# National Literacy and Numeracy Week 2008
## Project Report

**Project title:** Students writeNOW!08

**Project description:** Students writeNOW! is a targeted camp conducted at the Diocese of Broken Bay Outdoor Education Centre - Challenge Ranch. Talented young writers (Year 6) across the Diocesan primary schools are selected to attend a three-day camp incorporating writing workshops conducted by well-known Australian authors, professional story tellers and an illustrator. Students bring a laptop computer supplied by their school and are provided with the support, inspiration, technical skills and environment to produce a piece of narrative, which is published and distributed to students and all primary & secondary school libraries within the diocese.

In addition, the illustrated, published work is archived in the NSW State Library. Students also get the opportunity to engage in outdoor adventure activities, a theme dinner and evening campfire to provide fun, balance and inspiration. One of the significant benefits of bringing students together is the opportunity to develop lasting bonds of friendship, build networks with students of similar passions and talents and the sharing of stories.

**Person responsible for project:** Paul Nield – Education Officer, Challenge Ranch, Diocese of Broken Bay Outdoor Education Centre

**School, region, diocese:** Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay

**Contact person’s email:** paul.nield@dbb.edu.au

**Number of students, teachers, parents, other community members directly involved:**
- In 2008 69 students attended the camp, representing 32 schools.
- Australian author Deborah Abela, professional story teller Julie Mundy-Taylor & illustrator Tullia Price

Education Officers and administrative assistants from the Catholic Schools support the camp including:
- Julie Selkirk (Primary Curriculum Officer), Jason Young (ICLT Education Officer) and Paul Nield (Education Officer Challenge Ranch) develop the program
- Dr Erica Ryan (Ed Officer - Gifted & Talented) created selection criteria guidelines for schools to select students
- Five additional Education Services Officers and two administrative assistants attended the camp at different intervals over the three days of the camp and two days editing following the camp
- Staff from Challenge Ranch assist with student supervision and safe conduct of outdoor activities
- Parents attend a presentation to close the camp.

**Intended literacy and/or numeracy outcomes:**
- To provide a unique learning opportunity for talented Year 6 writers in Diocesan primary schools that promote learning communities, incorporates the use of emerging technologies and demonstrates a high standard of achievement in literacy.
- To publish a record of student work (narratives) as part of the 'students writeNOW!' series.
- To provide teachers with a literacy resource (the Students writeNOW! book) to use in the classroom with students

**Evidence of achievement of intended literacy and/or numeracy outcomes:**
- Narratives are edited and published as part of the ‘Students writeNOW!’ series.
Feedback about making grants available for such projects:
We appreciate the support of the NLNW funding initiative. Many parents have commented and provided written feedback indicating this opportunity would not be available to the children in a school setting.

WORK SAMPLES

The Lion

Amelia Russell
St John the Apostle Catholic Primary,
Narraweena

As soon as he opened his eyes, the lion knew something was wrong. No birds were singing, he was not with his pride and he could not see the sun rising. Strange bright squares hovering above him made him blink. He realised that they were attached to some large flat thing that was covering up the sky. Something wet and sticky was on his paw. Blood. The lion had only ever seen blood on animals that the lionesses had slaughtered and brought to him, never on himself. It was stinging, worse than his eyes had stung when he was a cub and had fallen headfirst into the dirt. He looked around. He was surrounded by rocky walls. He felt dizzy.

Alexander woke up. He had slept in. It didn’t really bother him because of the good catch he had made: a fully grown male lion, leader of his pride. Alexander had witnessed him fight. The lion had been so tired that Alex only needed to shoot a dart at the lion once to knock him out. Victory tasted sweet on his tongue. He leapt out of his bed with such force that he banged his head on the ceiling and crumbled to the floor.

The lion tried to stand, but could not find the energy to lift his own weight. His head was aching. He could not remember what had happened and how he got there. When he strained his mind, he remembered seeing a man.

Alexander stumbled to his feet and rubbed his head. ‘The lion should be awake by now,’ he told himself. He smiled and got dressed then looked in the jewel encrusted mirror he had traded a lion cub for. He had dark brown hair, piercing blue eyes and a small mouth. He smiled, pleased with his appearance. If anyone else was as cruel-looking as him, they would spend thousands of dollars to buy a mask.

Thudding. The lion’s sharp ears picked up the sound long before the man appeared. A deep rumble escaped the lion’s throat: he did not trust this man with a black stick-like object in his hand, a cruel smile upon his face.

Alexander stared at the powerful creature. He held the dart gun forward, prepared to shoot if the lion approached him. He trembled as the lion started to stand. He dropped the gun. He knew that he had to keep the lion quiet or someone might find out about his illegal hobby. He truly hated lions but he had always seemed to be able to control even the most ferocious cat, even if he had to beat it with a whip. So when he was short on money, he caught a lion and eventually he found pleasure in seeing the king of all animals suffer because of him, Alexander. He chucked a carcass at the lion, then left.

The lion did not eat. He longed to return to the long grasses of his home. He missed his pride, especially his young cub. He finally managed to gain the strength to try and return to his family. He looked around for an opening. He went over but fell back with shock. He could not get out. He could see outside, but could not get there.
Alexander could have danced down the street, he was so pleased with himself. He had done it at last, the lion was going away.

The lion was faced with the knowledge that nothing would change his fate. He was never returning to his pride. He would never run freely again. The man walked in.

Alexander felt like feeding himself to the lion he was so angry. He could not believe what he had done. After three entire days of restraining himself from whipping the lion, he had done it. He hit so hard that after just one stroke, blood had flown down the lion’s golden coat. Crimson red puddles had gathered on the floor.

His neck was stinging where the man had hit him. The lion groaned and pulled himself towards the water on the other side of the room. He lapped it up, splashed some on his neck and cringed with pain that burned like fire. The lion collapsed to the ground.

Alexander put down the telephone, a smile danced onto his face. He had made the call and told the lion’s new owner about an injury the lion seemed to have acquired on the back of his neck. They were going to pay the same amount as they were for a completely uninjured lion. Alexander had never mentioned the sore on the lion’s paw. The adoptive parents would arrive the next day.

As soon as he opened his eyes the lion knew something was wrong. He was lying still, but somehow he was moving. He was in a very small room with one of the strange openings that you could see through but not get through. He felt something around his neck. On it, it said, ‘Clive’.

Unlucky Friday Thirteenth

Joseph Jones
St Patrick’s Catholic Primary, Asquith

Ring. Ring. RING. Damn! My alarm clock had awakened me from the most fantastic dream ever. I lifted my heavy eyelids and, using all my energy available, pushed myself out of my warm creaking bed, regretting every second of it. Hardly knowing what grim thought awaited me, I casually strode over to my calendar. My vision was slightly fuzzy, so I rubbed my eyes and looked yet again. “Oh no! There has to be a mistake!” I yelled, but no matter what scenario strode into my head to try to prevent that thought, none of them were true. It was Friday the thirteenth, the most miserable day of the year and I, Kevin Masters, the luckiest and most popular person in my grade at school, had to endure it.

With my reputation at stake I knew I had to protect it. So trying to flush out the thought of bad luck, I opened my door and made my way downstairs where my breakfast was hopefully awaiting me. Steadily walking to the dining room, I realised that there was no breakfast and there was no sight of my mum or little sister Katie. Then, as if my mind had summoned them to the present, bursting through the door came Mum and Katie, not looking as happy as they should be. “Come on, Kevin. Eat breakfast, wash face, brush teeth, pack bag, can’t talk because I slept in!” Whilst Mum was talking I glimpsed her in a sergeant’s uniform shouting at me, the soldier, giving me orders and tasks, which need to be completed. If I were a real soldier I undoubtedly would have bellowed, “SIR! YES SIR!” But I was a tired fifth grader so I yawned and did as I was told.

After all that commotion, to avoid being late for school Mum drove what felt like a hundred kilometres an hour. She dropped me off and took off as fast as the wind to Katie’s preschool. At the same time I desperately hoped that she wouldn’t drive into anyone. I walked into my classroom with fear in my shoulders as I wondered if this day could get any worse. And so it did. If you think getting a D minus isn’t bad for an assignment, then listen to Mr Pendanski giving a lecture on how easy it
was to identify a composite number to a prime number. He’d even say things like, “You children don’t have brains!”

For the remainder of the school day, things went even more horrific. Mrs Fenia, our spelling teacher, asked me to spell ‘BELIEVE’. Spelling wasn’t my best subject and I had completely forgotten all of my spelling rules. With nerves racking my bones, I answered “B-E-L-E-V-E”, only to hear a big “WRONG!” The strained looked on Mrs Fenia’s face told me that I was in deep trouble. Her forehead was turning a bright pink and her veins were expanding. Without another word, Mrs Fenia stubbornly pointed to the door, then quickly back at me. I don’t know sign language but I understood what she meant. Like a hunting dog following its master’s orders I got up and with a sad look on my face made my way steadily to the door, being careful to avoid Mrs Fenia’s ice cold glare, exited the classroom and stood slouched over outside. I pondered in my mind what punishment Mr Kropp, our Principal, would try out on me. I have tried everything to make teachers tear their hair out yet I never mean it. Friday the thirteenth was such a horrible day.

Time passed and eventually the bell for end of school rang. It was like a light in my path. My blindfold had been removed. Finally the worst part of the day was over, or so I thought.

As long as my favourite television program ‘Top Gear’, an outstanding show on cars, was on there was nothing that could stop me from turning on my enormous jet black plasma screen television and kicking my feet back in relaxation. I was very tired so it was my only motivation to get from selfish school to a cozy home. And then, just as the first part of my worn out black shoes touched the glistening white tiles of the front door step, the door quickly opened with a WHOOSH! There in front of me stood Mum, not with a very pleased look on her face.

“Hi Mum,” I said with a tone of happiness. Silence. I could tell that Mum was not happy with me but how was it possible? I did all of my homework yesterday and extra chores. Well, ok, some chores and a portion of homework but I knew what I was doing.

“You’re late,” Mum neutrally answered me.

I was taken aback. Late? I had never been late in my entire life. Picturing in my mind that this wasn’t the situation I decided to let out a little giggle and so, “Ha, ha, ha. Oh, Mum, you really crack me up sometimes. What a joke”.

However despite my hilarious attempt to change Mum’s expression, it remained untouched. “I’m serious,” she informed me. “Look at the time.”

If there was one thing Friday the thirteenth told me, is that you must never be confident with anything you are relying on. Luck wasn’t walking hand in hand with me so facing the consequences I looked at my watch. I realised with humiliation that the time showed four o’clock.

“For being late Kevin, there must be a punishment,” continued Mum. I stubbornly nodded my head in obedience. “Therefore you are strictly forbidden to watch ‘Top Gear’ tonight.” With that, Mum walked down the corridor and out of sight. Really, of all the things that had happened to me today, this was the absolute worst. I was angry, boiling with rage. Words could not describe how furious I was.

Suddenly I lost control of my surroundings and myself. I threw my bag as hard as I could at the wall with a burning desire that it would be damaged by the impact. Without caring, I knocked over a beautifully patterned vase, which had been given as a gift to my mum, but I didn’t care. I sprinted to my room and slammed the door shut so hard that you could have mistaken it for an earthquake. I flung myself onto my bed and buried my head into a pillow. A few seconds later I heard knocking but I lunged for the door and locked it. I just wanted to be alone. Eventually the knocking died away.
After denying my hunger and not eating dinner, I convinced myself to apologise to mum for my awful behaviour. I thought she would reject it and tell me to go away but lucky for me I was welcomed into a warm hug. After our moment, I steadily made my way to my bedroom, hoping tomorrow would be much better. Thoughts were in my head of Mrs Fenia and Mr Pendanski.

The next school day I aced the maths test on my seven times tables that Mr Pendanski had set the class. I got an outstanding personal best, a B plus for my high achieving effort! Later, the time came to razzle-dazzle Mrs Fenia by spelling the word MISSISSIPPI with no errors! I left her gobsmacked and felt proud of myself. After school was finished I raced home to be on time so I was guaranteed time to watch my favourite show in front of my enormous plasma screen. Everything was back to normal. Or so I thought.

One year later. It was Thursday the twelfth. I wondered what tomorrow would bring...

Anne invisible

I woke up shivering. It was wet. An icy cold breeze was ruffling through my hair. Where was I? I knew that I was outside and that I was lying in a garden which looked very familiar. I could hear my sister Holly shouting at my other sister Amanda.

“Where did you put my pink and purple shoes? You know the ones with the hearts on them?” shouted Holly at the top of her voice.

“I didn’t touch them Holly, I swear,” Amanda replied.

Their voices seemed to get louder and soon I could see their red faces appearing from around the corner. They continued their debate all the way out the door and onto the footpath next to which I was lying. Amanda took a small step backwards and folded her arms, stepping on one of my fingers.

“Ouch, that was my finger Amanda.” I yelled with pain. Amanda took no notice. She stood there with her arms folded, still standing on my finger which was turning purple by the clogging up of blood.

“Get off Amanda!” But she wouldn’t budge, so I pulled my finger out from the heavy weight of her body.

I turned around, trying to figure out just where I was. It was then that I realised I was in my very own garden. I looked up. My big blue house, from which Amanda and Holly had just walked out, stood before me. I hadn’t the faintest idea how and why, but I was there.

Holly and Amanda continued complaining. I couldn’t stand to hear Holly yapping on about needing her special shoes for her fancy-dress party that would be starting in exactly ten minutes. I stood up awkwardly and shouted “Okay, that’s enough. I have had enough!” Normally if I were to do this Holly would have thrown me into a muddy puddle and my favourite teddy’s head would have been snipped right off its furry body, the way Holly always threatens me she will. But this time it was different. A lot different! Actually she didn’t take the slightest bit of notice. How come they didn’t notice me? I even tried pushing and pulling at Amanda’s pink and red t-shirt, her favourite one that she had received for her sixteenth birthday. I ripped one of the pale pink frills off the collar by accident but after a few seconds it had returned, leaving absolutely no evidence. How could this be happening? It had to be a dream. It was like I was a ghost. Nothing I did made a difference.

I decided to go inside and see if my mum or dad would be able to notice me. I scooped my long black hair out of my face and tossed my fringe to the side. As I walked very slowly up the footpath, I thought up of all the possibilities that could explain what was happening to me. As I got to the front
door which was mistakenly left open by my hopeless sisters, I saw my mum peering through the window. What was she doing?

“Mum, Mum!” I shouted, running through the open doors.

“Henry,” she called to my dad. Two tanned legs came running down the stairs urgently.

“What is it?” answered dad. “What are you looking at?” Both dad and I were staring at the back of mum while she was looking at the window. We didn’t know what was happening.

“There’s a strange truck parked across the road, do you know anything about it?” mum asked dad. Dad took a few steps closer to the window. “No, I wouldn’t have a clue what it’s doing there. Maybe it’s one of those delivery trucks,” dad suggested.

I walked out to the middle of the room and literally stood in between the middle of both of them.

“Hello, Mum. Dad? Can you hear me or possibly even see me?” I looked into both of their eyes, hoping they’d catch a glimpse of mine too. But they didn’t. I knew what this meant. I was a ghost. I was dead.

I turned around and walked away and as I did a salty tear dropped from my eye. My pale face turned red in anger. Imagine your life being ripped away from you just like that. The trouble is I don’t know how. Just then mum shouted, “Henry, come quick!”

“What is it?” Dad rushed over to the window.

Mum turned around as fast as a cracking whip. She ran right past me and flung open the door, Dad ran after her. I watched her running towards the road. I’ve never seen her run so fast. She stopped at the road and waited for an extremely large truck to pass. Then she ran across the road and suddenly stopped. I took a step closer to the door, confused by the way my mum was acting. Then something caught my eye. Lying right in front of where my mum was standing was a leg. A body! A tree was covering most of the body but I could clearly see the leg and this leg was mine. The turquoise shoes on the white leg were dirty and muddy and the striped pink and blue shorts were ripped at the ends.

Mum took one look and ran over to it screaming and shouting. Tears poured from her eyes. She bashed the ground, still screaming. Dad ran down to her. He fell to the ground and landed on both knees with shock and put his arm around mum, hugging her so tight her arms were squished by her sides. Mum pushed him away and lowered her ear so it was against the body’s chest. She shook her head and let out a loud roar. She picked the body up in both arms and kissed the cold forehead.

I watched silently, my eyes filling up with water like a fish bowl. “How did this happen?” mum screamed. She lowered the body back onto the ground. Her anger got stronger and stronger as if she was turning into a terrible tempered beast. “We don’t know for sure that she is gone.” Dad stood up and put his arm around her to hug her again. This time she put her arms around him and hugged into his soft warm stomach. I remembered what it was like to hug dad. He had the warmest and softest hugs ever! It feels like you are squishing a squishy marshmallow. Suddenly I felt all dizzy and tipsy as if I had just drunk fifty glasses of wine. I fell to the ground and drifted into a long dark sleep.

Then a strange thing started to happen it was like I was having a flashback. My mind started to spin and it felt like I had a terrible migraine. It was all coming back to me. I had just stepped out of the house. I shut the door but the wind blew against it and gave it an extra push. It gave a loud BANG! I heard mum shout something. I couldn’t quite make out what it was but it included my name. I walked down the four steps leading to the old cracked footpath. I was wearing my lucky charm bracelet. I reached up to push my fringe out of my face but as I did, the bracelet flew off my wrist and landed right in the middle of the road.

I ran out onto the road and searched for the bracelet with the name ANNE written on the middle charm. I looked at the bracelet and talked to it like a mad person “Phew, if I had lost you mum would have killed me.” Then there was a sound. There was a screech of tyres and a loud horn. I turned around. A huge truck was only a few metres away from where I was kneeling. I stood up. It felt like everything was in slow-motion as my flashback showed me running to the footpath. But…I didn’t
make it in time. The large truck tried with all its might to jam on the breaks but it skidded too far and knocked me off the road and onto the ground in my backyard.

I woke up with a heavy head. All the pieces of the puzzle finally joined up. I woke up in my backyard because I had been pushed in there at a devastating speed after being knocked over by a truck. But nothing changed the fact that I was still dead. I sat up straight. My vision was still not back to normal but it had improved a lot from before. Just then, I took sight of an ambulance taking my body into their truck. Mum was still crying and dad was still hugging her telling her everything was going to be alright.

I couldn’t watch. I stood outside near the window with mum. “There’s a chance” I whispered silly enough to think she could hear me. Mum looked closely at the body in the surgery room. The body lay so still, but then came a flicker at the eye. The eyelids flickered for a few seconds and then stopped. Eyes slowly opening wider and wider until they were fully open! Mum’s eyes started to widen too. “Oh, it’s a miracle, she’s alive!” She ran to the door and pushed it open.

She held out wide her two arms and grabbed me into them. I gently clasped her hand into my hand. “So what happened to you, Anne?” Mum asked curiously. I gave her a timid smile. “If I told you, you wouldn’t believe me.”

I sat bolt upright, my eyes snapped open! I took in my surroundings as I turned to a look of horror. A bare room, an eerie darkness and the most horrific of all was the blood splattered on the ground. My hands were tied and the blood was mine...

The sharp pain in my bleeding wrist brought me back to reality. I was held captive. Tugging at the ropes in frustration, I searched frantically for anything to help me, ANYTHING. I was desperate! A cold sense of dread clutched my heart, slowly strangling my morale with a sense of defeat.

Seconds, minutes, hours past; I could take no more of this enduring torture. With an angry roar I thrashed around until the rope snagged on the edge of the chair and snapped with a dull crack! I stared at the remains of the rope, it seemed too easy.

I scanned the room for even a slim chance of escape. The room was bare apart from a locked door and a window. My eyes rested on the window; pushing carefully, it swung open with a rusty creak. A cold wind swept my hair back as I surveyed the distant cars below. I grimaced knowing the situation was still critical. Why me?

I opened the window to the full extent then clambered out. I felt a sense of vertigo as I steadied myself. Overcoming my fear I clambered onto the ledge while steadying myself with my hands. I started making progress when my vision dipped and swayed due to the tremendous height. With a sense of foreboding I felt myself slip. Luckily my reassuring hands saved me. This terror was not over!

Finally with slow edging movements I manoeuvred myself to the next window. To my grateful surprise it was unlocked! Clambering in I took sight of my surroundings; a wide corridor with well polished floors greeted me. I thought back to what had happened, what had I done to deserve this?

Into the unknown

Mark Nuttall
St Martins Catholic School, Davidson
And more importantly...why me? I pondered numerous reasons however, none of them fitted. As I brought myself back to reality an athletic man strode round a corner and smiled a cruel, crooked smile. Otto was back.

Otto the most well known assassin, convict and mastermind stared at me with satisfactory menace. He was like a lion preparing to strike and I was the prey...my life close to being extinguished. Otto was in control.
I had one advantage however; surprise. Otto expects me to be easy bait. He won’t be expecting anything! Catching him unawares I changed direction in a determined attempt to escape. I pushed out obstacles and created diversions anything to buy more time. However Otto was like a rampaging bull prepared to stop at nothing. I knew that and so did he. I had to try something new!

Sidestepping Otto I ran through the maze of corridors momentarily losing Otto in a deserted room. My heart thumped in my throat and I stood panting for breath. Before I could react, two men in black suits stormed in, locked in furious debate. Scared out of my wits I hid behind a wooden cabinet. My heart was beating madly. Then one man spoke with a fluent English accent, “I have a plan my fellow, which will change the country for eternity!” A cold chuckle followed. My heart beat faster and a cold dawning of truth came to me. That voice belonged to the president!

Otto’s unmistakable cruel voice followed in a slight mocking tone. “And what may that be, my president, I mean...” with a cackle he continued, “What prime minister would do that to his own country!” The president snarled and replied furiously, “How dare you. Of course I had a reason; I’m sick of the public demanding things all the time, everyone voting against me and even my wife has turned against me. Life isn’t fair, so I’m going to make sure life isn’t fair for this accursed country!” He banged his fist on the table in frustration. “I plan to use something that will leave this country in ruins!”

“No it can’t be!” interrupted Otto.

“Yes Otto, I plan to use the ‘Green Tank Bomb’, placing it in the heart of the country. London is my next stop! In twelve hours the destruction will begin!” Both men stood up and as the prime minister left he spun around and stated, “Otto, find the boy. If he slips through your fingers again I will deal with you personally!” A glitter of red madness haunted the prime minister’s eyes, which left Otto flinching and turning pale! They left. I felt a cold, terribly cold. The fate of my country was resting on my shoulders. With a surge of effort I sped down the corridor. It’s time to escape!

I sped down the corridor dodging guards, skidding round corners and finally like a lion I burst through the front door. I sprinted down the pavement as thoughts bombarded my brain. It seemed impossible that less than twenty four hours ago I was safe and sound in my bed! It seemed that I had walked into a particularly terrifying nightmare! However, I know that this was reality. I needed help and I needed it fast! In my haste I bumped into a stout woman with a tight bun of hair. I murmured words of apology but she interrupted me. “Come!” I stared at her dumbfounded. “Come!” Tottering, I followed her into a building. Then blocking the door I stared at her questioningly. “How can I trust you?” “Are you Ben Eder’s son?” “Yes, I’m...” “She quickly interrupted me, “Then you can trust us!” Curiosity got the better of me and I followed. She sat and faced me,“ Luke let me tell you about your past, present and future.” My heart beat just got faster! She began...“Your life is a lot different then you expect. Believe it or not your father is actually working for us, the Secrecy Agency and he isn’t a plumber! To be the best at his job he promised not to tell anyone his secret. Also we would like to apologise Luke for what just happened. It appears that Otto tried to keep you hostage to get funds from us or your family. Luckily for us, you and your quick wits saved us a fortune!” When she finished my heart skipped a beat.
 Quickly I recounted the events of the last couple of hours. At the end it was the woman who was surprised, however she quickly gathered herself and went back to formality. “Luke, I’m Mrs Black. The news is very distressing. I have organised a ride back to your home. Now go, your work here is done!” Her pursed lips gave me a small smile as I departed.

On the journey I pondered what Mrs Black had said. It seemed impossible but I accepted it because it fitted the facts. Soon I was back at my house. As I strode up the driveway I glanced at the paper, HEADLINE NEWS – the Secrecy Agency has another success in catching the two men plotting to destroy England. Master criminal Otto and the prime minister will go to court on the third of January this year. I smiled and took a step knowing that I had saved my country.

Maws
Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Primary
Epping

Dedicated to a certain devoted Indiana Jones fan that I know of and for my little brother, who loves watching all the Jaws movies. This was written with you two in mind.

“Good luck, Americana Jonas. Remember to report any sightings to us immediately.”

Americana nodded and fell backwards off the Indian Hunter into the deep, blue ocean, his mind flickering back to his mission. In the beautiful Great Barrier Reef of northern Australian waters, a gigantic mako shark had been seen devouring surfers and swimmers like popcorn. Armed with an electric harpoon gun and a knife, Americana Jonas, adept underwater and explorer extraordinaire, was going to hunt down and kill the mako.

As soon as Americana Jonas hit the surface of the water, he kicked downwards and turned. His eyes were met by a rush of colours – blue, pink, white, red, orange, blue and iridescent silver. Clownfish circled anemones like little haloes, with seaweed swayed to the ocean current underneath them. All kinds of fish, which Americana Jones had never seen before, populated this ocean. A huge groper passed him and he patted it, mentally remarking at its slippery scales. Beyond all this, he could see for a long way, until a great wall of foggy blue stopped his vision of the reef.

The current of the ocean was a dull roar in his ears, and the water itself was so full of life that Americana could feel the microscopic animals brushing against his Lycra suit. He swam towards a large cave to his left, making up his mind to search there first. The oxygen in his scuba tank allowed him to breathe easy breaths. The coolness of the water created a calm, undisturbed atmosphere. His breathing echoed in his ears from his breathing regulator. Altogether, it was an innocuous scene.

Americana took out his communication device, an underwater Morse code machine, which was linked to the Queensland Marine Watch. “You should see it down here,” he sent. “The view is spectacular.” The waterproof earpiece he had been given crackled to life as an irritable voice blared from it. “Concentrate, Jonas.” Americana smiled inwardly and continued looking through the grotto. A flash of movement caught his eye. He turned, every muscle in his body tensing.

Eyes widening with horror and shock, he almost dropped his Morse code machine when he saw what had caught his attention. His fingers flew faster than they had ever before as he tapped, “Target sighted, one hundred meters under the surface, north of Green Island. Send in a tank, this shark has got to be at least twenty meters in length!” Americana had made the estimation from the grey-black tail of the mako which he estimated at seven meters in length.
Sensing his finger’s hasty movements, the mako turned around and glared at Americana. The unfortunate diver held his breath, tensing himself, and drew his electric harpoon. Triumphant as the general of a winning army, the mako shark lowered its huge, black head and charged with a powerful flick of its tail. It was like being in a battle; an overlord tank against a single soldier.

Doom, screamed Americana’s brain. Heroic battle, argued the rest of his body. Almost unaware of what he was doing, Americana lifted the harpoon gun and fired. Adrenaline coursed through his veins as the harpoon buried itself in the mako’s open mouth. It bucked and thrashed and its body convulsed, arching and bending. Blood poured out of his wound. Americana received a minor electric shock and jerked involuntarily. He glanced at his oxygen gauge. He had fifteen minutes left to get out alive. As it was, the mako shark was ready to bite him in two and it proved this by spewing out a single human leg. Yuck.

The blood in the water had attracted inordinate attention from other sharks in the vicinity. There were bull sharks, a couple of great white sharks and remoras. The water was alive with a feeding frenzy. Americana decided that, for his continued good health and wellbeing, he should evacuate the area and allow marine biologists to examine the unnaturally big mako shark. On the way out, he saw a stray piece of mako shark floating around and plucked it from its aimless journey, hastening on his way. Several sharks, deciding that they liked the taste of mako, followed him. Americana kicked up and swam towards Indian Hunter, waiting for him on the surface. He was well aware that there was a chance of him catching the possibly-deadly bends, in which nitrogen bubbles gathered in large numbers in his blood from ascending too quickly. He opted to risk it – better spending boring days in a decompression chamber than a dark eternity in death.

Americana drew his knife and cut at a shark that got so close to him that he could see the rancid meat in between its teeth. Another shark bit down on the injured one and the water churned as a fresh feeding frenzy started once more. He broke the surface of the water with a triumphant whoop. “I did it!” he yelled, spitting out his breathing regulator.

“Get on the boat before you get eaten!” the crew bellowed as one voice. Americana clambered onto the deck of the Indian Hunter, basking in the warm rays of the crew’s praise and congratulations.

If anyone, least of all Americana, had been looking out to the churning red surface of the ocean, they would have seen a three-meter tall, ragged fin – with bite marks and flaps of skin hanging off it – break the surface of the water with utmost silence and glide towards the horizon.