is like a small library. The wonderful thing about teaching short stories is that they can form the basis of a small self-contained lesson that can be completed in a double period or over a few periods. The story can be read and discussed in class so that all of the students can begin from the same point and feel confident in answering more complex questions on theme, imagery, etc. With a view to NAPLAN, these stories can provide a challenging and entertaining way of approaching the reading comprehension section. Any of these stories will lend themselves easily to the style of comprehension questions on the test, progressing from the simple to the more abstract.

Of course, the other possibility is to use the stories as a springboard for creative writing. Genre fiction is very popular with students and, again, it is likely that they will be familiar with many of the writers included in the collection. Genre writing is tricky in many ways but for younger writers, it can be a great starting point. Genres such as science fiction or fantasy appeal to adolescents' sense of wonder at the seemingly limitless nature of existence. But those stories are usually told in a particular manner to conform to the expectations of the readers who enjoy the genre. The manner of, say, a science fiction story is something that can be taught and this gives the student a structure to work with as they tell their own story.

The lesson plans that follow are based on the genres listed in the table of contents and are self contained lessons that can be used in conjunction with one or more of the stories in the particular section. For each genre, there is an A4 worksheet that can be photocopied and handed out to the students.

National Curriculum Links:

> The Literature strand of English for Years 7-10 suggests that *Students are introduced to increasingly sophisticated analysis of the differences between various kinds of **literary texts, popular-culture texts**, and everyday texts.* The sheer range of voices, styles, and genres here will provide the basis for understanding the manner in which texts are grouped. The strand also says that the *"notion of valuing of certain texts as literature is discussed"*. Because *Trust Me Too* includes stories that might be seen as popular fiction as well as so called "literary" texts, there is an opportunity to invite students to explore their own ideas on this issue.

> The Literacy Strand at this level advises that "*Students engage with a variety of **genres** and modes. They re-enact, represent and describe texts in order to display their understanding of **narrative, theme, purpose, context and argument** and to defend their ideas in written and oral modes"*. Clearly, *Trust Me Too* is an ideal text to meet the requirements of this aspect of the strand. "A variety of genres and modes" could be the subtitle of this collection and, again, it provides a one book solution for teachers seeking material in this area.

# Before Teaching

Genre:

Discussion questions

1. What does the word "Genre" mean?
2. What are some examples of genres?
3. Why are texts divided into genres?
4. What makes a genre? Is it the setting, the characters, the story?
5. What is a sub genre? What are some examples?

Writing Questions

1. What is your favourite genre? Why?
2. What is your least favourite genre? Why?

In Groups:

Choose a particular genre and:

1. Think of as many examples as you can. They can be books, films, TV shows, games, comics, or anything else you can think of.
2. Try to write a definition of the genre
3. Read your definition out to the class and answer questions about it.

# Adventure

Before reading:

1. Think of an adventure film, an adventure book, an adventure television show and an adventure game.
2. What do they all have in common (besides being about an adventure!)?
3. Can you think of any sub genres associated with Adventure stories?

Now read one or more of the stories in the Adventure section of *Trust Me Too*

1. Adventure stories usually contain "excitement, risk, and danger". Did the story you read contain all of these? Use quotes from the story to support your answer.
2. Was the story told in the first, second, or third person? If it was in the first person, what is the effect on the story? What do you think works best in an adventure story? Why?
3. In an Adventure story, a character may find out something new about themself. Was that the case in the story that you read?

Writing

An adventure story can be something as simple as an unlikely incident on the way to school or something exotic that happens on the side of a mountain in an imaginary land. You are going to write an Adventure story using the following quote as a starting point:

**"Adventure is just bad planning".**

**-**Roald Amundsen

Steps:

1. Make a chart like the one that follows:

| Who? Who is the main character? | |
|---|---|
| Where? Setting? | |
| What? What happens in the story? | |
| Why? Why does it happen? | |
| Ending? How does it end? | |

2. Start writing your story. Remember that your readers are expecting something fast paced and exciting. Try to come up with a first line that draws them in immediately.

Example: "Dan had set his alarm and placed it under his pillow so his dad wouldn't hear it" – "Tin Horse Plain" by Corinne Fenton.

3. When you have finished the first paragraph or first section of the story, read it to a partner. Is it exciting? Are they keen to find out what happens next?

4. Keep writing, don't stop, and don't forget to enjoy yourself. If you're having a good time writing the story, it is likely that others will have a good time reading it!

# Crime

Before Reading

1. What is the first thing that you think of when you hear the word "crime"?
2. Why are people so interested in crime?
3. Crime Fiction, as we understand it today, began with detective stories in the 19th Century. Can you think of a famous detective?
4. Make a list of TV shows, films, and books that could be called Crime stories. What do they have in common?

Read one or more of the Crime stories in the collection and answer the following:

1. What is the crime at the centre of the story?
2. Did the story focus on the criminal, the victim, or the "detective" charged with solving the crime?
3. Describe the tone of the story using examples to support your ideas.
4. Describe the ending. Was it a twist? Were you surprised? Why or why not?

Writing

Use the following chart to get started on your crime story:

| | |
|---|---|
| Point of view? Who will tell the story? | |
| Setting? | |
| Characters? Investigator, victims, suspects, criminal(s) | |
| Crime? What happens? | |
| Ending? How is the mystery solved? | |

Hints:

1. A good crime story starts with the crime. Traditionally, the detective arrives at the scene of the crime soon after it has taken place and begins to try to piece together the story.
2. The perpetrator of the crime must have a motive and the means to commit the crime. The job of the detective is to determine who, among the suspects, has the best of both.
3. Crime stories are based around secrets. From the beginning, you must decide what the secret is and how it is going to be discovered.

Start writing your story. Think about the tone that you want and the language that you can use to get it.

Example:

*"He expected to find the same thing when he searched the other body, but instead he found a wallet, a can of capsicum spray and a two-way radio. He opened the wallet, and found a police badge shining at him".* – "The Rats" by Jack Heath

# Contemporary

Before reading:

1. What does the word "contemporary" mean?
2. What makes a story "contemporary"
3. Make a list of "contemporary" TV shows. What do they have in common?

Read one or more of the stories in the contemporary section of the "Trust Me Too" collection.

After Reading:

1. Contemporary fiction usually deals with current issues. What issues arose in the story that you read?
2. How did the writer establish a contemporary setting?
3. What language did the writer use to give the story a contemporary feel? Give examples.
4. If a student were to read this story in 50 years' time, what would they learn about the world today?

Writing

A contemporary story is a good way to explore aspects of the world in which you live. You could write a story that tackles a personal issue or one that incorporates an issue in the news. Phillip Gwynne's story "Led Zep" is a hilarious reflection on the gap between generations over music. Hazel Edwards' story "Tag" is about tattoos and graffiti. Jen Storer has written about a grandfather. Your life and your observations are the raw material for a contemporary story.

To start:

1. Make a list of five things that are on your mind today.
2. Stories are based on problems. In your list, is there something that is a problem? How might it be solved?
3. Will your story be serious or humorous? Or a bit of both?
4. How will it end? It doesn't need to be an overly dramatic ending but it does need to offer some kind of conclusion.
5. Think about your main character. What are they going to learn? How are they going to change?

Start writing your story!

When you have finished a first draft read it over checking for the following:

1. Have I used clichés like "at the end of the day" or "it all boiled down to . . .". Try to use phrases that aren't overused.
2. Are there bits of the story that might be confusing and can be cut out?
3. Is the pace right? Do I need to speed up or slow the story at any points?
4. Does it make sense? Good luck!

# <u>Fantasy</u>

Before Reading:

1. What does the word "fantasy" mean? What do you associate with fantasy stories?
2. In small groups, research one of the following:

A. The history of the Fantasy genre
B. JRR Tolkien
C. Role playing games
D. Fantasy sub genres
E. Fantasy films

Share your findings with the class.

Read one or more of the stories from the fantasy section of the *Trust Me Too* collection

1. Briefly describe the fantasy elements of the story that you read. Use quotes.
2. How would you describe the plot of your story?
3. Were the characters the kind that you associate with this genre?
4. How did the writer create the fantasy setting? Use quotes and examples in your answer.
5. Was the story what you expected or did it change your mind about the fantasy genre?

Writing

One of the most popular plots in fantasy stories is a Quest. A Quest story has a distinct structure. After you have created a main character that you think might work well in a quest style fantasy story, use the following steps to write your story:

1. The Call: Your hero must go on a quest. If they don't, the village will be destroyed, someone close to them will be in peril, etc, etc. They refuse the mission at first but then reluctantly accept. At the point of departure, they may be joined by a faithful companion or two.
2. The Journey: The hero and companion(s) leave home and begin the quest. Along the way there will be challenges, including the following:
   a. Monsters
   b. Temptations
   c. Deadly Opposites: A choice between two unpleasant possibilities
   d. Journey to the Underworld: An encounter with dead, or the dead, that provides the hero with some important information.
3. Arrival and Frustration: The goal is in sight but there are still obstacles to overcome.
4. The Final Challenge: One last mighty battle to reach the goal
5. The Goal: Success, and the journey home.

Good Luck!

# **Science Fiction**

Before Reading:

In small groups, discuss the following quotes. How do they define Science Fiction?

1. "For me science fiction is a way of thinking, a way of logic that bypasses a lot of nonsense. It allows people to look directly at important subjects".
   **-** Gene Roddenberry, creator of "Star Trek"
2. "Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science fiction is the improbable made possible".
   **-** Rod Serling, creator of *The Twilight Zone*
3. "Anything you dream is fiction, and anything you accomplish is science, the whole history of mankind is nothing but science fiction".
   **-** Ray Bradbury, author of *The Martian Chronicles*

Read one or more of the Science Fiction Stories in the *Trust Me Too* Collection

After Reading:

1. Describe three elements in the story that establish the story in the Science Fiction genre.
2. Research some of the Science Fiction sub genres. Does the story fit any of them?
3. Science Fiction stories may be set in the future or on other planets but they usually contain some message about contemporary life. Is this true of the story that you read? Use quotes and examples.

Writing

Science Fiction is an exciting genre for writers. You may want to write a "Deep" SF story set on another planet with a much altered version of reality or you could try a "Speculative Fiction" story set in the future.

Deep Science Fiction

1. Decide on your setting. What kind of world will it be? Who's there? What does it look like?
2. Your story needs a problem. Is your world in trouble? Describe the threat. Create a main character. What dangers might they face in your world.

Speculative Fiction

Think about the world in 20, 50, 100 or 1000 years. What will have changed in the following areas:

1. Technology
2. Politics
3. Medicine
4. Sport/Entertainment
5. War

Now, create a character and present them with a problem associated with a particular change.

Good Luck!

# Romance

Before Reading:

1. What does the word "Romantic" mean? What is "Romance"?
2. List five elements that you would expect to find in a Romance story.
3. What kinds of characters would you expect to find in a Romance story?
4. Should a Romance story have a happy ending? Why or why not?
5. Romance is one of the most popular genres. Why do people like Romance stories?

Read one or more of the Romance stories in the *Trust Me Too* collection.

After Reading:

1. What happened in the story? Was it what you expected? Explain.
2. Describe the "romantic" elements of the story.
3. Did the story have a humorous element? Do you think humour and romance are a good match? Why or why not?

Writing

You are going to write a Romance story. Fill in the chart before you begin:

| | |
|---|---|
| The two main characters (it takes two to tango!). Think about their ages – this is important. | |
| The setting | |
| The situation – How do they meet? Are there barriers to the romance? | |
| Other characters – Jealous ex? Forbidding father? | |
| The ending | |

A Romance story is about a relationship between two people. Therefore, good dialogue is the key. Try to hear their conversation in your head and try your best to avoid anything too corny. Before you begin, try to imagine the first conversation that will take place between your two main characters. Write it down and read it aloud. Does it sound natural? Is this how people really talk? Here's Gabe and Ellie's first conversation from JE Fison's, "The Bridge":

*"Ellie . . ." Gabe says, finally breaking the silence.*
*"Will I see you on the bus again?"*
*I shake my head. "That time I caught your bus was*
*. . . an accident," I manage to say.*

By using ellipses, she manages to show the awkwardness in the exchange. How did your dialogue sound?

Now write your story, remember to give special attention the dialogue.

Good luck!

# Ghost Stories

Before Reading:

1. Do you know any ghost stories?
2. Why do people enjoy ghost stories?
3. In small groups, research one of the following and present your findings to the rest of the class:

   A. MR James
   B. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
   C. *The Ghost in Hamlet*
   D. *Famous Australian Ghosts*.

Read one or more of the ghost stories in the *Trust Me Too* collection

After Reading:

1. Describe the ghost in the story that you read
2. Was the story scary, funny, or serious?
3. Why did the ghost in the story appear?
4. How did the writer create the atmosphere of the story. Find five words or phrases that the writer used to do so.

Writing

A ghost story requires, above all, a ghost or at least the idea of a ghost. In the classic ghost stories by MR James, a ghost will appear when summoned accidently through an old book or artifact. Marley's ghost in *A Christmas Carol* appears to help his old friend avoid a terrible fate. Other ghosts like "poltergeists" simply appear to wreak havoc. Still more ghosts haunt those that have harmed them in life.

All stories are based around a problem. You are going to create a ghost. Use the following chart to help you get started:

| | |
|---|---|
| Why does your ghost appear? | |
| What does your ghost look like? | |
| What does the ghost do? | |
| Who are the living characters? | |
| How does your story end? | |

1. Before you write, think about how you are going to create the right tone and atmosphere. Make a list of words or phrases that might work well in your story.

2. Ghost stories are best when they are read aloud. When you have finished a first draft, read the story to someone and get his or her reaction.

Good Luck!

# Horror

Before Reading:

1. Write a definition of "Horror".
2. In partners, make a list of horror movies, TV shows, books, comics, games, etc. What do they have in common?
3. In small groups, research one of the following and share your findings with the rest of the class:

a) Gothic Literature
b) Dracula by Bram Stoker
c) HP Lovecraft
d) Stephen King.

Read one of the Horror stories in the Trust Me Too collection.

After Reading:

1. Was the story scary? Why or why not?
2. Was it what you expected? Explain.
3. List three elements in the story that place it in the Horror genre.
4. Were the characters who you would expect to find in a horror story?

Writing

1. Ray Bradbury is best known for his science fiction stories but some of his earliest work was writing horror stories for magazines. To gather ideas, he would sometimes simply make a list of titles. To get started on your story, try Bradbury's technique.

1. The Old House
2. The Lonely Road
3. The Black Cat
4.
5.
(Keep going as long as you can!)

2. Choose one of your titles and start thinking about your story. The main objective here is to scare your reader. How are you going to do that? With a twist? By building suspense? By creating a truly frightening character? By setting the story in a fearful place?

3. Your first sentence is important because a horror story has to set the tone from the beginning.

*Tom should have said no* is the first sentence of Michael Pryor's story, "Shop Till You Drop". It doesn't have anything to do with monsters or old castles but it creates a downbeat atmosphere that perfectly suits the story that follows. Try a few first sentences until you find one that works.

Good Luck!

# The Twilight Zone

Before Reading:

1. What is "The Twilight Zone"?
2. Can you think of any films, TV shows, or books that might be associated with the "Twilight Zone"?
3. What does the word "uncanny" mean? Why is it a good subject for writers?

Read one or more of the stories in the "Twilight Zone" section of the *Trust Me Too* collection.

1. Describe the story that you read? What happened, who were the main characters?
2. What was the "uncanny" element in the story?
3. How did the writer attempt to put the reader off balance?

Writing

The classic television show could not be characterised as horror or science fiction though it did dabble in both in particular episodes. The Twilight Zone was effective because it dealt with real human fears and worries. Use the following steps to create a story in . . .The Twilight Zone!

1. Create a character, noting their age, gender, job, family, personality, and anything else you think might be important.

2. What is your character's greatest fear?

3. The story: Your character encounters their greatest fear. How do they react? How are they going to deal with it?

Good Luck!

# Historical

Before Reading:

1.Why do writers and filmmakers set their stories in the past?
2. Does a "Historical" story have to be accurate about the period in which it is set? Why or why not?
3. What historical periods are popular with writers and filmmakers? Why?

Read one or more of the stories in the Historical section of the *Trust Me Too* collection.

After Reading:

1. When was the story you read set?
2. How did the writer establish the historical setting? Find three examples.
3. Was it clear what was made up and what was real?

Writing

Pick one of the following years or choose your own:

1399
1605
1788
1832
1915
1968

Research your year and think about where you might set your story. Consider the following questions:

1. What kind of character or characters might work well in a story set in this year?
2. What was going on? How might it have affected your characters?
3. What was life like in the period you are writing about?
4. What did people wear? What did they do? What had been invented? What had and what hadn't? (It's easy to make an error here!)

Remember that the historical period is important but you still have to tell a good story. Start with the characters, remember to introduce a problem or conflict to be resolved, and start add historical details.

Good Luck!

# Humour

Before Reading:

1. Make a list of the things that make you laugh
2. Why do people find different things funny?
3. What's the funniest movie you've ever seen? What's the funniest book you've ever read? What made them so funny?

Read Doug McLeod's "I am an Author"

1. How does he create humour in this story?
2. How would you describe this style of humour?

Writing

Nothing is trickier for writers than comedy. Because humour is a very personal aspect of human consciousness, it is almost impossible to write something that everyone will find funny. So what should you do if you want to write a humorous piece?

Write something that *you* find funny!

If it makes you laugh, that's one person who enjoyed it and chances are that others will too. Trying to write something like an imitation of a funny film or television show will only work if it truly makes you smile while you are writing.

Activity:

Tell a joke to the person next to you.

Why is the joke funny? Is it the unexpected punch line? Is it the sheer inappropriateness of it? Surprise is an important part of humour.

Activity:

Think of a funny story that you have told about your own experiences. What is the humorous element in the story? Could you use it in a fictional tale?

Start writing your story. It can be about anything you like as long as it makes you laugh!

Good Luck!

# Sports

Before Reading:

1. Why does sport work so well in books and movies?
2. With a partner, make a list of sports stories and movies. What do they have in common?
3. What sports stories have been in the news? Why are they of interest?

Read one or more of the Sports stories in the *Trust Me Too* collection

After Reading:

1.Describe what happened in the story you read?
2. Who was the main character? How did they change in the story? What did they learn?
3. What did the story say about sports in general?

Writing

Some Ideas:

1. Sports stories are inspired by actual sports events. Look through the sports section of a newspaper. Can you find anything that you could use to write a story?

2. Sports stories are also often drawn from a writer's own experiences. Can you think of a dramatic moment that you could employ for a story? Don't like sports? Great – some of the best sporting tales come from those who have no interest whatsoever in participating!

3. One of the most memorable aspects of JK Rowling's Harry Potter series was the Quidditch game that she invented as the main pastime at Hogwarts. Invent a new sport and tell a story about a match.

4. In partners, create a card game based on a sport that you enjoy.

Good Luck!

# Poetry

Before Reading:

1. How is poetry different to prose?
2. What are some famous poems?
3. Does a poem have to rhyme? Why or why not?
3. What are your favourite song lyrics? Why do you like them?

Remember, when reading, poetry to use the punctuation. If you simply read a poem line by line, it may not make sense. Try to read it aloud as though you are reading prose. This may make the poem clearer.

Read one or more of the poems in the *Trust Me Too* collection.

After Reading:

1. What was the poem about?
2. How did the poet create "Rhythm" in the poem? Was it simply the rhymes or did they use other techniques as well?
3. Describe the language of the poem. What effect was the writer looking for?

Writing

Writing poetry is not difficult and is a good way to get your ideas down on paper. The only real rule about writing poetry is that you need to find a way to create rhythm. Think of your poem like a song except that you don't have music over which to sing the lyrics. You have to create the "music" yourself.

Poems are measured in "meter" which is the length of the line and by the number of lines in a "stanza". Look back at the poem that you read. Is there a pattern? Are the lines long or short? How long are the stanzas?

Try this:

1. Write down some words on a blank page. They could be an idea or an image or a short description of action.

2. Write down another line of similar length that adds information the first image. You now have two lines of your poem.

3. The next two lines should somehow echo the first two, either by rhyme or repetition. When you have finished them, you will have written a four-line stanza.

4. Start a new stanza. Don't second guess yourself or stop because you think it doesn't make sense. There will be plenty of time to edit and rewrite once you have finished. Just keep writing.

5. When you have finished, read your poem to a partner. Don't show it to them, make them listen and read slowly so that they get a sense of your poem. What do they retain once you have finished? What did they like? What wasn't completely clear?

Good Luck!