



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary aged readers
(ages 8 to 11; years 3 to 6)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and creative thinking

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A hilarious story that will have kids laughing – and learning about nits!
- Learn about writing with dual voices

THEMES

- Family
- Friendship
- Learning to trust and accept yourself
- Courage
- The action-comedy genre
- Overcoming great odds
- Diversity
- Bloodsucking insects
- Health and hygiene

PREPARED BY

Tristan Bancks and Penguin Random House Australia

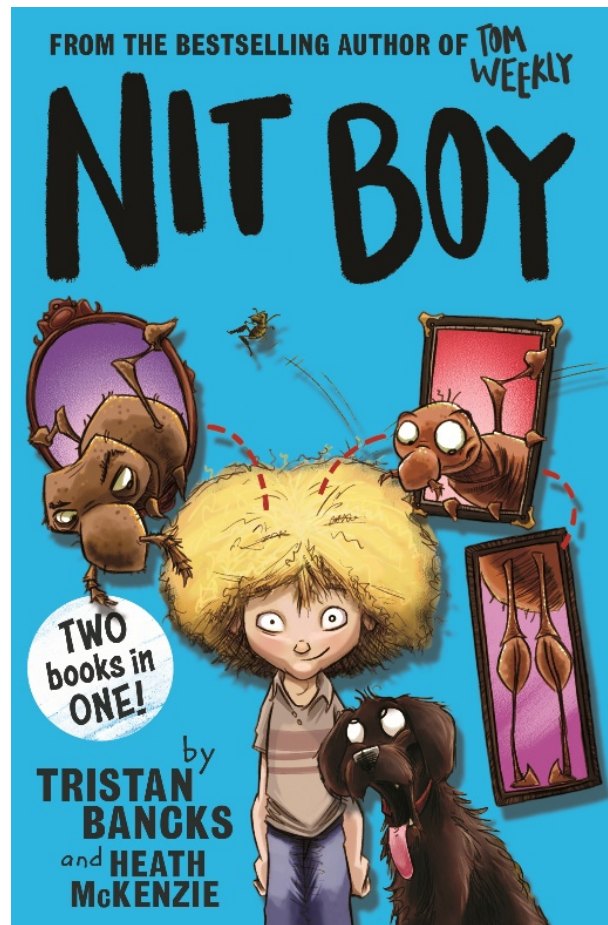
PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9781760896300 (paperback);
9781760147693 (ebook)

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Nit Boy

by Tristan Bancks

Illustrated by Heath McKenzie

PLOT SUMMARY

**It'll make you laugh. It'll make you cry.
It'll make you itch.**

Meet Lewis Snow. He has the worst case of nits in world history. Everyone wants him to shave his head. But Lewis thinks of his nits as pets. He's determined to keep his hair and his nits, whatever it takes.

Ned lives on Lewis's head. He's the first-ever jumping nit. His dad wants Ned to help nits take over the world. But Ned likes it on Lewis's head. Ned's vegan and hates the taste of human blood.

And you thought you had problems.

*This new edition contains two Nit Boy stories
in one book!*

NIT BOY 1: LIFT OFF! SYNOPSIS

Lift Off! entwines two stories: that of Lewis, a boy with wild blond hair and a great fondness for his thousands of head lice; and that of Ned, who lives on Lewis's head and is the first-ever jumping louse.

The story opens with Lewis sent home from school by deputy principal Ms Herrick, who calls him 'filthy'. Lewis resists his mother's attempts to treat his head with lotions. He is determined to keep his nits.

Meanwhile, Ned hatches on Lewis's head. His father, Keith (the Head Louse), is thrilled because here, for the first time, is a nit who can jump – a nit who will help head lice conquer the world. Ned is not very keen to jump anywhere. He doesn't even like the taste of blood. He befriends a girl nit, Sheena.

Lewis stays home for two weeks, increasingly bored but unwilling to relinquish his nits. Meanwhile, Ned grows up, marries, and becomes father to hundreds of jumping nits. He infuriates his father by hanging out with his buddy, Sheena, instead of jump-training.

Lewis returns to school, and Ms Herrick checks his hair, just as hundreds of lice make their first jump. They land on Ms Herrick's head, and she runs away, scratching madly. Meanwhile, Ned is in hiding. He still does not want to jump. His father disowns him.

The jumping nits quickly start a nit plague. Schools and businesses are closed, and many people have their heads shaved. Everyone blames Lewis. Meanwhile, Ned is wracked by guilt and uncertainty – why isn't he like other nits? – and resolves to jump.

A new anti-nit device, the NitBuster, is trialled at Lewis's school. Ms Herrick applies the NitBuster to Lewis's head, but thousands of nits remain. Ms Herrick shaves Lewis's head. Meanwhile, Ned's plan to jump is foiled by the NitBuster. He survives the attack, and goes in search of his father and Sheena. Keith is semi-conscious. Then their clump of hair is shaved from Lewis's head, and falls to the floor. At last, Ned jumps – back to Lewis's head – taking Keith with him. They hide in Lewis's ear. Reconciled, Keith dies in Ned's 'arms'.

Lewis is heartbroken at the loss of his nits. Then he feels a tiny bite in one ear. One nit left. He heads off to class.

NIT BOY 2: BUG OUT! SYNOPSIS

Bug Out! continues the story of nit-loving Lewis, whose hair has now been shorn by his arch-nemesis, deputy principal Ms Herrick; and Ned, the first-ever jumping louse, who finds himself (seemingly) alone on Lewis's barren scalp.

Lewis is horrified to discover Ms Herrick will be teaching his class until the end of term, and he vows to drive her away from the school forever, and to get his hair and nits back. Angry with his mother, who allowed his head to be shaved, he goes to stay with his entomologist father, Huck ... and Huck's chocolate Labrador, Boston. Huck's laboratory full of live insects gives Lewis an idea and, with his friend Chris, he gathers many creepy-crawlies in a plastic container.

Meanwhile, Ned collapses in exhaustion and despair. Then he hears another nit voice on the scalp. His friend Sheena has survived. Their reunion is marred by a giant, slobbering tongue which descends from the sky, but they escape, and Ned speculates that the huge, brown, dirty creature attached to the tongue is the dog – or the 'Other Forest' – his father warned him about. He believes that his mysterious mother may live there, and persuades Sheena to leap to the dog with him.

Lewis and Chris sneak into the school early in the morning, and empty the container of insects into Ms Herrick's classroom desk drawer. Later in the day she opens the drawer and runs screaming from the room, followed by her students. Lewis decides to repeat the prank the next day. Chris refuses to be involved, saying that Ms Herrick must be phobic about insects, but Lewis decides that the possibility of driving her away from the school justifies his actions.



Meanwhile, Ned and Sheena walk nervously through the dark and creepy Other Forest. Despite his exhaustion, Ned (who has never enjoyed human blood) refuses to drink dog blood. They are chased by fleas, and eventually captured and bound. A hungry crowd surrounds the nits, and the huge and hideous Head Flea arrives to pass judgement on them. At the last moment, Ned and Sheena are saved by the intervention of an ageing flea, Sahaj, who offers to take them to Ned's mother.

The following morning, Lewis returns to the school, accompanied by Boston. He plans to plant bugs in Ms Herrick's office desk, but the deputy head arrives just as he opens the container. Lewis and Boston hide in a small cupboard. The insects escape, one eventually biting Lewis so hard that he screams and bursts out of the cupboard. Ms Herrick, Lewis and Boston flee the room, covered in bugs.

Meanwhile, Sahaj leads Ned and Sheena in circles all night, before finally taking them to the dog's tail. Maru, Ned's mother, stands at the end of the tail, singing sadly to herself. Sahaj introduces them, and Maru explains that Ned's father Keith visited the Other Forest in search of a wife to breed nits with jumping legs. She travelled to the scalp with Keith, but once she'd laid a single egg was banished to the Other Forest.

Maru convinces the famished Ned to try a little dog blood – and he finds it delicious. He is horrified. He is a filthy, low-down flea. And now he must decide where he belongs: on the scalp, or in the Other Forest?

Lewis escapes expulsion, due to his mother's pleas, but is sentenced to a half-hour detention every day until the end of term. Huck collects him from school, and explains that he is departing on a bug-collecting trip. Boston is in the van, breathing in Lewis's ear.

Ned decides to return to the scalp, and farewells Maru. He and Sheena make another giant leap.

Lewis feels two nit bites on his right ear. He checks the mirror, and thinks he sees two tiny nits. To Lewis, this is awesome.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tristan Bancks tells stories for the page and screen. His books for kids and teens include *Two Wolves*, *The Fall*, *Detention* and the Tom Weekly series. *Two Wolves* won Honour Book in the 2015 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards and was shortlisted

for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards. *The Fall* was a CBCA Notable Book and shortlisted for the Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature. *Detention* was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and Australian Book Industry Awards, and was a CBCA Notable Book. Tristan's books have also been recognised in multiple children's choice awards.

Tristan is a writer-ambassador for literacy charity Room to Read. He is currently working with producers to develop several of his books for the screen. He's excited by the future of storytelling and inspiring others to create.

You can find out more about Tristan's books, play games, watch videos, chat to the author and help him try to change the world at tristanbancks.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Heath McKenzie is an award-winning Melbourne-based author and illustrator who specialises in stylised digital illustrations (aiming to make them look as non-digital as possible). He has written and illustrated 15 picture books and illustrated a whole lot more across numerous forms of print media.

Find out more about Heath at heathmck.com.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Tristan Bancks says:

I'm ashamed to say it but I like weird and gross stuff. I think this is key to me climbing inside the mind of my eleven-year-old self and staying there for months on end as my stories unfold.

I used to hear stories about some families' ongoing battle with nits. And I realised that every family is out there battling these creatures on a daily basis. But no one had really written a book about it. I decided that nits could make for fantastic characters. What is their world like? What do they eat? Who do they love? And why do humans despise them?

So the idea was born and an entire world emerged. Ned became the world's first-ever jumping nit. Lewis grew a never-been-cut blond hair-do filled with thousands of the beasts. Ned's dad, the Head Louse, decided he wanted nits to take over the world. Ms Herrick, the bug-phobic deputy principal, became Lewis's nemesis. It was mayhem. An epic battle of man versus mini-beast.

And, in the midst of it all, are two kooky characters, Lewis and Ned, who just want to be together.



AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Why write about nits?

Why not write about nits? Nits are amazing. We've wiped out so many species on earth but we can't get rid of these microscopic mini-beasts feasting on our kids' scalps. They're like thousands of mini bloodsucking Voldemorts.

Have you ever had nits?

Yup. I remember the bad old days of nit shampoo. I'm scarred for life. But that was back when shampoos worked. In the last twenty years nits have come a long way. Kids now are dealing with intergalactic super nits that cannot be stopped.

Did you ever know anyone like Lewis?

All of my characters are me in some way. Even the nits. Lewis hates the hairdresser like I despised the dentist. I used to bolt from the chair and take off up the path, mother and drill-wielding dentist in hot pursuit.

Lewis is kind of weird, too. He's a regular kid but he's weird. And we all feel weird sometimes. I always tried to use my disadvantages to my advantage and that's what Lewis does with his nits. Having the worst case of nits in human history actually gives him power in the playground.

Do you like nits?

Are you kidding? What's not to like? Nits are like pets. In tough economic times who can afford dog food? Nits feed themselves. They just stab their little beaks in and start sucking. They're very loyal. They love being on our heads. You never need to pay for vet visits. No collar, no tags, no expensive operations. They don't get fleas. They're self-sufficient. We supply the blood and they do the rest. And how many other pets can you take with you to the movies? And into national parks? And to school?

What's your favourite bug?

I've become so close to Ned (the nit) that I'd feel like a traitor if I said anyone else. He really has become like a member of the family.

Do you prefer writing to acting?

I like that writers can work in their pyjamas. Whereas actors have to wait for a night-time scene for that opportunity. I like that you don't have to wear make-up as a writer. I like that writers never have to get up at 4 am and get thrown into the deep ocean and float there for five hours while 72 shots are filmed. But the catering isn't as good for a writer. No banana muffins. No big icy jugs of orange cordial.

Do you have any pets?

A dog named Bear. But my old golden labrador-retriever features in *Nit Boy* as a chocolate lab. I needed his fur to be dark so it'd be harder for the nits who land on him to make their way through the forest. If you haven't read the book yet, that probably sounds a bit weird. It is.

Favourite food?

Not soggy Weet Bix. Just had some. Very bad. You know when you leave it just that second too long to eat them? Crispy. Crispy. Crispy. D'oh. Soggy. Nuts. I like sushi a lot. And tacos. And Barbecue Shapes.

Favourite book?

I liked *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *My Side of the Mountain* as a kid, anything to do with escaping society. I loved Roald Dahl, too. I like *The Bugalugs Bum Thief* and Dave Metzenthens's *The Really, Really High Diving Tower*. I think Aaron Blabey's *Bad Guys* books are excellent.

Favourite colour?

Blue. Always has been.

Star sign?

Sagittarius.

What's the worst thing that's ever happened to you?

I once walked into my sister's garage in the dark with bare feet and trod in dog poo. I screamed and took another step and trod in another giant pile with the other foot. It squished up between my toes. That was pretty bad.



What's the best ...?

I once went on a date to the movies with the Queen. It was the royal gala movie premiere at the Odeon in London's Leicester Square. She was late, as usual. But she looked beautiful. Old, but beautiful. There was no kissing involved. I did try to hold hands but security stopped me. All right, maybe it wasn't officially a 'date'. She was sitting two rows in front of me and she may not have known that I was in the room but, to me, it was like we were the only two people there.

Most embarrassing moment?

I used to have this recurring nightmare where I was at school, doing a play and, at the end, the crowd was going wild, laughing, screaming, cheering and I was lapping it up. Then I looked down and I was naked. Does everyone have this dream? No? Just me, huh? Wonder what it means. I don't imagine it's good.

What's the best thing about writing for kids?

Writing for kids and teens, you have to keep it interesting. 'Never Be Boring' is the credo. I write what I find interesting, what excites me, what makes me laugh, and hopefully that enthusiasm is channelled directly into the reader.

How did you come to write for kids?

I was writing about the film industry. I love movies. I was interviewing actors and directors who inspired me. Then I was approached about being part of a children's book series and I've never looked back. Greatest job in the world. Apart from astronaut. And garbage collector. I hear they get paid very well.

Have you ever written a book for adults? If not, might you?

Not yet. I'd like to. I've made short films and TV for adults. Right now all my ideas are for kids, though. I've got to grow up. But don't hold your breath.

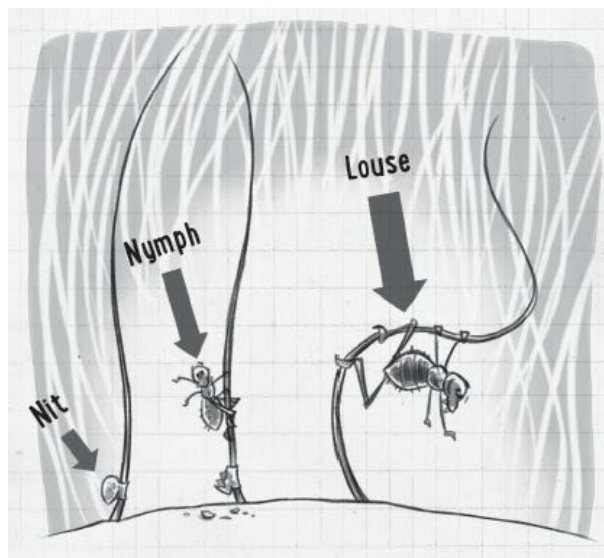
Are any of your books being turned into movies?

Two Wolves and the Tom Weekly series are currently being developed for TV. It's fun working with screenwriters in a writers' room to develop the shows.

What's your next book going to be?

My great-great-uncle, Jimmy Bancks, created a comic strip called *Ginger Meggs* in 1921. It's the longest-running comic strip in Australian history. In 2021 it's the 100th anniversary and, to celebrate, I'm writing a special hardback edition of *Ginger Meggs* short stories which will be illustrated by current *Ginger Meggs* artist, Jason Chatfield, and released by Penguin.

DID YOU KNOW?



Tristan says:

'Nits' is the name commonly given to head lice. In actual fact, 'nits' are just the unborn head lice in their shells. Once they hatch they are called nymphs. When fully grown, they are called lice. But in this book I usually refer to lice as 'nits', because that's what most of us call them. And it's kind of a funny name.

QUIZZES

You can find fun quizzes to test your nit and flea knowledge on pages 125 and 251!

WRITING STYLE

Tristan Bancks has written a book that is fast moving, funny, and kid-friendly: Tristan uses their language, but without condescension. The humour will pull the young readers in, and the fast pace will hold them and carry them through a story that, for all its 'gross factor', has a soft and serious heart.

The point of view shifts in each chapter, giving the reader an intimate insight into the lives and thoughts of the two characters. While there is much to smile at, there is also much to think about and discuss.

Questions

1. This story is told from two points of view: Lewis's and Ned's. Talk about how their experience and understanding of key events differs. For example, what does each character experience when Lewis's mother uses the anti-nit shampoos? And when Ned gets married? And when Ms Herrick applies the NitBuster to Lewis's head?
2. This second story shows Ned in two very different settings: Lewis's shaved head, and the 'Other



Forest' (dog's coat). Talk about the types of language the author uses to capture each setting. What words are used to describe the scalp (moonscape, desert, wasteland) and the dog's coat (undergrowth, forest, darkness)? Whose point of view is being shown? How might Ned see other settings ... a human knee, a fingernail, a fluffy cat tail?

Activities

1. Creative writing: Ask students to write a short story describing a meeting between two different creepy crawly species (for example, a cockroach and a fly). What would happen? How would they relate to each other? What adventures might they have?

Try writing the same story twice, once from each character's point of view. How would a fly seeing a spider be different to a spider seeing a fly? Or try drawing the insect characters and turn their story into a short comic strip.

2. Imagine if one or both of your creepy crawly characters from the previous activity decided to go on an adventure around your school. How would they describe different parts of your school? Think about their different points of view – a fly would see the room differently from the ceiling than a cockroach would on the floor. Think about where these characters would like to hang out: in a cupboard, the playground, the bathrooms, the canteen, on people, in a locker? How would you describe a chair if you didn't know it was called a chair? Pick a place in your school and describe the scene from your character's point of view. Then try swapping stories and see if you can figure out where the other person's character is.

KEY THEMES

Family

Lewis and Ned struggle against the demands of their 'custodial' parent; in particular, Ned is torn between his father's insistence that he jump, and his own desire to stay quietly on the scalp. Both also have absent parents: Lewis's father no longer lives at home and no one can tell Ned who his mother was. In *Bug Out!*, each seeks out the 'absent' parent. In particular, Ned sets off into the danger of the Other Forest (despite his dead father's warnings to avoid the place), believing that he will find his mother there. Lewis, angry with his mother, goes to stay with his father. Ultimately each returns home, acknowledging that they will miss the absent parent.

Questions

1. Did Ned do the right thing in finally deciding to jump? What would you do if your parents or other adults pressured you to do or be something that you felt was against your nature?
2. Lewis's mum tried a lot of different ways to get rid of the head lice before they had to shave Lewis's head. What are some of the over-the-top things a parents or adult have done to help you?
3. Lewis's dad isn't around much. But Lewis loves the time he gets to spend with his dad. Is Lewis's dad a bad father? Or is he a good father who just doesn't have much time?



Friendship

Sometimes, you have to choose between your friends and your sense of duty. Sheena urges Ned not to jump, but he is spurred on by his sense of duty to Keith. Lewis (temporarily) loses the friendship of his best mate, Chris, who blames him for the jumping nit outbreak, but chooses nonetheless to continue in his duty of care to his nits.

Questions

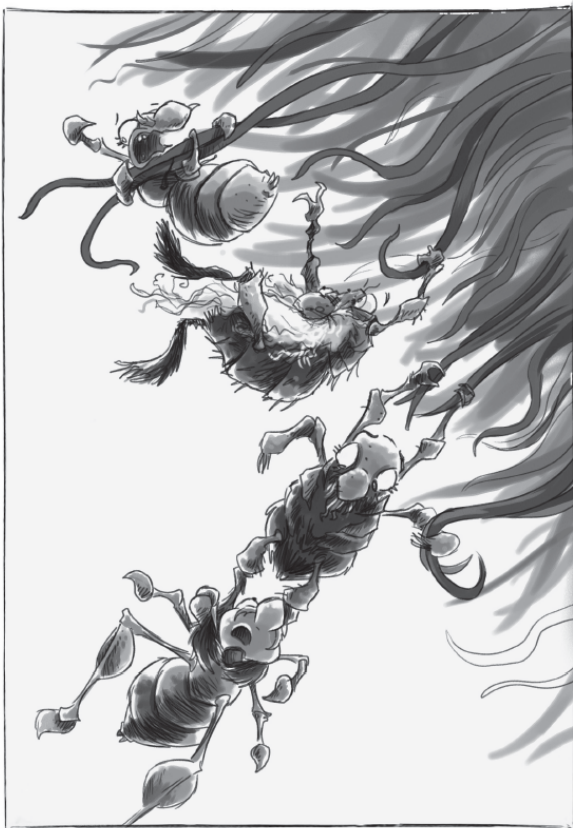
1. What's most important: to stand by your friends, or do something you feel you really have to do? Is there ever one right choice?



2. Did Ned make the right choices, jumping to the Other Forest despite Sheena's refusal to go, then returning to the scalp to save her life? Which is more important: friendship, or following your gut feelings about what is right for you? When should you put your friends' needs before your own?
3. Lewis decides to prank Ms Herrick a second time, despite Chris's warnings and refusal to take part. Was his action justified? What would you do in this situation?

Courage

It takes courage to be different: to love and protect your head lice; to be the only nit in the world who loathes the taste of blood and doesn't want to jump.



Questions

1. Which is more important: Lewis's love and protection of his nits, or Lewis's responsibility to do what is right for the rest of the people in his town?
2. What makes someone courageous? Does having courage mean you aren't scared anymore? Create a list of different reasons people need courage; e.g. public speaking, to try new food, to confess when you've done something wrong, to stand up for what's right, to face challenges.

Identity

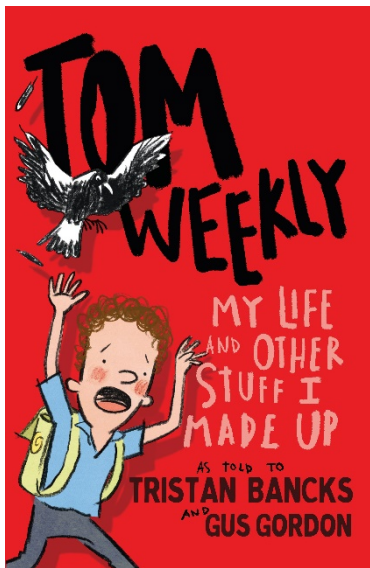
Throughout the two books, Ned has been desperate to understand who he is – why is he the first-ever louse with jumping legs? And yet when he learns the answer he struggles against it: he is part-flea, and nits believe fleas to be dirty and disgusting. Eventually, with his mother's help, he begins to see that his mixed birth makes him perfect in his own way, and at the last realises he cannot tell the difference between a gooey-eye nit kiss and a gooey-eye flea kiss.

Activities

1. There are so many things that make us who we are – our friends, our family, our experiences. Create a list of all the people and experiences that have helped make you the person you are today. Think about where you live, your family's culture, things you have learnt from your parents, things you have learnt from your friends, even bad experiences.

Imagine how different you'd be if you removed one or a few of these influences.
2. A collage is an art technique where you combine a variety of different pieces and create a new whole. Just like how different people and experiences in our lives combine to make us complete. Create a collage of images with all different pieces and pictures of what has influenced you. You can add in other people (whether you know them or just look up to them), your favourite places and foods, your favourite hobbies, and anything else that comes to mind!

FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Tom Weekly 1: My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up
by Tristan Bancks and Gus Gordon

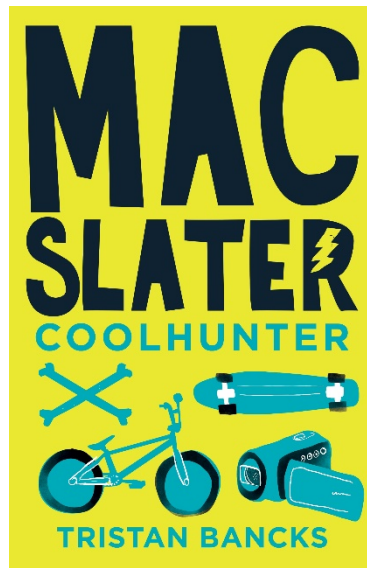
I'm Tom Weekly. This is a nail-biting – make that toe-biting – thrill ride through my life.

This is where I pour out whatever's inside my head. Like the time a bloodthirsty magpie out to get me. Or when I had to eat Vegemite off my sister's big toe. And don't forget the day I ate 67 hot dogs in ten minutes. My life gets a bit weird sometimes but that's how I roll.

Top 3 reasons to read this book:

1. Cures for nits
2. Hover underpants
3. Instructions for teleporting

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Mac Slater 1: Coolhunter
by Tristan Bancks

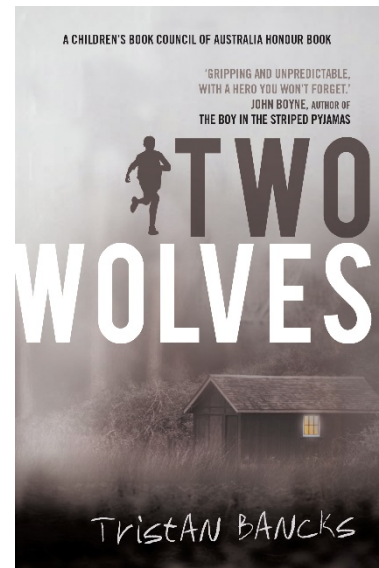
Mac Slater has just crashed the latest prototype of the flying bike he and his best friend Paul invented. Even worse, practically the whole school witnessed it.

So when the creators of massive global webspace Coolhunters offer Mac the chance to compete for a job hunting cool, Mac thinks they're crazy. I mean, Mac lives in a small town and he doesn't have a TV, let alone a mobile. But Tony and Speed say he's so uncool he's cool.

If Mac wants to win, he has one week to prove he has what it takes. And it turns out that finding the next big thing isn't easy – especially when he's pitted against Cat DeVrees, the most popular girl in school.

Does Mac really know what cool is? Or will he crash and burn?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Two Wolves
by Tristan Bancks

'Gripping and unpredictable, with a hero you won't forget.' – John Boyne, author of *The Boy in The Striped Pyjamas*

One afternoon, police officers show up at Ben Silver's front door. Minutes after they leave, his parents arrive home. Ben and his little sister Olive are bundled into the car and told they're going on a holiday. But are they?

It doesn't take long for Ben to realise that his parents are in trouble. Ben's always dreamt of becoming a detective – his dad even calls him 'Cop'. Now Ben gathers evidence and tries to uncover what his parents have done.

The problem is, if he figures it out, what does he do? Tell someone? Or keep the secret and live life on the run?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)

COLOURING IN

NIT BOY



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Nit Boy	Tristan Bancks and Heath McKenzie	9781760896300	3-6	\$14.99		
Tom Weekly 1: My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up	Tristan Bancks and Gus Gordon	9780143790082	3-6	\$14.99		
Mac Slater: Coolhunter	Tristan Bancks	9781925324334	4-6	\$16.99		
Two Wolves	Tristan Bancks	9781760892661	4-6	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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