

## Reviews of 'I Am JACK'



'I Am Jack' celebrates kids. Unique, valuable kids who deserve the right to take pride in their own special qualities. Bullying takes this right away from them.

In the context of family and school life, 'I Am Jack' sensitively explores how bullying attacks the very basis of a child's self esteem. Bullying isolates and victimises children. 'I Am Jack' shows them that they are not alone and that they can win against bullying.

'I Am Jack' is children's literature at its most effective. Beautifully written, revealing the quirkiness of kids, it is funny, loving, moving. It gives adults and children a remarkable understanding into an area that challenges children's belief in themselves.

This is a book children should read because kids are unique.

Life Education Australia.



### **Outback Australia Reviews I Am Jack as a Major Success**

I am Walgett Shire's Youth Development Officer who was instrumental in bringing the Monkey Baa Company out to our remote communities. Just a few lines to express and offer not only my sincere thanks but our Shire Council's and the 400 plus young people who experienced (most for the first time) the live theatre

productions of I am Jack.

What a show... The professionalism displayed by Tim McGarry (actor) and the crew was something rarely seen in these remote parts of the world ... we need to resource more opportunities like this to engage our young people. It was also great to meet Susanne Gervay in the Ridge (Lightning Ridge), what a lady, inspiring to say the least!!!

The concept of addressing a social issue while promoting the Arts is an ingenious approach to creating awareness and getting the message through.

The performances in Walgett and Collarenebri saw the audiences approximately 90% of indigenous young people delight in the concept of "in your face" entertainment, in the promotion of awareness to social issues, and in Lightning Ridge {which I might add is full on multi cultural... 58 different nationalities in the school} totally engaged by Tim's special {has that man got talent!} performance skills.

We, as Council provided venues and youth workers to assist with each performance ... I regard the flow on effects just as important as the shows and to my knowledge all the schools are utilizing the teacher resources and the kids are still talking about it.

If we can sustain our approach to bullying in our remote communities it will benefit all, and the schools have the resource kit to revisit if required.

A few special moments I absorbed during the project:

- A middle aged teacher from Collarenebri, approached Tim following a performance, tears in his eyes, and stated .."I was Jack" he spoke of how he was bullied at school for many years.
- My sons young George and Joshua, aged 13 and 11 continually bring up the subject of poor Jack, when playing handball yelling out Jack, Jack, and Jack, proof if my kids got it I can assure you, lots of other young people certainly did.
- A group of young Indigenous girls asked me why George, don't this sort of thing happen more often. ... I applaud ... the efforts of the Monkey BAA Company for the committed approach to dealing and raising awareness to social issues within our society and creating a genuine interest in the arts.

*George McCormick, Youth Development Officer, Walgett Shire Council.*

### **Artistic Director Outback Theatre for Young People**

**OUTBACK  
THEATRE  
FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE**

In the finest tradition of the one person show Tim McGarry gave a stunningly good performance. It was like watching Billy Crystal for primary school kids: terrific range of characters, excellent direction, simple in terms of no need for pyrotechnics and yet so sophisticated in terms of requiring the audience to invest a great deal of belief and understanding of the theatrical devise of the one person show.

Lot's of kids had questions such as "how did you change your voice and act all those different characters?" Some comments I over heard at the end of the show:

- From 2 school kids aged about 8 "That was COOL!!"
- From 2 teachers: "That was so worth it!!"

I think they were from a group who had travelled from a long way away. The moment in the show when my heart sank was when Jack's friends Chris and Paul say "We can't play handball with you anymore. We can't be seen with you - we can't take the risk" and Jack just says" ok. yeah, I understand" He doesn't rail against them - he's just lost. The poor wee fella. Well done.

*Adam Kronenberg - Artistic Director Outback Theatre for Young People.*



**Reviews of 'I Am Jack' can be found in  
Aussie Reviews**

'I Am Jack' –

[www.aussiereviews.com/article1169.html](http://www.aussiereviews.com/article1169.html)

I Am Jack should be compulsory reading for every parent, teacher and child aged 8 to 12. It is a truly wonderful book.



### **I Am Jack by Susanne Gervay**

Do you recall being bullied and teased at school? Can you remember feeling isolated in your pain, too terrified to unburden for fear of retribution by the perpetrator?

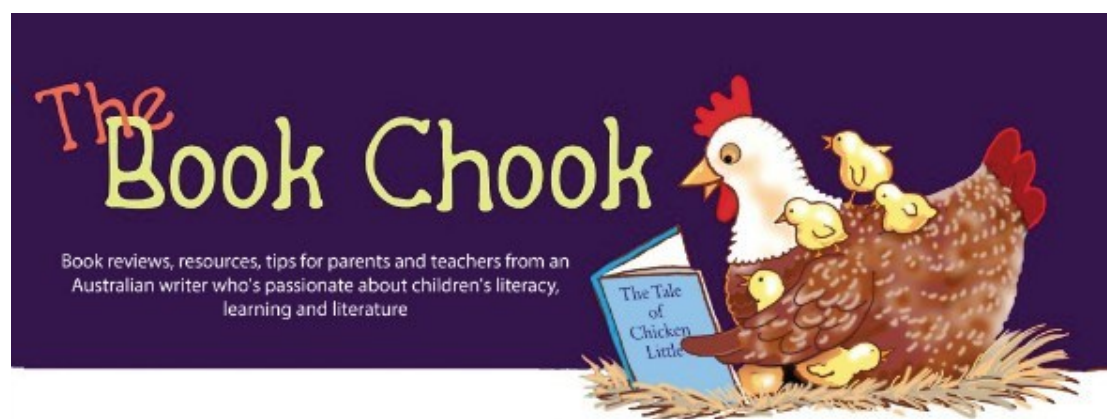
'I Am Jack' is told by one such victim - an intelligent, creative and discerning 11-year-old whose desperate attempts to reveal all to his mum are thwarted by his chaotic everyday life. Jack's relationship with his mother and the rest of the family is touching and revealing, but nobody seems to want to listen to him. His fear of school and those who taunt him mercilessly results in his attempts to feign illness. Gervay's analogy of a volcano exploding in his head is both vivid and apt.

Jack is triumphant in the end - but read the book to find out how. Bullying is a significant issue yet Jack's story is accessible and hilarious. An absolute must.

*Good Reading Magazine*

### **Parentbytes - review of I Am Jack by Susanne Gervay from**

This excellent book about bullying, told in the first person, focuses on the often overlooked insidious taunting and teasing that bullies are so adept at inflicting on their victims. The author succeeds in making this topic accessible to young readers by using humour and quirky illustrations to offset this heavy subject. It also recognizes the importance of family support and that schools need to respond to this problem in a proactive way ..... This important book should be read, discussed and celebrated by children, parents and educators alike.



## **I Am Jack and Super Jack By Susanne Gervay**

Reviewed by Susan Stephenson, The Book Chook

Blogging about kids' literature and literacy

One of my favourite books ever is I am Jack, by Susanne Gervay (Angus and Robertson/Harper Collins Publishers 2000). A couple of months ago, I was lucky enough to see I am Jack performed on stage in Brisbane (Queensland, Australia), and what a treat that was! In my post about it, I described the performance as having "lots of opportunities for laughter, but also moments when 150 children sat transfixed and made not a sound."

It's difficult to pinpoint why I like the novel, I am Jack, so much. I guess it's a combination of factors. Firstly must come its theme - bullying. I loathe the consequences of bullying and applaud Gervay for writing a book that shows victims of bullying that they're not alone in that scary, lonely place. Her honesty and matter-of-factness make this book accessible to kids who may not be able to speak up for themselves. Next is humour. Does that seem to conflict with such a serious theme? Not at all with Gervay's deft handling. There is drama, tension, conflict AND humour as we get to know Jack and his family.

That brings me to character - Gervay's characters are thoroughly believable. I'm sure I know Nanna - enjoys a chat, a little hard-of-hearing, loves to score a bargain or ten at the shops - and all the other characters are just as real. Even when the bully George made me furious on Jack's behalf, he was always three dimensional, not a stereotype.

Above all though, as with many great books, I think I am Jack shines because of its authentic voice. From the first lines, we hear the narrator as a young boy. We experience his anguish; share his corny jokes one minute and pant with him the next as he runs to escape the bullies. Jack grows, changes, learns lots about who he is and what is important to him during the book, and through him, so do we.

Super Jack (Angus and Robertson/Harper Collin 2003) continues with the great characters we met in I am Jack. This time we experience the highs and lows of Jack's life against the backdrop of a holiday on the Gold Coast. Super Jack introduces a new problem for Jack in the form of Leo, his sort-of-step-dad Rob's son. Jack also must cope with worries about Nanna's health, his growing affection for Anna, and Rob moving in. He's such a great kid though, you just know he'll sort it out in the end!

Cathy Wilcox's illustrations are only occasional in what is really a chapter book. We find them most often as chapter headers. But there are also some quirky, comic-style sketches that contribute an extra visual element to Gervay's word pictures.

Both I am Jack, and Super Jack are perfect for kids 8-12. They deal with serious issues in a light-hearted way, but above all, are great stories from a superb story teller. If you'd like to take a peek inside, the Harper Collins site offered me the option of letting you browse inside the book via my blog in the widget below.

Susanne Gervay's own website adds real value to the books. You can check out a cute trailer of I am Jack, link to find Monkey Baa stage show performances, get more information about bullying, and discover a ton of useful literacy activities tied to the books. The great news here too, is that US readers can share the fun - it's published in the USA by Tricycle Press, an imprint of Random House USA, and has been translated into Korean, Bahasa and Vietnamese.

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