

SUE WALKER
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH - CHILDREN'S PEACE LITERATURE AWARD - 2011

It's an honour to receive the 2011 Children's Peace Literature Award for *Arnie Avery*, and I'd like to acknowledge the Australian Psychological Society, and in particular, the Psychologists for Peace, for their commitment to promoting peace in our communities through the Children's Peace Literature Award.

We all know that books can leave lasting impressions. A good book can enlighten – it can lead us to question our values and behaviours – and sometimes its characters can mean so much to us, it's almost as if we know them. Some of the books I read in primary school are imprinted on my memory, and I know they've played a part in shaping my thoughts about the world and the people in it. But just as books can make an impression on our lives, an author's life can also make an impression on their books. Because as with most writers, my experiences often creep in the story...and so it was with *Arnie Avery*. I thought it was relevant today to share something that happened to me in primary school because it's an example of a conflict that may be faced by children, and in some way, it did influence my writing of this book.

When I was 12 years old, my sister came home from school with a message for me. She told me that a girl named Donna wanted to fight me. It was all arranged...and all I had to do was go the park behind Donna's house that afternoon where she'd be waiting. Now, Donna wasn't very big, but she was tough, and I was exactly the opposite. I was shy and quiet, and I definitely wasn't the kind of girl who got into fights. So how did I feel when my sister told me the news about the fight? Well, first I was confused because I didn't know why Donna wanted to fight me, but more than anything, I was scared. Terrified, actually. And some how I think that's how most of us would feel in that situation. Conflict and violence are confusing and scary, and their consequences can be devastating. And I think these are all reasons the work of the Psychologists for Peace is so important – to present children with alternatives to violence and to promote peace and an understanding of others, so that children can carry this knowledge with them into their adult lives.

Now, obviously I survived my conflict with the girl named Donna, or I wouldn't be standing here today, and I'd like to thank my Publisher, Walker Books, for choosing to publish *Arnie Avery*. I'm proud to be associated with such an esteemed Publisher of children's books. And once again, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the Australian Psychological Society and the Psychologists for Peace. The Children's Literature Peace Prize represents a milestone in my career. It's a thrill to receive such an important award, and to have *Arnie Avery* stand alongside the previous prize winning books from some of Australia's finest authors. Thank you.