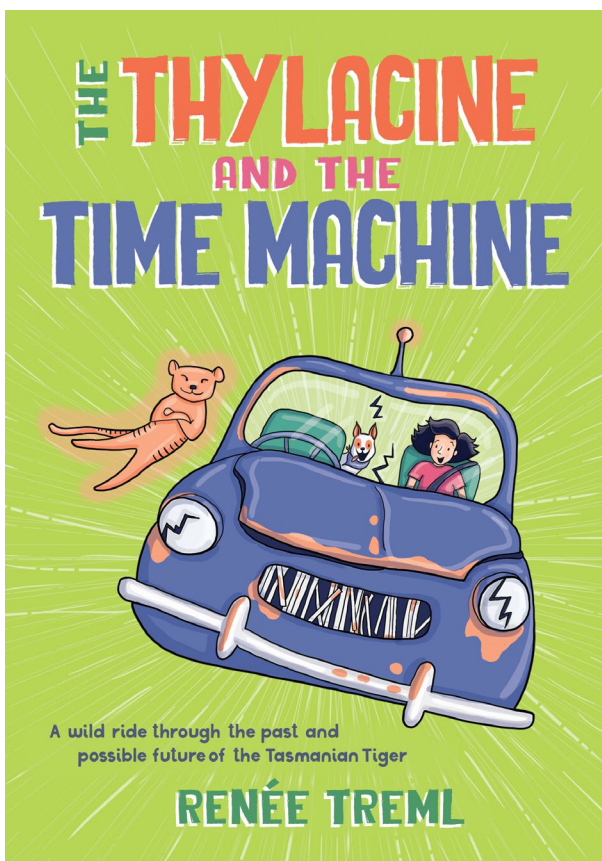


# The Thylacine and the Time Machine

by Renée Treml



Violet is researching the Tasmanian Tiger for a school project when she is visited by the ghost of the last Thylacine, who takes her on an amazing trip in a time machine. A fascinating and funny graphic novel exploring the past and future of the most enigmatic extinct Australian native animal.

**RECOMMENDED FOR**

8–12 (Upper Primary and Lower Secondary)

**THEMES**

Australiana, time-travel, science, Tasmanian tigers, conservation, ecology, humour, graphic novel, facts, extinct animals, ethics

**ISBN (AUS)**

9781761181184

## SYNOPSIS

Buckle up! The time machine awaits!

Join twelve-year-old Violet, her dog Tassie and her new friend Thyla – the ghost of the last Tasmanian Tiger – on a wild ride to learn all about the legendary, elusive and extinct thylacine.

Could there still be hope for one of Australia's most missed (and misunderstood) native animals?

This exciting new graphic novel is packed full of fascinating facts about the terrible past and (potentially) exciting future of the Tassie Tiger.

## AUTHOR MOTIVATION

'As a former environmental scientist, I was intrigued when I heard about the thylacine de-extinction project at the University of Melbourne. Everyone loves Tasmanian tigers, and I can't help but hope there are still a few roaming the wilds of southwestern Tasmania.

'I planned to write a non-fiction picture book about the de-extinction project but quickly realised there was a lot about the thylacine that I didn't know. For example, despite being called "Tasmanian tigers", up to 4000 years ago the thylacine roamed the mainland of Australia. I created a graphic novel because the story needed to be big enough to include the past, present and (possible) future of the species, and I thought the illustrations and narrative format would help make the non-fiction information digestible and fun to read.

'During my research, I ran into what Violet and Thyla (the main characters in the book) refer to as "sticky bits" – those ethical questions that don't have a single correct answer. I found myself unsure how I felt about this science that I find so exciting. On the one hand, it's science-fiction meets real life, and I think bringing back the thylacine makes sense for the

environment; but I have a lot of questions about it. Where will the first thylacines live? Will they behave like the previous thylacines, or will they be a new animal? Should we be using this money to save Tasmanian devils instead?

'I wrote this book because I believe de-extinction will be a part of our future, and children and adults need to critically think about it to decide how to best manage our environment.'

Renée Trembl

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo: Indie Lane Photography

Renée Trembl is the author and illustrator of several successful picture books for very young readers, including *Once I Heard a Little Wombat*, *Sleep Tight*, *Platypup* and *Wombat Big, Puggle Small*. She is also the creator of the highly engaging and funny junior fiction graphic novels *Sherlock Bones and the Natural History Mystery*, *Sherlock Bones and the Sea-Creature Feature* and *Sherlock Bones and the Art and Science Alliance*, as well as the *Super Adventures of Ollie and Bea* junior graphic novel series. Renee has degrees in biology and environmental science, and has a passionate love of natural history.

## IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### Before Reading

Find out what students already know about thylacines by asking the following questions:

- Where did they live?
- What name are they also known as?
- Why do you think people called them *Tasmanian* tigers?
- Why did people think they looked like tigers?
- When and how did they become extinct?

Make sure students also understand the concept of a time machine by asking:

- Where might you go if you got in a time machine?
- Can you think of any books or movies featuring time machines?
- How were characters transported forwards and backwards in time in them?

Explain to students that they will be discovering lots more about these fascinating creatures in *The Thylacine and the Time Machine*.

### Cover Analysis

Hold up the book so that students can see the cover. Continue holding the cover up while discussing the following:

- Illustration: The cover shows a girl, a dog and a thylacine in a very old car that appears to be flying. Where might they be going? What do you think might happen in the book? Why might a thylacine – an extinct animal – have a halo effect around its body?
- Colour: explain to students that colour can communicate information without words. Point out that some colours make us feel sad, others make us feel happy, and others

can even make us feel hungry [red and yellow]. Discuss the feelings that the bright greens, reds and blue/purple on the cover evoke in students.

- Themes: Does the tagline *A wild ride through the past and possible future of the Tasmanian Tiger* complement the message that the illustration and colours are communicating? How can a Tasmanian tiger have a future?

### Comprehension Questions

Read 'Saturday', the opening section of the book where Vi meets the ghost of thylacines past, present and future. Answer the following questions:

1. When is an animal extinct?
2. Name one animal, other than a thylacine, that is extinct.
3. What is a marsupial?
4. Like many marsupials, thylacines have a pouch. Where is the pouch located on their body?
5. Why do some marsupials have backwards-facing pouches and other have forwards-facing pouches?
6. Name another creature with a backwards-facing pouch.
7. When and why did the last thylacine die?
8. National Threatened Species Day falls on what date?

### True or False

Read the section called 'The Past' and mark the following questions as True or False.

1. 4000 years ago, thylacines roamed most of Australia and the island of New Guinea. [T]
2. Climate change, a growing human population and the arrival of dingos caused thylacines to disappear from the mainland of Australia. [T]
3. Thylacines first arrived in Tasmania on boats with humans. [F]
4. Thylacines thrived in Tasmania because there were only a few dingos there. [F]
5. People of the First Nations hunted only as many emus and thylacines as they needed. [T]
6. A species is a group of plants or animals that become extinct. [F]
7. Thylacines preferred grasslands and grassy forests but could live anywhere in Tasmania as long as there was prey to eat. [T]
8. The Latin name for thylacines, *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, means 'striped cat'. [F]
9. A thylacine joey is smaller than a jellybean when it's born and has two arms for climbing into its mother's pouch. [T]
10. Mammals are animals that have fur or hair, a backbone and produce milk. [T]
11. Thylacines are more closely related to wolves than humans. [F]
12. 'Evolve' is the term for slow change over a long time to best suit the environment. [T]
13. Dunnarts, numbats, quolls and Tasmanian devils are close relatives of the thylacine. [T]
14. Thylacines kept nature in balance because they ate other animals. [T]
15. Land, soil, native plants, and trees thrive when one species grows in large numbers without predators. [F]

- 16. Tasmanian devils thrived after the Australian Government issued a law to protect them. [T]
- 17. The disease that affects Tasmanian devils thrives when there are fewer devils in an area. [F]
- 18. Colonists hunted thylacines because they thought they were eating their sheep. [T]
- 19. Private companies and the government encouraged people to kill thylacines for a bounty. [T]
- 20. Scientists have proof that a few thylacines are alive today. [F]

**Matching Game**

Read the section called 'The Present' and match the following scientific terms with their correct description.

Clone	A collection of DNA that will help scientists to save animals before they become endangered or extinct.
DNA	A field of science that combines engineering with biology to make new things.
Cells	A layer below the soil that's usually permanently frozen.
Permafrost	This stores all the information for a plant, animal or other living thing, and can be found in organs, bones, skin, fur and teeth.

Biobank	All living things are made of these.
Bioengineering	An exact copy of an organism using a living cell.

### Writing Exercise

Write a paragraph explaining why bringing woolly mammoths back to life might be a good thing for climate change. Follow this paragraph with another explaining the ethical difficulties in bringing a woolly mammal back to life.

### Debate Topic

Read the section called 'The Future' and debate the question: Should scientists bring the thylacine back to life in Tasmania?

### Research Topic

Research an extinct animal (other than the woolly mammoth) and write an argument for or against bringing it back to life.

### World Threatened Species Day – September 7

Encourage students to choose an endangered species, research its habitat, threats, and conservation efforts, and create a poster or digital presentation highlighting why it needs protection. Students will then present their findings to the class, explaining what actions people can take to help. To encourage deeper engagement, the class will collaborate on a 'Wildlife Action Pledge', listing small actions they can take to protect animals, such as reducing plastic waste or supporting conservation programs.