REMARKABLE RESEARCHERS

Writing is deeply personal. I always base my books on truth, even when it is called fiction.

I write from Kindy to year 12 and I invite you all into my life because story matters and you matter.

Ships in the Field and Heroes of the Secret Underground are my family’s escape from Nazism

Parrot Palace and Elephants Have Wings comes from my extensive friendship with the Indian communty and my travels to India.

Researching is creative. You might not think so. Wrong. It’s your special way of thinking and looking around you and the world.

Class activities

1. So why do you want to write?
2. Brainstorm your ideas. Hear others.
3. Select ideas that are age appropriate. A kindy child might say rabbit. A senior student might say war or climate change.
4. Give examples of reasons people write or illustrate and talk about it and their interests and passions. It could be anything from rugby to the movies to scrabble to … they know what they want to explore.

The students’ interest is EVERYTHING.

I love those naughty sulphur cockatoos who fly around my terrace and in the park. It inspired me to write Who’s the Gang on my Street?

What inspires the students? Makes them laugh and cry and think?

1. Don’t accept the answer ‘I don’t know.’ Suggest a list:- pets, sport, troubles at school, home, the world, games, cooking, family, courage, bullying …etc

Food is always in my research because I love food. That’s why in *Parrot Palace* there’s cabbage rolls and strudel because my background is Hungarian. I didn’t need to do much research on that. But there’s Indian food because the Indian -Aussie kid is Hari. I had to research that! It’s maybe the reason for a feast of food. That’s the best research

1. Research – fiction or non-fiction needs integrity. So make sure your facts are real.
2. When I was In India, I had such a strong sense of the beautiful colours. I had photos of the spiritual red and the amazing saris. There are lots of resources in books, online. Look at the Indian shops which are filled with exotic dresses.

Class activities

1. Research a place they have travelled, or is part of their cultural heritage. Where relevant and available, they can do interviews, locate images, access family photos, dive into archives etc.
2. They should find what tempts their curiosity. It is not research for the sake of research. It is discovery, reaction, their response and formulating story.
3. The first time I visited India I came back with the picture book *Elephants Have Wings.* I had spoken to people in the temples and saw elephants in the rivers. It became deeply symbolic and opened ideas of peace, despite the challenges of war and climate change. There is non fiction in the book which opens more ideas, from saving elephants, protecting the tree of life, needing water, discovering what life means. Teachers can:-
* Use this elephant illustration for class, it can be colouring in, but it also inspires philosophy and story at varied levels.
* Schools use *Elephants Have Wings* for Harmony Day and it becomes a community and also personal display.
1. Research family history. As you know *Ships in the Field* is my personal yet universal story relevant for research on refugees finding home. While it is my family’s journey, everyone understands how scary leaving the home you love, bombs falling, facing a new country.

What is your family’s journey?

Research, interview, read books, find photos, talk to your family. So much to think about and chose what interests YOU.

*Heroes of the Secret Underground*  is one of my important books. Imagine a time-slip from Australia in the year of Peace 2000 to Nazi 1944 Budapest and meeting your grandparents as kids.

As the child of refugees, I write to unlock pathways for young people to be heroes.
Inspired by my parents and the courage.I went to Hungary. You could have to online.I found the iron shoes on the banks of the Danube. It became the heart of the novel. But the treasure was that I had a very old letter from my mother when she had escaped Hungary and was in a displacement camp. She was so afraid. She said everyone was mad there, because they had lost family and friends. The old photos were beautiful. When were they taken? How did my parents get to Australia? So many mysteries to unlock.

Classroom Activities

1. Read a fictional novel like *Heroes of the Secret Underground* or *Pavana* by Deborah Ellis (Afghanistan) or *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (Nazi Germany) *To Kill A MockingBird* by Harper Lee (South USA)etc
2. Take notes to think about in your writing.
3. Research your personal history.

My just release book is *Guess How I Was Born?*

*Guess How I Was Born* explores diverse families and the many ways children come into the world. This picture book is warm and funny, but at its core it accepts all families are unique and important.

Class Activities

1. Research your own family.
2. Interview relevant adults
3. Uncover why you are important.

A blank screen or page is confronting

To help your students it is useful to provide opening lines or read prologues.

Sample opening lines:-

1. I want to be the best.
2. The music was slowing, the song was almost over, but …
3. It began as a mistake
4. Wandering through the graveyard it felt like something was watching me.
5. A frightened cry ….
6. The dog barked.
7. A shiver raced down my spine .
8. What have you done? He/she stared at me.
9. Everything stopped,.
10. ‘Just shut up. Shut up.’
11. He wandered aimlessly along the creek/through the streets/along the cliff.
12. The shot blasted through the streets
13. The phone rang. ‘Hello,’ I said, ‘Hello.’ No one was there.
14. Cold and wet, tired and exhausted she made her way through the flood.

From *Heroes of the Secret Underground*

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, 1944

WINTER

Banging shakes the foundations of the house …

Heavy black boots stamp down the hallway.

Research opens the mind and provides pathways to uncover the great interest of young people. Remarkable Researchers can be from kindies to senior students.



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