

MIKE LUCAS: GETTING THE FRIGHT RIGHT

RESEARCH AND REFLECT: GENRE

Start by making a list of the common characteristics and tropes of the horror genre. Write as many as you can think of, then do some research online to add more to your list. Next, find some examples of authors that lean heavily into the genre and others that subvert the genre completely. What is the appeal of doing one or the other?

MAKE SOME ASSUMPTIONS

Nineteen seventy-six was the year we covered up the death of a twelve-year-old boy, hiding his body from his family and the world forever. It was the year we learnt the truth, and the lies, about Hags Drop. And it was the last year Shell, Gray, Charlie and I spent together as childhood friends.

It was also the year the drought came. This wasn't unusual for parts of Africa, or where I live now, in South Australia. But we were in the south-west of England. Not that kids died of thirst or had to walk six miles to fill a bucket from a well. In fact, for us, the absence of water and the constant sisterly shine of the sun made for long days outside, late evenings playing and the disturbing, yet fascinating, spectacle of flying ant swarms.

So what if you couldn't flush at school? If bathwater had to be shared? If Mum's roses had to sacrifice their useless lives for the greater good? We had the sun, when peeling skin was the fashion and before melanomas were commonly known. We had long yards and wide streets and mothers shouting for us to come in and us ignoring them and marbles on the grass and everything else that told us we were there, then.

And we had the wood.

Leighford council estate was bordered by trees. There weren't just fifty, a hundred or even a thousand. There were so many that they became one. This was the wood, a single entity. Each tree was like the cell of a living creature, a grain of sand upon a beach, a single brick within a wall. Nothing alone. Everything together.

The four of us were weaving our way through the wood, along a narrow path that was rarely trodden. Gray was in his natural position at the front, swiping at trees and bushes with his chosen stick of the day. Charlie followed behind, rucksack on his back, talking incessantly about

how his dad knew this and his dad knew that and his dad... his dad... his dad... until the inevitable happened.

(What We All Saw, pgs. 1–2)

After reading the first few paragraphs, what do you think is going to happen in *What We All Saw*? What can you say about the style of writing? Who do you think this story will appeal to? Are there any other stories that it reminds you of?

RESPONDING TO LITERATURE: HISTORICAL FICTION

This novel is an exploration of the cruelty and ignorance of the witch trials and the importance of considering the truth of history.

(Books + Publishing)

What We All Saw is set in a small English country town in the 1970s, and explores as far back as the witch trials from the 15th to 18th century. Why do you think the author chose this time period for his novel?

How can historical fiction help us reflect on the past in a different way? Is it possible to gain a new perspective on history through fiction?

WRITING ACTIVITY: ESTABLISHING MOOD

How can you convey the mood of a story? What techniques are used to create a certain atmosphere, or to make the reader feel a certain way?

Write a paragraph about a character walking to meet a friend. Try to make the mood light and joyful. Make every attempt to express the happiness of the scene.

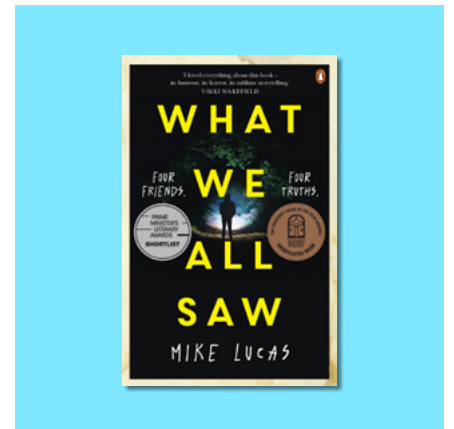
Now rewrite the paragraph in a more foreboding tone. Create a totally different atmosphere. Your character might feel morose, or unsettled, or completely terrified. Can you change the scene completely without changing your setting, character motivation, or general storyline?

PUBLISHER TEACHING NOTES

[What We All Saw](#) (extract)



Mike Lucas



KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Learning areas: English, history

Capabilities: Critical and creative thinking, literacy

RELEVANT BOOKS

What We All Saw

About the Author

Mike Lucas is the author of poetry anthologies, picture books and YA novels. His 2022 novel, *What We All Saw*, published by Penguin Australia, was shortlisted for the CBCA Older Readers Book of the Year. He owns an independent bookshop in Adelaide and works full time as an engineer.

Curriculum Links

Understand how language is used to evaluate texts and how evaluations about a text can be substantiated by reference to the text and other sources ([VCELA368](#))

Analyse how point of view is generated in visual texts by means of choices, including gaze, angle and social distance ([VCELA370](#))

Discuss aspects of texts, including their aesthetic and social value, using relevant and appropriate metalanguage ([VCELT373](#))

Recognise and analyse the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches ([VCELT374](#))

Use prior knowledge and text processing strategies to interpret a range of types of texts ([VCELY377](#))

Analyse and explain the ways text structures and language features shape meaning and vary according to audience and purpose ([VCELY379](#))

Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts ([VCELT385](#))

Create literary texts that adapt stylistic features encountered in other texts ([VCELT386](#))

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas to a specific audience ([VCELY387](#))

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([VCELT393](#))

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view ([VCELT394](#))

Understand that authors innovate with text structures and language for specific purposes and effects ([VCELA429](#))

Identify how vocabulary choices contribute to specificity, abstraction and stylistic effectiveness ([VCELA432](#))

Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([VCELT435](#))

Present an argument about a literary text based on initial impressions and subsequent analysis of the whole text ([VCELT436](#))

Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts ([VCELT437](#))

Analyse texts from familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and discuss and evaluate their content and the appeal of an individual author's literary style ([VCELT438](#))

Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts ([VCELT439](#))

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that present a point of view and advance or illustrate arguments, including texts that integrate visual, print and/or audio features ([VCELY449](#))

Reflect on, discuss and explore notions of literary value and how and why such notions vary according to context ([VCELT454](#))

Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past ([VCHHC100](#))

Explain different historical interpretations and contested debates about the past ([VCHHC101](#))

Identify and explain patterns of continuity and change in society to the way of life ([VCHHC102](#))

Analyse the causes and effects of significant events that caused change and/or a decline over the period ([VCHHC103](#))

Evaluate different historical interpretations and contested debates ([VCHHC125](#))

Evaluate the historical significance of an event, idea, individual or place ([VCHHC128](#))

Synthesise information from multiple sources and use lateral thinking techniques to draw parallels between known and new solutions and ideas when creating original proposals and artefacts ([VCCCTQ034](#))

Consider how to settle matters of fact and matters of value and the degree of confidence in the conclusions ([VCCCTR038](#))

Examine how to select appropriate criteria and how criteria are used in clarifying and challenging arguments and ideas ([VCCCTR039](#))

Consider a range of strategies to represent ideas and explain and justify thinking processes to others ([VCCCTM040](#))

Critically examine their own and others thinking processes and discuss factors that influence thinking, including cognitive biases ([VCCCTM051](#))