THE WAY

TERM 2 | THE WAY NEWSLETTER | FRIDAY 23 MAY 2025



LIVERPOOL COUNCIL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE FORUM

Across term 1, students in Year 11 English considered Australian voices in literature to develop their own voice as authors of their own fiction and non-fiction texts. In response, students composed an excellent array of voices and experiences, experimenting with contemporary, historical, and diverse Australian perspectives in some unique and well-crafted short fiction pieces. The following is an outstanding piece from a Year 11 student that appropriates an indigenous voice to explore the historical experiences of cultural and familial isolation experienced by many Australians during the period of state-led displacement of children.

Sole and Soil

Plants are long-lasting beings, but they are not immortal. As long as the dead ends of a plant were cut
off, it would rejuvenate and bloom into a streak of green, with such brilliance that it would be near
impossible to discern whether it had been transformed into something, anything that would preserve its
vitality. The land itself knew this, and sacrificed its form again and again to endure the never-ending
cycle of existence. Nobody knew what the first eucalyptus looked like.

But as much as Marli knew this, she was victim to the torment of curiosity, reaching for a conclusion that

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would never be within her grasp as she carefully plucked the brittle branches, salvaging what still remained. Her ngamayi's voice was an engulfing warmth that overtook her, guiding her wrists and steadying her hesitant hands, as if she were actually holding them. She relished in its pretentious comfort, swallowing every last remnant of the sense of normalcy she gained from its touch.
The voice hollowed out like a dying symphony, and Marli had plucked every last branch from the eucalyptus. Its stalk stood alone, hinging between life and death.

A dramatic thud pulled her consciousness from the stream of thought, directing her eyes to the source of
the sound. A pair of white sneakers sat atop the lush grass, dropped by the woman she now called mother. The woman's eyes squinted as her pupils were drawn to the stalk, before resigning to rest upon
Marli's figure hunched over it, as if to instinctively protect it from her scrutiny.

Marli understood the silent request immediately, one that was made far too many times beforehand.
She was all too aware of how her mother's eyes briefly paused over the dirt that clung to the soles of her
feet, and the enervated exhale through her nose that carried a world's worth of suppressed disciplines.
Her fingers lingered on the sneakers' rim, assessing the thickness of the synthetic that would disconnect
her body and the ground. The soles would undoubtedly dull her senses.

Yet, she clasped the rim's circumference as she systematically drew towards the nearby tap. The movement of her limbs felt rigid as she walked, stubborn to follow her will as she twisted the handle.
The sloshing water poured out in uneven spurts and splattered on her feet. She scrubbed the crevices of
her feet meticulously, snuffing out the contumacious residues of the earth that stained them.
Marli stood there for a moment, saturated with a prolonged feeling of discomfort with the exposition of
her naked feet, scrubbed bare and left raw. Perhaps it was this very feeling that drew people to enshroud
themselves, to conceal that vulnerability. Perhaps that was why eucalyptuses evolved to envelop their
frangibility with a blanket of leaves, as a means of protection from the unforgiving nature of the land.
And so, the girl followed suit.

As she slipped her feet into the unfamiliar rubber insoles, she noticed a twinge of elevation that distanced her from the ground by the smallest amount. But it was a distance she could no longer close.
Her gaze lingered on the eucalyptus, its stripped stalk standing motionless, before turning away. With
each step, the earth grew quieter beneath her, muffled by the soles, until the plant was a mere shadow
behind her.

- D.P (Year 11 student)

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