



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Years 4 to 6; ages 9 to 12

CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the author	2
3. Author's inspiration	2
4. Pre-reading questions	2
5. Writing style	2
6. Syllabus connections	2
7. Key study topics	2
8. Further reading	5
9. Worksheet	6

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding; Intercultural understanding; Literacy; Personal and social capability; Difference and diversity
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Sustainability; Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A heartfelt story about making change happen in your own little corner of the world, from one of Australia's top-selling children's authors.
- A contemporary middle grade story with heart that touches on family, cultural traditions, sisters, Harmony Day, friendships, collaborating and finding solutions to problems.
- Touches on subjects such as bushfires, the pandemic, climate change and immigration, in a way that young readers will relate to.
- Learn about letter writing and crafting a story about your own life.

THEMES

- Sustainability and the environment
- Difference and diversity
- Family
- Friendship
- Letter writing

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

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Dear Greta Yvette Poshoglian

PLOT SUMMARY

This was meant to be Alice's year to shine, but things are already going wrong . . .

First, she is given young environmental activist Greta Thunberg as her pen pal for a fictional writing assignment. Why couldn't Alice get someone easy to write to, like a pop star?

Then, she's put in charge of the Harmony Day Food Fair. It's the ultimate Year Six project, so Alice should be happy . . . but the food fair has to go online this year, which seems impossible, *and* she has to work with the most annoying boy in her school.

As if she didn't have enough on her plate, Alice gets kicked out of her bedroom by her Armenian grandmother coming to stay.

Through her letters to Greta, Alice finds herself opening up about her life. And as Alice approaches the hard questions by wondering, '*What would Greta do?*', she starts to believe that her voice can make a difference – a big one.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yvette Poshoglian is the author of over forty books for children and young people, including the bestselling Ella and Olivia series.

Born and raised in Sydney, Yvette taught secondary English in southwest Sydney and now manages major education projects for the NSW Department of Education. Currently she works at the intersection of pedagogy, technology and innovation with the Technology 4 Learning team at the NSW Department of Education. Many of the STEM and technology developments occurring in schools around NSW are captured in *Dear Greta*.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Yvette says:

"I have so many heroes that inspire me when times are tough. So, imagine if you got write to your hero? This was the idea behind *Dear Greta*. And in a world where things are changing – be it climate change, bushfires, a global pandemic – heroes can help us more than they know – even if we can't meet them or talk to them. While this book was written in and out of lockdown I also saw incredible stories of kindness and resilience. Students today have the power to change the world – now and very soon.

Dear Greta is a book about all my favourite things – best friends, awesome grandmothers, delicious food, amazing innovations – and standing up for what you believe in. Best of all, the main character has a name just like mine. When I was growing up, I couldn't find a book with an Australian-Armenian hero. So, I had to write my own!"

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about Greta Thunberg?
2. Do you have Harmony Day or Harmony Week at your school? What activities does your school organise for Harmony Day?
3. Do you have a hero you would like to write a letter to – a favourite author, singer, sportsperson or someone who inspires you?

WRITING STYLE

Dear Greta is what is called an **epistolary novel**, a novel written in the form of letters or other documents.

Questions and activities

1. Why do you think the author chose to write *Dear Greta* in the form of Alice writing emails?

2. Have you read any other books that take the form of different documents such as letters or emails?
3. Imagine you are Alice a year from now, after the end of the book. What would you write to Greta?
4. Write your own letter as if to Greta Thunberg, or to someone who is your own hero. What would you like to tell your hero about how they have inspired you or helped you to face challenges?

SYLLABUS CONNECTIONS

- Resilience and wellbeing
- STEM
- Harmony Week
- Multiculturalism and refugee stories
- Current affairs
- Climate change and sustainability
- Civics and citizenship
- Media literacy
- Post-pandemic concepts
- Multimodal explorations of story
- Cross-generational and cross-cultural communication
- Technology as a learning tool

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Communication methods

People communicate in many ways, such as through speech, through body language and through writing, and via many means, such as over the phone, via video call, letter-writing and email-writing, as well as face to face.

Questions and activities

1. 'I think almost every form of communication today comes down to texting. For instance, a tennis ball emoji from Sami means Do you want to meet at the handball courts at lunch? Even Mum and Dad send messages using emojis.' (p. 6) Do you think Alice is right about the importance of texting in today's world? Or do you think Mrs Malouf is right when she says, 'Text messaging is not writing. Emojis are not forms of communication.' (p. 7)?
2. Explore some of the different meanings of emoji to different people. Have the meanings of certain emoji changed over time?
3. What is different about writing a letter to other forms of communication? Make a list of what is



needed for a letter, and some of the options for the opening and closing lines of a letter.

4. What other forms of communication could you use to tell a story about something you're passionate about? For instance, writing a poem, making an artwork, or telling your story through fiction. Choose one form of communication to tell a story in one page.

Making change happen

Around the world there have recently been many movements for social and political change that have been spearheaded by young people.

Questions and activities

1. 'Did you realise your handmade sign would become so famous and a symbol of protest? A symbol of strength and power to change people's minds and inspire so many kids around the world – just like me?' (p. 100) Research other examples of change-makers and influential people in the world who have used their talents, skills, experiences and passion to inspire others to make changes. For instance, you could explore the story of 11-year-old student Molly Steer who campaigned against single-use plastic straws. You can learn about her campaign [Straw no More here](#). Other examples of inspirational change-makers who you could find out more about include:

- Mahatma Gandhi
- Malala Yousafzai
- Jade Hameister
- Adam Goodes
- Helen Keller
- Anne Frank
- Craig Reucassel
- Jessica Watson
- Mary Mackillop
- Turia Pitt
- Deng Thiak Adut
- Eddie Woo
- Kurt Fearnley
- Tim Flannery
- Weary Dunlop

(You can find lots more examples of inspiring people in *Shout Out to the Girls*, *High Five to the Boys* and *Stand Up for the Future*, which all feature

stories about Australians who have done amazing things in our past and for our future.)

2. In pairs, discuss some of your hopes for the future. For example, your career path, the type of society you want to live in, the place in which you would like to live.
3. Visit your local council, state parliament or federal parliament to find out more about how our government works.
4. Pick an issue that you are passionate about and research whether there are any groups you could join, petitions you could sign or ways to help promote the cause. Write down your findings in a list.
5. Write a letter to your local Member of Parliament to ask them to support a cause or make change in an area you feel strongly about, such as sustainability, climate change, caring for wildlife, or another cause.
6. Watch a documentary about Greta Thunberg – *I Am Greta* is a documentary film, and *Greta Thunberg: A Year to Change the World* is a three-part series about Greta's travels (currently available on ABC iView).
7. Design a poster with a strong, simple message about an issue you are passionate about. What words will most clearly get across your message?
8. Create a website with a photo gallery to publish your ideas to help your class achieve a wider awareness for your cause. Include a 'Call to Action', to inspire people to join your cause. Greta's Call to Action was the Fridays For Future protest that many people around the world signed up to.

Harmony Day

'The message of Harmony Day is everyone belongs. It's a day to celebrate Australia's diversity – a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home.' (From www.harmony.gov.au)

Questions and activities

1. Schools around Australia celebrate Harmony Day or Harmony Week each year. What does your school do to celebrate? How can you get involved?
2. As a class, discuss what you understand the word 'diversity' to mean. Where or when have you heard it used?
3. Research statistics to find out where Australia's migrant population comes from.
4. Pair up with a classmate and discuss your family's heritage. Do you share a similar background or is it



quite different? For example, where were you born, where were your parents and grandparents born? Remember one or two facts that the other person has told you and share these with the class.

5. Choose a country or culture to celebrate. Split into groups to research that country's food, music, dress, dance, art, sports and history.
6. If you're allowed to have a Food Fair, Set up a feast with stalls or tables representing different families' cultures. Ask everyone to bring a plate from their own family's culture or their class's chosen country.
7. Organise a class excursion to a museum or art gallery to learn more about other cultures such as Australia's First Nations peoples.

Using technology as a learning tool

Inspired by author Yvette's work at the intersection of pedagogy, technology and innovation with the Technology 4 Learning team at the NSW Department of Education, *Dear Greta* includes lots of ideas for the classroom in using technology to communicate and share knowledge.

Here are some ideas classrooms and schools could use for setting up virtual excursions or platforms:

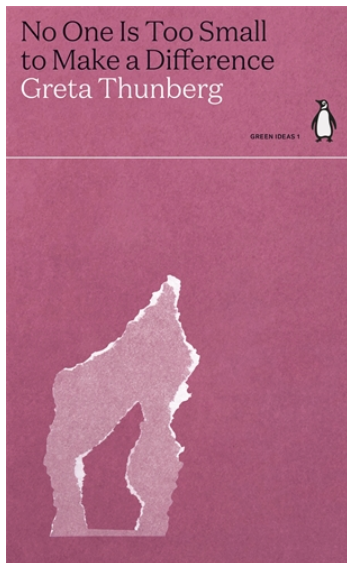
- Create a virtual food fair platform that is free for students.
- The Technology 4 Learning team at the NSW Department of Education could build a free Virtual Food Fair template for schools around Australia. The platform is free for schools to use and easy to create in and could be used as an educational tool alongside the book.
- This would encourage multi-modal creativity – e.g. writing scripts, recipes, filming and editing, publishing and more.
- The virtual excursion template is already being used by many public schools in NSW, created by both teachers and students.
- Virtual excursions can be viewed both with and without VR goggles.

Questions and activities

1. Use a video or phone camera to film an interview with someone about their cultural heritage or the food from their culture or family. Prepare interview questions before you start. Show the videos in class when your interview is complete.
2. Explore more about telepresence robots – how do you think they could improve things for students who can't attend school? What other ideas could they be used for to help people with mobility issues or distance?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



No One is Too Small to Make a Difference
by Greta Thunberg

Why this story? Read it for Greta Thunberg's original speeches that inspired Alice!

Over the past 75 years, a new canon has emerged. As humans have driven the living planet to the brink of collapse, visionary thinkers around the world have raised their voices to defend it. Their words have endured, becoming the classics that define the environmental movement today.

No One is Too Small to Make a Difference collects Greta Thunberg's history-making speeches, from addresses at climate rallies around the world to audiences at the UN, the World Economic Forum, and the British Parliament.

Greta Thunberg continues to prove that the tiniest voice can have a monumental impact.



A Glasshouse of Stars
by Shirley Marr

Why this story? A story of learning about other cultures and accepting difference and change.

Meixing Lim and her family have arrived at the New House in the New Land. Everything is vast and unknown to Meixing and not in a good way, including the house she has dubbed Big Scary. She is embarrassed by the second-hand shoes given to her by the kind neighbours, has trouble understanding the language at school, and with fitting in and making new friends. Her solace is a glasshouse in the garden that inexplicably holds the sun and the moon and all the secrets of her memory and imagination.

Her fragile universe is rocked when tragedy strikes and Ma Ma refuses to face the world outside. Surviving will take all the resilience and inner belief of this brave girl to turn their world around.

Teachers' notes available.



Thai-riffic
by Oliver Phommavanh

Why this story? Lengy's adventures will have you laughing out loud and perhaps shedding the occasional wimpy tear.

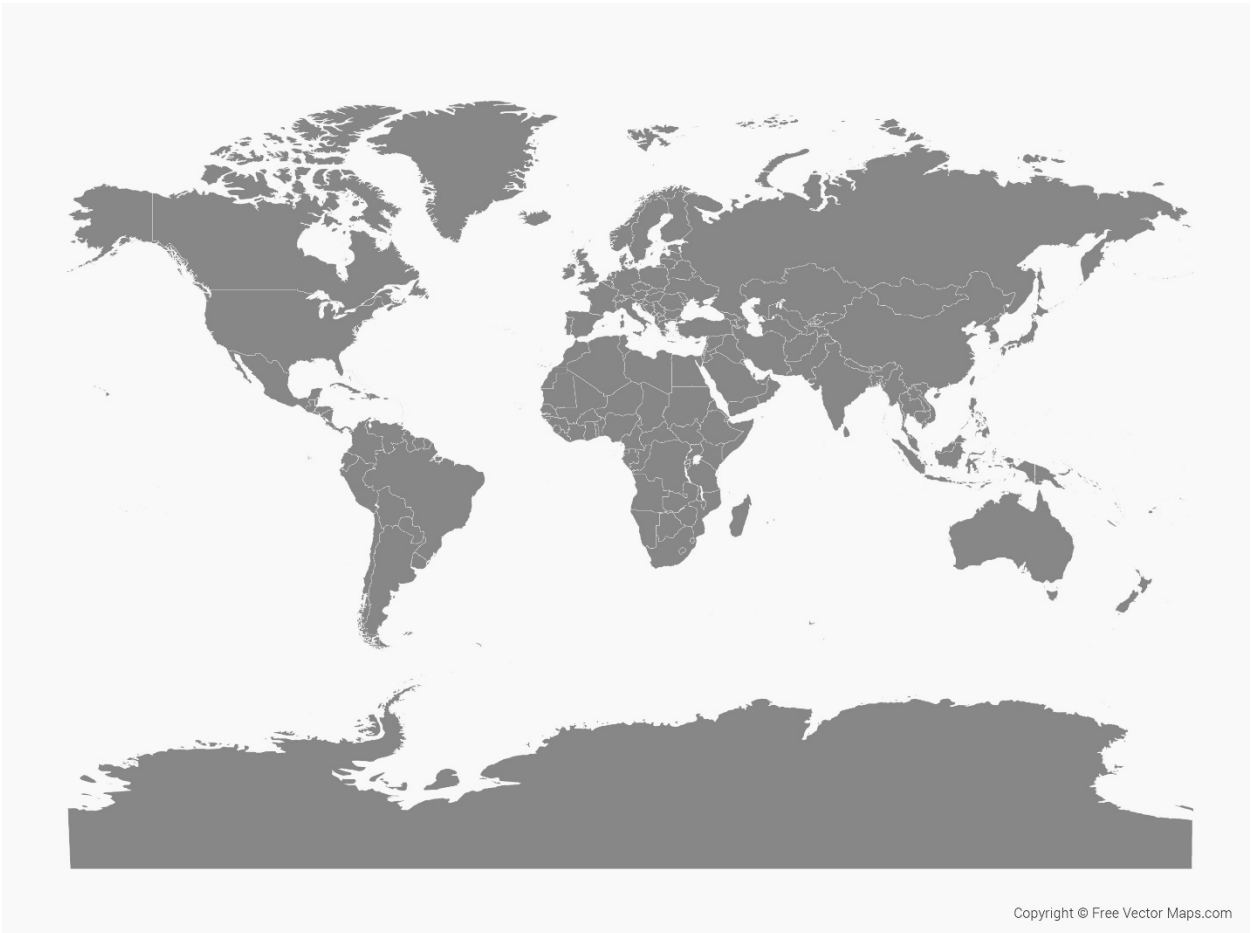
Albert (Lengy) Lengviriyakul, is fed up with being Thai. His parents own a Thai restaurant with the cheesy name of Thai-riffic! and Lengy is sick of being his father's curry guinea pig, longing to just eat pizza! At school he is a bit of a troublemaker, going to any lengths to hide his background. But when his best friend decides to become Thai for a day for a school project, Lengy stubbornly comes to the realisation that there may just be some pretty cool things about his culture.



WORKSHEET: WORLD MAP

Ask everyone in your class to put an asterisk in the countries or regions where their family is from. Write the names of the countries underneath the map. How many countries can you mark off on the map?

(Source: freevectormaps.com)



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Dear Greta	Yvette Poshoglian	9781761043789	4-6	\$16.99		
No One is Too Small to Make a Difference	Greta Thunberg	9780241514573	5-6	\$9.99		
A Glasshouse of Stars	Shirley Marr	9781760899547	4-6	\$16.99		
Thai-riffic	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143304852	4-6	\$16.99		
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