

Glitch Teacher's Notes

From the Illustrator

When I read the text for *Glitch*, my first reaction was that there was absolutely no hint at what Glitch was meant to be, apart from a bug. That leaves a few hundred thousand possibilities, because I wanted him to be a real bug, not something made up. After all, there are more bug and beetle species on earth than any other type of creature, so I had plenty to choose from.

Michelle's lovely description of Glitch's personality gave me the clues I needed. He's pretty much Obsessive-Compulsive, a worrier, a nervous wreck. I needed something that *looked* nervous, scared, maybe downhearted, because he feels like he always ruins everything. So naturally, I thought "Weevil!"

Now this is where being a zoologist in a former life helps – I know heaps about animals. And weevils are the most worried, depressed and kind of cute beetles there are – just look at that nose! Ok, it's actually a proboscis, but it sure looks sad. So Glitch was a weevil, but what sort should I use? Obviously an Aussie, and the choice was easy – The Botany Bay Weevil. It's the most colourful, one of the largest, and also famous (among beetle-people) for being the first Australian insect ever scientifically described. It was collected by Joseph Banks in 1770 during Captain Cook's first voyage to Australia. So there.

June was easy. A June bug is the common name for a type of scarab beetle found in North America. The most famous scarab in Australia is the Christmas beetle, which comes in a beautiful range of colours. I chose the bright green form so that June would stand out against the grey/blues I wanted to use for the rubbish dump, and to match the bright personality that Michelle had written for her.

No other characters are directly mentioned by Michelle, but of course the world of creepy-crawlies is full of great characters. A dump is the perfect place to meet a lot of them. Glitch and June don't actually belong in a dump – they're vegetarians. Glitch feeds on wattles, June on eucalypts. But, hey, they're building *billycarts* – I think I can get away with moving them to a dump! Let's just say they work there, and have lunch in the trees around the dump. But the rest of the gang could certainly be found there. Just for my own amusement, and to help me give them character, I named all the other creatures, except the ants – just too many of them – and the worm, but since he couldn't even see the race, I didn't think he'd mind.

The cockroach was just Roach. Native cockroaches are actually very nice insects, quite clean, and rarely found in your home. The nasty ones in your kitchen are all the introduced ones, and the biggest, fattest, most annoying one is the American Cockroach. That's Roach.

The snail was Squint, for some reason I can't quite remember. Something about the eyes on stalks.

The silverfish was Slip. They're wriggly, slippery little characters. I hate them because they eat paper, especially expensive watercolour paper. Also coffee and dandruff – weird!

The flies were all Zorf, as in "Buzz orf!" Enough said.

The mosquito was Scratch, because I'm very allergic to mozzie bites.

The Giant Blue Robber Fly, who wins the race by a nose, I mean, a proboscis, became the GBR; a bit like the BFG, only smaller.

The centipede started out without a name, because they are actually quite nasty – don't get bitten, they're quite poisonous – and I couldn't find a fun thing about them. So he just became *The Centipede*. (Ominous music chord!)

And then there's my favourite of all of them – the Dung Beetle. He had to be Dug. (Not Doug, please.)

All of the characters can be found on the endpapers, rather more realistically than in the story, and at their real sizes. Squint has been there, if you look carefully.

This is the third book I've illustrated with Ford Street, the other two being *The Poppy*, which I also wrote, and *Spark*, written by Adam Wallace. The one thing they all have in common is that there are no white pages or spaces for the text. Every bit of every page of the story is painted, with pale areas left for the text to be placed over. I love the text and art to be completely mixed in together. It's a *picture* book – the words and art work together, and I don't think they should be separated. Of course, there are certain designs for particular stories where separating them works perfectly, but if I can, and if it works for that story, I'll always integrate them. In *The Poppy*, the words weren't over the art, but the backgrounds were all black, with white writing.

Making the billycarts was really hard. Glitch and June are in reality about 3 cm long – I made them a little larger, about 4 cm, because I discovered that finding rubbish of the correct size to be used in construction was quite difficult. I wanted sim cards, plastic toys, credit cards, washers, nuts and bolts, rubber bands, straws, toothpaste and other types of tubes; all the rubbish of our disposable world that was both small *and* recognisable. Making the characters a bit larger meant they could use all those things. I had suggestions to use smart phones and DVD's, but they are all too big. But mini mp3 players are perfect, and there are 60mm diameter mini CDs, (even though most mini ones are 80mm, which was a bit big for the wheels of Glitch's billycart.) A fair bit of chewing gum would be needed to hold the some bits of the billycarts together, but I figured there would plenty lying around.

From the Author

The idea for *Glitch* came to me when my boys were trying to explain to me what a 'glitch' meant in a computer game. The thing I found most interesting was that it wasn't always a bad thing, and could sometimes have a hidden benefit. When I was growing up, if there was a problem with the computer, we called it a bug. I put the two ideas together and Glitch the bug was created.

What if I wrote a story about a bug who couldn't do anything right, and who kept trying hard but getting nowhere. He would obviously have to live on a rubbish heap but I wanted him to have something to do that would prove to himself he was more than his mistakes. When I was a little girl, my grandfather would take me to the dump and we would often come back with more things than we would throw away. He was from the bush and was a huge advocate for reusing and recycling. Being bug sized made it a bit difficult to build too many bigger items and it would have to be bug sized.

The idea for a billycart race came to me after I heard about the annual billycart races that are held annually all around Australia. It's a great way to reuse items, as well as a fantastic way to build teamwork and resilience. It would be a perfect way for my bug to get over his anxiety of always making mistakes. All he needed was a teammate. June was created to be the calm to Glitch's crazy. We all need that one person who can make us see more clearly when things seem to be getting out of control.

Andrew was like my June Bug while making the story. I really didn't have a specific illustration style in mind and I was happy with an artist to run with the story line and make it something they could put their own special style to. I am like this with most of my stories. Picture books are half words, three quarters pictures and the illustrator needs to fall in love with the story as much as I am so we can work together to make it something we will both be proud of. Andrew would email me all the roughs and I got to see what my characters looked like. It was like meeting a pen pal for the first time.

Questions for students

1. Glitch and June are the only characters who have names. What would you name some of the other characters?
2. Glitch and June are about 3 to 4 cm long. Everything around them is at the same scale. Can you identify what Glitch used to make his billycart? (For teachers: mini mp3 player, rubber band, two biro tops, long threaded bolt, two washers and small bolt as an axle for the front wheel, soldering wire, plastic bottle top, ear phones, coat hanger wire for the rear axle and to hold up the ear phones, two mini CDs and two more washers for the back wheels, chewing gum for both sets of wheel axles, ring pull tab for June to hold on to when braking.)
3. Can you make Glitch's billycart? Send a photo to Ford Street if you can!
4. What other bits of rubbish have the other racers used? Can you find a mints box, cotton reels, AAA batteries, a cigarette lighter, a sim card, dental floss, a black-head remover, lolly pops, a thick shake straw, and a tube of acne cream?
5. Design your own billycart as if you were Glitch. Remember – you are only 4 cm long!
6. Dug the Dung Beetle doesn't appear in the text, but he appears often in the story. What is he doing, and how does he help to show that time is passing?
7. Dug the Dung Beetle is always in the background or in shadow, until the very last picture, when we see him clearly for the first time. What do you think he represents? (For teachers: perseverance.)
8. The Giant Blue Robber Fly was big and mean looking, and so a good choice for Glitch's competition. What in its name hints that maybe it didn't race fairly? (For teachers – Glitch was robbed!)
9. What other racer looks like it didn't race fairly, since everyone was supposed to be riding a billycart? Do you think it matters, when all the creatures are so different? Could you write the rules for such a race?
10. What other characters can you think of that might live in a dump?
11. Glitch is a bug who uses the principles of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Can you identify any ways you can implement this into your classroom or home routine?
12. Do you think the story would be different if it was written from June's point of view?. (Texts and the contexts in which they are used Identify the point of view in a text and suggest alternative points of view (ACELY1675))
13. Glitch would lock himself in his house when he was feeling anxious. Do you think there were other ways he could deal with his feelings? (Being healthy, safe and active sub-strand Describe and apply strategies that can be used in situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe (ACPPS035))

14. Is Glitch weak or strong? Why? (Personal responses to the ideas, characters and viewpoints in texts Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596))

15. Australia has a lot of rubbish dumps. How does Australia's lifestyle contribute to this? What are some other places in the world that have problems with too much rubbish? (Geography The main climate types of the world and the similarities and differences between the climates of different places (ACHASSK068))

16. How would you make a billycart using only recycled materials?

17. There is a story happening in the background. Can you identify the extra characters and make up their own identity and separate stand alone stories?