

## Application for 2009 National Literacy and Numeracy Week grant

School, region, diocese name	Joint project: Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office & Challenge Ranch Outdoor Education Centre
School address	160 Hensons Road Somersby NSW 2250
Project title	<b>Students' <i>writeNOW!09</i></b>
Project description	<p>Students' <i>writeNOW!09</i> is a three-day residential program for gifted Year 6 writers across the thirty-six primary schools within the Diocese of Broken Bay. Students are selected by school staff based on a set of criteria identifying gifted writers.</p> <p>During the program, students are accommodated at the Diocese of Broken Bay Outdoor Education Centre – Challenge Ranch, located at Somersby on the Central Coast of NSW. The use of laptop computers further enhances each student's writing experience in this natural environment.</p> <p>Now in its fourth year, students' <i>writeNOW!09</i> incorporates a diverse program utilising recognised Australia authors to share their knowledge and skill with student writers, enabling them to write engaging and well constructed narratives. These narratives are published as a model to other students and their teachers to be used in a variety of ways to support literacy education.</p> <p>In 2009 illustrations will be done by local Catholic High School students.</p> <p>Previous programs have highlighted benefits to students including; the opportunity for boys to develop connections with other boys of similar literary interests, the emergence of informal support and friendship networks between students and the further development of sophisticated literary technique, which have been shared with peers on return to the classroom.</p>
Intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' <i>writeNOW!</i> narratives become an authentic publication, archived as part of the state heritage of NSW; located in the NSW State Library; Parliamentary Library Canberra; Broken Bay primary and secondary school libraries &amp; available across school systems</li> <li>• to promote students as authors in their own right, inspiring their passion for writing as a life long pursuit</li> <li>• to deliver to each student a copy of the publication, thus recognising them as a published author in their current school communities, with links to their destination secondary school</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to further develop student writing skills in narrative, mentored by respected, published Australian authors, such as James Roy in 2009.</li> <li>to utilise the publication as a method of modelling/ teaching best literacy practice: written by students for students</li> <li>to promote a network for writers utilising ICT technology</li> </ul>
Numbers of students, teachers, parents, other community members directly involved	<p>Approximately 70 students will be supported by a team of education officers from the Catholic Schools Office Broken Bay, as well as well known Australian author James Roy; and elective art students attending local Catholic high schools as illustrators.</p> <p>In addition, staff from the outdoor education centre will assist with conducting outdoor activities and supervision. Approximately 70 parents will participate in the closing session, which follows the students on their three-day literacy journey. An edited digital version of this journey is provided as a means for students to share with their family and fellow students in their schools, providing a catalyst to explore their learning with others.</p>
Brief budget breakdown	The National Literacy & Numeracy Week grant will be put toward the cost of publishing the student stories. The estimated cost of publication is approximately \$3000. The Catholic Schools Office of the Broken Bay Diocese will also assist with funding the publication.
Date/s for project	<p>Term 2: students identified, parents informed, registration/permission forms, liaison with schools</p> <p>Term 3: Program Monday August 3<sup>rd</sup> to Wednesday August 5<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Term 4: Publication and book launch.</p> <p>While the publication will not be available before NLNW week, students' stories will be available for inclusion on the NLNW website. A pdf version of the publication will be made available later in Term 4.</p>
Contact details of project coordinator	<p>Paul Nield Education Officer Challenge Ranch Diocese of Broken Bay Outdoor Education Centre</p> <p>Phone: 02 43721221 (office) 0411161433 (mobile) Email: paul.nield@dbb.edu.au</p>

### Sample stories from two students:

*The World through the Water*

**Sophie Cullen**  
St Patrick's, Asquith

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The cold water rushed over her, soaking her clothes and giving her goose bumps. Lungs tightening, yearning for air, she suddenly doubted herself. Angela pushed away the negative thoughts that were winding through her mind. She knew that whether she liked it or not, this had to be done. Shivering involuntarily, the freezing water slowly took hold of Angela's consciousness. The last thing she saw was the lighthouse: its tall, white walls looming, as though

they were laughing at her pain. Everything went black. If anybody had been watching the scene at that moment, they would have seen the sun slowly sinking below the horizon and a single, lifeless figure bobbing with the movement of the waves.

Will didn't recognise the shape as a person at first. But when he saw the curls of chocolate brown hair that floated behind it, the air was sucked out of his body in a rush. He yelped, his green eyes widening in shock. There was a person, a girl, drowning! Will turned, spraying sand in all directions, making for his house by the beach. Thinking the better of it, he swiveled around and sped to save the bobbing figure, forgetting all his fears of water. Will splashed clumsily through the waves, beginning to regret his sudden urge to be a hero. He paused, stopping mid-stride, knowing he couldn't swim - what use would he be? Shoulders slumped, he realised he was faced with a difficult decision. Was it her life or his?

Will looked up at the figure, trying to force himself to continue with his rescue mission. He could make out her face, skin pale and eyes shut her mouth blue in the cold. She was quite beautiful, he decided; appalled at how easily he'd become distracted. Suddenly he made his decision. In his heart, he knew it was the right choice, but his brain told him otherwise. He could have just left her, but instead, Will plunged into the violent sea.

Breaking through the icy water, Will surfaced. His head throbbed in disappointment as it registered that he was no closer to the girl. He would have to hurry if he were going to save her life. Already his arms ached with the effort, still far to go. His legs were so tired and weak that they almost couldn't support his body weight. He gazed out at the raging water, feeling scared and helpless. Foam flew into the air and sand churned up, giving the water a muddy, dirty look. The sea around Will swirled and tossed, as though it were throwing a temper tantrum. Waves charged like angry bulls at Will as he stood, braced to face them. Salty air flowed through Will's nose, choking his throat and drying his mouth; flailing desperately towards the figure.

Finally approaching the girl, Will called out, hoping fervently that the figure would answer. He got no reply. With a sinking feeling in his stomach, Will reluctantly admitted to himself that he could go no further. A strange sensation fizzed through Will. He dived into the frothy depths, frantically attempting to rescue the girl one last time. Adrenalin was coursing through his system and he experienced sudden energy. With his breathing coming in infrequent gasps, he pushed on.

Relief flooded his mind as he finally reached the girl. He reached for her hand, abruptly unsure of what to do. Her skin felt smooth.

Will couldn't recall exactly how they'd safely reached shore. He had dragged her onto the sand, flopping down exhaustedly beside her. Comfortable, with his hand still on the girl's, Will fell into a deep sleep.

When Will awoke it was dark. He could make out the black silhouettes of distant palm trees and the shadows of the beach houses. The round, glow of the moon gave off a ghostly light that lit up Will's surroundings with a pale, eerie colour. The black ocean, now silent and calm, shone with the silver staircase of the moon's reflection.

Will peered down at the girl's face. He acknowledged that after the long hours he'd spent watching her and waiting for her to wake up, he'd grown quite fond of the girl's beautiful, delicate features. Will stared in shock as he noticed the girl's eyes were beginning to open. He inhaled, in awe. Her eyes were unbelievable; he'd never seen anything like them! They sparkled

a brilliant blue in the moonlight, with spectacular flecks of emerald green, that shimmered like priceless jewels.

“Hello,” the girl whispered, weakly. “My name is Angela,” her voice sweet and gentle, like the flowing of a peaceful creek.

“Ah, um, what are you doing here?” Will stammered nervously, immediately feeling guilty when he saw tears form in Angela’s magnificent eyes.

“I - I’m not from here,” she said, still managing to sound elegant despite her tears.

“Then where are you from?”

“I’m from a different world, Will,” answered Angela, although Will had not yet told her his name.

“It’s in a parallel universe to your own. It is full of magic and happiness and is home to my family and friends; home to my people, the Elves.”

Will was definitely not expecting that, and he couldn’t help it when he jumped in shock. “An elf?” he queried, stunned.

“Yes,” said Angela, smiling at Will’s surprise. Angela’s face clouded over as she thought about her home.

“Well, why were you in the water?” Will asked, trying to distract Angela.

“It’s complicated, I guess, but I need to tell someone,” Angela said. She paused, thinking, then continued. “To get back to my home, my world, I need to come in contact with water. It sounds fairly easy, but there’s more to it. The water has to be connected to the lives of the occupants of that world. Of course, I thought of the ocean, since so many people are drawn to its mysteries and magic.” Angela began quietly weeping to herself. “I just miss everyone and everything so much!” she sobbed.

Will felt tears well up in his eyes and rapidly wiped them away with the back of his hand.

“Please don’t cry, Will,” urged Angela and turned red with embarrassment. One of his teardrops fell on Angela and he leant down to apologise.

“Oh, Will! You gave me the answer! You’ve saved my life and given me the way to get back home!”

Will looked back at Angela’s face to ask what she meant. He observed the fact that she looked paler. His jaw dropped when he saw Angela was gradually fading away.

“Thank you, Will,” she murmured, then disappeared altogether.

The sky was grey, threatening to pour rain. The waves crashed and foamed; the sand was soaking wet. An elderly man hobbled along the beach, appearing to look for something. “Angela! Angela!” his voice carried on the sea breeze, echoing up and down the beach. The wind seemed to sigh, the sound morphing into words: “Thank you, Will. Thank you.”

The old man smiled.

## ***The Quest for Freedom***

**Catherine Wong**  
Holy Family, Lindfield

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### Prologue

#### The Bear

*The first thing I remember is spending days with my mother in the forest. She played with me and taught me how to hunt and forage for food. I’d drink from the crystal clear stream and snuffle in the bushes for sweet succulent berries. As a young bear cub I lived a carefree life, oblivious to the dangers around me. Little did I know that I would lose something dear to me due to my carelessness.*

“Oi! You there! C’mere and scrub the flagpole, till it’s shiny!” hollered Alex, taking a long drag on his cigar.

I groaned and dragged my heavy bucket along the ground. I was already covered in an inch of filth and grime and, as always, my face was smeared with dirt and sweat. My clothes were dirty and ragged and my hair, usually a golden honey sort of colour, was filthy and in desperate need of a wash. I began scrubbing the pole, thinking of my parents. I was an accident. My father had not wanted a child and, when I was born, he left. My mother didn't care much for me because I was the reason my father left. She died a few years later and thus, I became an orphan. My name is Freddy Lane but everyone calls me 'Boy'. I'm a slave, you see, a little boy who is a nobody.

"Hey! Boy!" bellowed Alex. "Clear this whole spot. A circus is coming tonight and we need a big clean space."

"A-a circus?" I asked "What's so special about it?"

"There's a bear they've got. They got it a few years ago. They were just about to grab it when the mum stepped in. They shot her and took the little cub," Alex laughed cruelly, stubbing his cigar. "Trained it to dance they did."

My stomach churned with the little scrap of cheese I had eaten earlier. I felt sorry for the bear. I understood how hard it was to live as a slave and have no parents.

*I hate my life. I've hated it ever since I was captured. I don't know what happened to my mother, but I can assume she's dead. For many weeks I had spent time in darkness, with strange smells and not much food. I'm a full-grown bear now. I've spent years being tortured, laughed at and provoked. I can't escape. I'm stuck in this ghastly life. I hear yells and shouts. We're moving to a tiny village for the next show. I really couldn't care less. I'm hungry, cold and miserable. And that's how I'm going to stay for a while.*

I've just spent the last six hours clearing the big space. Big caravans and trucks have come in and they're setting up the big tent. For the past years I have been stealing food from my manager's huge food store, but it's fair because they only give me tiny portions of food scraps. I've saved up many bits of food, storing them away in the small shed I have to sleep in. One day, I'm going to run away and find a better life for myself. I went and got some bread and a hunk of cheese, shovelled it down and then sneaked under the flap of the tent to watch the show.

*I moaned gloomily. It was show time. I lumbered slowly to the entrance, my trainer slapping me and yelling for me to go faster. I roared in his face. Didn't he see that I was bound down by chains? I stepped into the ring to see excited faces jeering at me. There was only one face that I didn't see yelling at me. It was a dirty boy that looked at me as if he understood how I was feeling. This was the worst crowd I had ever seen. They sneered at me, mocked me, poked me with sticks and threw food at me. I'd had enough. I got up on my hind legs and roared, sending the crowd scattering and screaming with terror. The trainer tried to control me, but I just lashed out at him with my claws, making a deep cut in his shoulder. He sunk to the ground groaning, while men ran at me and covered me completely with nets. They dragged me back to the cage and locked me in. I kept roaring and growling, but eventually I fell into an exhausted sleep.*

I sat quietly while Alex paced back and forth in front of me. "Stupid bear! Frightened everybody! I swear if it is the last thing I do I will get that bear put down!" he spat, fuming.

"But it wasn't its fault!" I protested. "The crowd provoked it and I'm sure nobody would be able to handle all that cruelty!"

Alex grabbed me by the ear and dragged me out of his office.

“Don’t tell me what I don’t care about!” he bellowed in my face, before slapping me on my right cheek. He stormed off and left me lying on the ground, overcome with fury. I jumped up and ran to my shed, grabbing everything and stuffing it into a sack. I put all the food I had stored up in the sack and stole more food from Alex’s pantry, feeling no guilt. I was running away.

*I lay at the end of my cage miserably, wallowing in self pity. I know that they’re going to get rid of me soon and I’m afraid of what will happen. They didn’t give me any food, but I wasn’t really expecting anything at all. They yelled at me and hit me a few times and my body is sore. Suddenly I heard footsteps. I tensed and got ready to growl at anyone who got too close to me. A head popped out and I saw that it was the boy I saw in the crowd earlier. He quietly put a finger to his lips signalling me to not speak or growl. At first I did not know why or what he was doing and I didn’t care. I lay down, beginning to doze off. Something went click. I turned my huge head around and realised the door was open. There stood the boy, whispering softly, and motioning for me to follow him. I didn’t budge so he took out a scrap of meat and held it out for me. My stomach rumbled and I slowly crept forward.*

I breathed in slowly and calmed myself down. The bear was slowly coming towards me and my hands were shaking slightly. The bear had reached me now. He eyed me warily before carefully gobbling up the meat. I kept my hand extended and it licked my hand greedily. Up close the bear looked very sad. Its fur was matted and there were a few bald patches along its body. It was filthy and so thin, you could see its ribs. I stroked its snout carefully, murmuring comforting words and slowly coaxing it out of the cage. A light turned on in the distance and I heard a door slam. I panicked and started pulling the bear out, but it wouldn’t budge. So out of desperation, I pulled a chunk of meat out of my bag and threw it into the trees nearby. The bear lumbered after it with me running behind. When we were out of sight behind the trees, I slumped to the ground with a sigh of relief.

*It was good to have a nice bit of fresh meat for once. I’m not too sure about the boy, but I think I’ll stick with him. He seems nice enough. He looked tired and worried, but he smiled when I nuzzled into his hand, looking for more food. He himself bit into an apple and saved the last bite for me. He had a little blanket that he wrapped around himself, but he was still shivering so I walked to him and curled up next to him. It was the start of a new life - I could just feel it!*

I woke up the next day feeling pretty lost. I hadn’t really planned what I would do, but I decided to head south. I ate a little bit of bread and had a swig of water from my canteen before getting up and starting to walk through the trees. The bear started to walk along with me and I was glad that it was relatively calm. We travelled like that for many days, walking all day and stopping occasionally to eat something and have a rest. We walked deeper and deeper into the forest, but I knew that if anything threatened us, the bear would surely defend us both. The bear was able to forage and hunt by itself so I didn’t have to worry about feeding him. But my supplies of food started to thin and I mainly had to eat berries and wild mushrooms and drink water from streams that we rarely passed. I was exhausted and each step that I took got more and more painful. I often had sleepless nights due to worry, hunger and thirst and I noticed, too, that the bear was tired because it wasn’t used to all this exercise. I wasn’t sure we could go on much longer. But then we found a miracle.

*After many days of walking on my sore paws, we finally found heaven on earth. We stepped into a clearing and found the most beautiful sight. A crystal clear stream, with schools of fish darting in it, ran along the ground and bushes and trees filled with sweet fruit and berries were scattered around. In the distance you could see a snow-capped mountain, surrounded by sapphire-coloured clouds. Flowers bloomed everywhere and the grass was as green and soft as moss. Beautiful insects and animals could be seen all throughout the day. Everything we would ever need was supplied here.*

And so, the bear and I began our life together. I made weapons and tools out of stones and sticks and built a shelter that I could sleep in. I only hunted when I really needed to and tried to eat meat as little as possible. We would spend days in the warm sunshine, eating berries or swimming in the cool stream. The bear lived happily in his new life and so did I. We were happy and we were free at last.