



## National Year of Reading 2012

# 'Love 2 Read' ... especially about nature

Continuing the biodiversity articles in Otherways by Jeanie Clark

Do you love reading – books, magazines, hard copy, digital text? Do you have overflowing book-shelves? Do you love visiting libraries and book stores? It seems to me to be one of the privileges of home educating that we can spend a lot more time on shared and pleasurable reading than those traditionally schooling. I continue to be amazed at the way our son laps up books, and is able to do so, because time in his day allows it. So have you considered the place of reading in your home education? Why read?

### National Year of Reading

2012 has been declared the National Year of Reading (NYR). The logo gives some reasons for reading. Like all logos, it can be used to discuss concepts in communication. Why was a flower – a living thing – chosen? Why the theme 'love2Read'? Do the 'petals' fully cover what you get from reading? How would you classify your reading by the categories of the 'petals'?

I challenged our 16 year old to reflect on the things that he has read by the 'petals'. It led to a discussion about the way some of these words can be interpreted. He created the diagram above to collate his ideas, so they could be shared with others. Knowing how much science fiction he reads, I was impressed that, when he reflected on his reading, it covered many types and a variety from current, back to primary years' sources.


My selection would be quite different. For example, *Pride and Prejudice* and the *Poldark* series would be under 'Escape' and a delightful picture book *Tom's Tree* would be under 'Cry'. I wondered what other youth and children would come up with. If you'd like to have a go at it, please send it in to *Otherways* to share!

### Reading matters

The NYR has some serious national concerns behind it. In 2006, it was found that nearly half of adult Australians didn't have the literacy skills needed for every day life and work! In 2010, three-quarters of major employers of the Australian Industry Group<sup>2</sup> said low levels of literacy (and numeracy) were a problem in their workforces! The Federal government responded with a four-year plan of literacy initiatives<sup>3</sup> – the NYR is one of these.

So why would home educators want to participate in the NYR? These are its three objectives:

- For all Australians to understand the benefits of reading as a life skill and a catalyst for well-being.
- To promote a reading culture in every home.
- To establish an aspirational goal for families, of

<b>Escape</b> Any book I read to get away from the world (any book not used for studying)— <i>Playfair's Axiom</i> by James Axler, <i>Wrath Squadron</i> by Aaron Allston	<b>Laugh</b> Any book with a funny section can make me laugh— <i>Scarecrow and the Army of Thieves</i> by Matthew Reilly,	<b>Cry</b> Any book that invokes a strong negative reaction— <i>Wolf in the Window</i> by Lucy Daniels
<b>Feel</b> Any book that invokes an emotional response— <i>The Naughtiest Girl Again</i> and <i>Circus Days Again</i> by Enid Blyton		
<b>Grow</b> Any study resource or non-fiction book — eg 'Tertiary path ways' article in <i>Otherways</i>	<b>Explore</b> Any book that makes me read a prequel/sequel is making me explore— <i>Master of Rome</i> by John Stack, <i>I Am Number Four</i> by Pittacus Lore	<b>Discover</b> Any study book but especially a textbook or non-fiction book— <i>The Dam Busters</i> by Paul Brickhill
<b>Question</b> Any study book but especially a textbook or non-fiction book— <i>Essential Cell Biology</i> (Third Edition) by Bruce Alberts	<b>Think</b> Any study book but especially a textbook or non-fiction book— <i>Animal Diversity</i> (Fifth Edition) by Cleveland P. Hickman, <i>Tomorrow When the War Began</i> by John Marsden	<b>Dream</b> Any book that inspires me to do something— <i>The Silver Brumby</i> by Elyne Mitchell, <i>The Man From Snowy River</i> by Banjo Patterson

parents and caregivers sharing books with their children every day.<sup>4</sup>

In my experience, home educating families tend to be already doing these things!

Want to get involved in the NYR? The NYR website is <<http://www.love2read.org.au/>>. It has events, activities, competitions, etc. and there is a monthly e-newsletter available for subscription. Libraries are key places for the delivery of activities for the NYR. Check them out for local events as well as the State Library of Victoria (SLV).

### Reviews

In July, this NYR website had a link to a free issue of the *Good Reading* magazine, which includes many book reviews, for example *Ahead of the Games*, which reviews eight books about the Olympics<sup>5</sup>. Where else can you find book reviews? In *Otherways*, of course – we are fortunate to have *Colita's Couch* and the *Home Education Bookshelf* as regular features, where you discover books that you may then be inspired to read.

But what about particular book reviews? Librarians might be a source of assistance, as might Google. The SLV has '*Inside a Dog*', a website with story outlines and the opportunity to add your own book review there see <<http://www.insideadog.com.au/>>. The *Open Library* website <<http://openlibrary.org>> also has reviews, and an invitation to add to them, as well as book details and where to source copies of them. It has a more global outlook than the SLV one, but both are worth visiting.

### Study Guides

Where can you find ideas for discussion, comprehension and/or reflection on books? If you google 'study guides' with the name of the book, you will find some websites. *Book Rags*, *Gradesaver* and *SparkNotes* are websites

that I have often used. I look for their multiple-choice comprehension quizzes, chapter summaries, plot and character descriptions and ideas for essay (discussion) topics. They can provide a different view of a book and links to more resources. You can take bits out of them to create study materials that will suit your child.

I search for other materials especially for background to books and authors. When we were reading *Robinson Crusoe*, we found out about the shipwrecked sailor that inspired it from the Smithsonian<sup>6</sup>. There was amazing historical/geographical background, including period paintings, for *Children on the Oregon Trail* at <<http://www.mrtripodi.org/students/?p=1488>>. Such freely available reliable materials add depth to reading.

## Nature

What about reading to increase knowledge and appreciation of nature and biodiversity? You may well be doing this already! Last issue, I discussed the science children learn through reading books about farm animals. The same thing can happen with the many story books which inform youngsters about nature and living things in our world, where they live, how they live together and what we can do to help look after them. When this information is covered, it is contributing to the United Nations Decade of Biodiversity (UNDB) Target 1 – for people to be aware of the values of biodiversity (variety of living things) and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably<sup>7</sup>.

Any such information is pretty obvious in non-fiction books, but fiction books may also communicate it. Lucy Daniels is an author of many chapter books who specialises in stories about the needs of particular animals. The *Picture Roo Book*<sup>8</sup> series about lyrebirds, penguins, emus and kookaburras covers their needs and life stories. Their drawings support the information about how and where these creatures live.

Other books may have hidden detail in the illustrations.

*Mike's Bulldozer and the Big Flood*<sup>9</sup> has wattle blossoming by the side of a new road and huge old trees by the river. In *A Year on our Farm*<sup>10</sup> notice the tree changing monthly in this delightfully drawn book.

Some books contain scientific information in both text and illustrations. *Waddle Giggie Gargle*<sup>11</sup> is a wonderful story about the behaviour of magpies in protecting their nest. If you look closely at the pictures, you may be able to help your child see that there is only one gum tree left in the street where magpies can live – all the other trees are not native. What has been lost to the magpies? If you look behind the street at the hillsides, what does this tell you about changes in the environment? How do the people respond to the magpies' behaviour? Creatively! They



willingly change to care for the magpies – they do not chase them away or damage their nest. It illustrates the UNDB theme 'living in harmony with nature' so well and, for Target 1, shows how to sustainably live with magpies.

Where can you find more books to support nature? Under the 'Read4Nature' title, I have begun to create an online resource of books that can raise awareness and appreciation of nature, like those in the photo above. See <[www.enviroed4all.com.au/read4nature](http://www.enviroed4all.com.au/read4nature)>. It will take time to grow it, but it is an aim I have for the NYR and I hope people will find it useful as it develops.

## Encourage

How do you encourage reading? For me, it was:

- 1 Share the reading experience right from a young age, i.e. from babyhood, with lots of animal books!
- 2 Discuss books – and websites – for comprehension, ideas and opinions, growing in their complexity.
- 3 Create our own stories, giving ownership of books.
- 4 Encourage wide reading and plenty of it!
- 5 Support our child in read-a-thons – great for setting targets to increase reading! Three which are open to home educated students each year are the Premier's Reading Challenge, the MS Read-a-thon, and the Home-Ed Winter Read-a-thon. All will be finished for this year by the time this *Otherways* issue comes out, but you can check them out on the web and consider using them next year.

Whether our country needs a focus on reading to raise its literacy levels or not, I think it is inspiring to have a year when we can encourage and share all that can be gained in relaxation and knowledge from reading – traditionally or digitally. Reading is essential to life!

'Love2read book diagram used with permission of Michael Clark  
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## References :

- 1 2006 *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4228.0>
- 2 Survey by the Australian Industry Group <http://www.aigroup.com.au/portal/site/aig/education/workforceliteracy/>
- 3 [http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/gillard/media/releases/pages/article\\_100511\\_173837.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/gillard/media/releases/pages/article_100511_173837.aspx)
- 4 <http://www.love2read.org.au/about-us.cfm>
- 5 In *Good Reading* pages 16-17 found at <http://digital.goodreadingmagazine.com.au/?MembershipID=0#folio=16>
- 6 <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/crusoe.html?c=y&page=3>.
- 7 UNDB Aichi Targets at [www.cbd.int/sp/targets](http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets)
- 8 The *Picture Roo Book* series was written by Pauline Reilly, and published by Kangaroo Press in 1988.
- 9 *Mike's Bulldozer and the Big Flood* by Nan Bodsworth, Puffin Books, Penguin Books, Ringwood. 1994
- 10 *A Year on our Farm* by Penny Matthews Omnibus Books from Scholastic Australia, Norwood, SA 2002
- 11 *Waddle Giggie Gargle* by Pamela Allen Puffin Books, Penguin Books, Ringwood. 1996