

# Psychologists for Peace (South Australia)

an Interest Group of



## 2011 Children's Peace Literature Award: Winner and shortlisted books

### Summary of the Winning Entry:

***Arnie Avery*** by Sue Walker (Walker Books)

Arnie is a boy who is about to turn 13 in a family still struggling with the accidental death of his older brother. There is conflict within the family as they are all trying not to upset each other but in the process, feeling isolated. Arnie also has to decide on his response to the school bully. There are excellent descriptions of the fear of expected physical pain, and of Arnie's capacity for self-analysis. He initiates solutions by accepting help from his father to talk about the things that are troubling him; his best friend Belly is also an important resource. His solution to the bullying offers an effective alternative to violence and one which maintains his self-respect and that of his peers.

### Summaries of the Shortlisted Books:

***Alice-Miranda at School*** by Jacque Harvey (Random House Australia)

Alice-Miranda is a resilient, self-confident and determined 7 and ¼ year old who has just started at boarding school. Things do not seem to be quite as they should be, but Alice-Miranda does not accept the status quo. She attempts to resolve a variety of problems for herself and others through a range of strategies. She is kind and models positive active behaviour in handling others and resolving conflict. She tries to work out all the problems by herself, and at times enlists the assistance of others. In the end the values of friendship, loyalty, compassion and hope prevail. Likened by some to a modern-day Pippi Longstocking, this book is an amusing tale for young readers.

***I found a friend & my friend found me*** by Beth Norling (Viking - an imprint of Penguin Books)

Two children are looking for friendship. They meet when they are walking their dogs and then find that they have fun doing lots of activities together, becoming special friends. One day the children are unkind to each other and they decide they are fine playing by themselves until they realize it's just not as much fun. Saying sorry to each other restores the friendship. This picture book for young children reflects the value of making and keeping friends, even though there may be disagreements along the way. Being able to resolve conflict by saying sorry is a lifeskill that can be developed from an early age.

***Ishmael and the Hoops of Steel*** by Michael Gerard Bauer (Omnibus)

The third book in Bauer's Ishmael Leseur trilogy takes Ishmael and his four great friends through Years 11 and 12 at their Catholic boys' college with all the concomitant responsibility and end-of-an-era nostalgia. James Scobie is now captain of both House and School and all the energies and ingenuity of the friends are focused on galvanising their lacklustre House into winning the House cup for Ms Tarango, who has been their champion and inspiration

throughout their schooldays. The book triumphantly models the value of participation at every level while continuing to provide attractive models of ethical behaviour and imaginative, non-violent conflict resolution. The Year 12 play is *Hamlet*, and the book is organised around quotations from the play, including the title reference - *Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel*. The quotation aptly introduces a novel full of the feel-good warmth of friendship and telling examples of the kinds of support true and caring friends can provide for one another. All three of the *Ishmael* books have now featured on Children's Peace Literature Award shortlists, with the hilarious first, *Don't Call Me Ishmael*, winning the award in 2007.

***Matty Forever*** by Elizabeth Fensham (University of Queensland Press)

Bill moves to a new town with his mother and meets his neighbour, the indomitable and inventive Matty who puts him through a range of "tests", including eating snake, in order for him to become a member of her "club". He and his mother are quickly and warmly welcomed into Matty's household by her extended and unconventional family. To cement their friendship Bill and Matty share secrets with each other, not to be revealed to anyone. A new girl joins Bill's class at school, however, and he is captivated by her appearance and confidence, and by her family wealth and status. The new girl demands Bill's exclusive friendship and allegiance and Bill reveals Matty's secret to her with devastating results for Matty. Bill recognises his mistake and takes steps to make amends to Matty even though at his own expense.

This is a great story for primary aged readers about friendship, loyalty, trust and tolerance. The conflict between friends is resolved not only by Bill's learning and actions but also by Matty's understanding and acceptance.

***Shrieking Violet*** by Emma Quay (Scholastic)

Violet is the baby of the family, always interrupting her older sister's attempts to gain their mother's attention. Whether it is falling over, crying or simply being saved from imminent trouble, Violet's needs are constant. Frustration and resentment bubble over as big sister shrieks, "Violet always ruins everything!" While mother offers comfort, little Violet offers tissues! It is only then that the older sister finds a way of including Violet in a cooperative game. *Shrieking Violet* is a realistic, humorous and touching picture book that captures family dynamics with simple illustrations and few words.

***What Now Tilda-B*** by Kathryn Lomer (University of Queensland Press)

Tilda lives in a small rural town in Tasmania, is 15 and about to complete Year 10. She has some major decisions to make – leave school to work or leave home to complete her schooling. While riding home along the beach she discovers a huge seal lying on the sand and this starts a train of events which ultimately help to make up her mind about her future. In the meantime, however, her life as a teenager is complicated by conflict between her parents, a clash between a long term friend and a newly found friend, a boyfriend she is not sure is right for her and a bully who threatens her and her friend. Tilda does not solve all of these problems but resolves the conflict between her friends with directness and sympathy, does not shy away from being honest with her boy friend and recognises the reasons behind the bully's behaviour. With a background of environmental and social issues, this book is a good read demonstrating the importance of loyalty, acceptance, empathy and the suspension of judgment in the development of relationships and the understanding of others.