

MEET ME AT THE INTERSECTION

AMBELIN KWAYMULLINA AND REBECCA LIM (EDS)

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YEAR LEVEL: Y10–12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Meet Me at the Intersection is an anthology of short fiction, memoir and poetry by authors who are First Nations, People of Colour, LGBTIQ+ or living with disability. The focus of the anthology is on Australian life as seen through each author's unique, and seldom heard, perspective.

Editor Rebecca Lim writes: 'George Orwell's pigs once declared that all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others, and I think that's true of [Australian society] as well; [it] will be tailored for you – it will be easier, more usable or more understandable for you – if you're the 'right' gender or ethnicity, have the 'right' cultural or religious affiliations, or you are physically, physiologically or neurologically 'normal'. But those who aren't the 'right' ones, including those from whom this land was stolen, will struggle to see themselves in our Houses of Parliament, our sporting teams, our movies, TV shows, plays or books, our public structures and institutions. Certain overt and implicit privileges are the birthright of some in this nation who identify with its colonisers, but not all. Ironically, those comfortably within [the mainstream] don't usually see or understand this. They might simply shrug and say: *Well, it is what it is.*'

The anthology provides a rich and nuanced collection of voices for teachers to explore different experiences of Australia. The stories in this anthology open windows onto the diverse worlds of identities and communities that make up modern Australia and, in so doing, provide points of connection for teen readers into experiences both like and unlike their own.

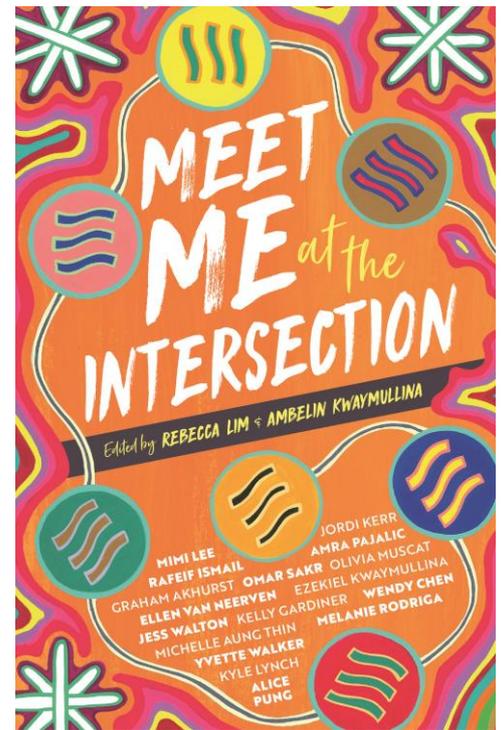
ABOUT THE EDITORS

Ambelin Kwaymullina is an Aboriginal writer and illustrator who comes from the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. She is the author and illustrator of a number of award-winning picture books as well as a YA dystopian series. Ambelin is a prolific commentator on diversity in children's literature and a law academic at the University of Western Australia.

Rebecca Lim is a writer, illustrator and lawyer based in Melbourne. Rebecca is the author of eighteen books for children and young adults, and has been shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award, INDIEFAB Book of the Year Award, Aurealis Award and Davitt Award. Rebecca's work has also been longlisted for the Gold Inky Award and the David Gemmell Legend Award and translated into several languages.

THEMES

- Indigenous peoples and cultures
- Personal identity
- Intersectionality
- Diversity
- Mental health
- Family
- Empowerment
- Social isolation
- Race



- Disability
- Sexuality
- Community
- Migrant identities and experiences
- Life in rural and remote Australia

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which piece had the greatest impact on you? Why?
2. Read the 'Introduction' and answer the following questions:
 - What are Own Voices stories?
 - Why is it important to have Own Voices stories?
 - What do you think 'intersectionality' means in your own words?
 - What different identities and intersectionalities are represented in the anthology?
 - What do the editors identify as some of the barriers to Own Voices stories being published?
3. It is a common stereotype that there is only one Indigenous identity, culture or experience in Australia – in fact, as the first group of stories in the collection demonstrates, Indigenous peoples are highly diverse. What other myths and stereotypes exist about Indigenous peoples (or about other groups represented in the anthology)? Choose a story from the anthology and discuss how it challenges the myths and stereotypes you have identified.
4. The stories in this collection demonstrate the need for strength and resilience in dealing with difficulties. Choose one or more stories from the collection and discuss how these stories show resilience – what strategies or tools do the characters use to deal with difficult circumstances? Why is it important to have resilience?
5. Many of these stories, including Omar Sakr's and Rafeif Ismail's, focus on community – communities you are born into, that you fall into, or that you seek out. How do you think identity is tied to community?
6. Jessica Walton writes, *As a queer, disabled teenager I never had stories about people like me*. She says that it *meant something the first time I read a queer character in a published book*. (p. 91) Do you see people like yourself in books, TV shows and movies? What effect does that have when you do? Or don't?
7. Kelly Gardiner and Wendy Chen both look back to the cultures and attitudes of an earlier time in Australian history. How much do you think things have changed in Australia? How might the protagonists' experiences be different today?
8. Amra Pajalic says, *sometimes I feel like I have only one story to tell and that I've spent my whole life finding a way to tell it*. Do you think that marginalised writers face additional barriers to telling their story that mainstream writers might not face? What might those barriers be?
9. Ellen van Neerven's protagonist is passionate about soccer. Do you think sport creates a common language between different groups?
10. Think about the experiences of the main character in Alice Pung's story 'The Last Stop' and compare them to your own experiences of travelling and intercultural exchange. Write an essay for or against the following statement: 'Travelling to visit another country or culture inevitably breaks down cross-cultural barriers.'
11. In Olivia Muscat's story she writes, *the society we live in likes to make life stupidly difficult for anyone who is a bit different*. (p. 70) Research the social model of disability – how does society create barriers for people with disabilities? What can be done to overcome those barriers?
12. Compare Melanie Rodriga's piece of narrative memoir with Michelle Aung Thin's personal essay. How do they each make use of their chosen genre to communicate ideas about belonging, identity and difference?
13. Mimi Lee explores how the death of a loved one can have a profound effect on our sense of self and wellbeing. Reflect on how the death or absence of someone close to you has affected how you see yourself or the world around you.
14. The stories in *Meet Me at the Intersection* present many different experiences of Australia. Why do you think it is important to read different stories about what it means to be Australian?

STORY-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

'Night Feet' by Ellen van Neerven, p. 17

Write about a day where something important in your life had to occur and the steps leading up to that point. Did everything go as planned? If not, why not?

'Dream' by Graham Akhurst, p. 33

Analyse the structure of Graham Akhurst's poems. How does he use form to add meaning to the poems? Try writing your own poem using a similar structure.

Write a shape poem that represents a pivotal event in your life or illuminates part of your identity, personality or personal experience.

'Dear Mate' by Kyle Lynch, p. 39

Write a snapshot of a week in your life, a week at school, or a week when you were undertaking a difficult task.

'Embers' by Ezekiel Kwaymullina, p. 57

Ezekiel Kwaymullina's short poem articulates his struggle with the indifference of people in a position of power or influence over his younger self.

When have you felt like your voice wasn't heard? Write a poem or short story expressing what you felt or what your message to others might be.

Write a poem about one or more experiences of education in either primary or secondary school that shaped the person you are now.

'Harry Potter and the Disappearing Pages' by Olivia Muscat, p. 61

What are some of the difficulties that the writer shares about being vision impaired?

Is this story motivated by a sense of rage or hope? Discuss.

Write a piece about giving advice to, or looking back on, your thirteen-year-old self in relation to something that you were struggling with.

'Fragments' by Mimi Lee, p. 73

Write about your favourite memory with your grandparents, or about a story that you were told about your grandparents' lives, and how knowing them has shaped you as a person.

'Stars in our Eyes' by Jessica Walton, p. 91

Why is it important for a greater range of identities to be represented in YA fiction?

Write a story about attending a convention to meet a character in your favourite TV show or book. They could be real or made up, but explain why meeting them would be important to you.

'Trouble' by Kelly Gardiner, p. 111

Discuss the expectations placed upon Australian women in the 1950s and those placed on Australian women today. What things have changed? What needs to change further in your opinion?

Write a diary entry about how you are expected to conform to gender or other expectations and how you challenge or defy them.

'Sheer Fortune' by Jordi Kerr, p. 131

How do you think the writer uses the imagery of the were-kraken as a metaphor to share her feelings about physicality or identity?

Write a story where you, your identity, physicality or abilities are represented by a particular creature of myth or legend.

'Telephone' by Yvette Walker, page 149

At its heart, 'Telephone' is about happiness. Discuss.

Write a story about somehow making a phone call to your older self and what you wish you could tell them about your life now.

'DNA' by Melanie Rodriga, p. 163

Michelle's family has a complicated structure. Map out your own family tree in words or pictures. Do you consider that you live in a 'nuclear' family? Why? Why not?

Melanie Rodriga writes that *what matters is not what my DNA makes me, but what I make of it.* (p. 176) Use this as a prompt to write a letter to your future self about what you want to make of yourself one day (and keep it so that you can check in on the past you one day!).

'Almitra Amongst Ghosts' by Rafeif Ismail, p. 177

What do you think the writer means by the sentence *It is sometimes easy to fall into the dream of this country, to walk towards that mirage of blind equality* (p. 182)?

Write about a memory from your childhood that haunts you.

'The Other Son' by Omar Sakr, p. 187

Write about a family member or family event that is, or has been, important to you and why.

'School of Hard Knocks' by Amra Pajalic, p. 201

What were the cultural expectations that Amra was brought up with and how were these different to those of her friends?

Write about a time when you compromised who you were to fit in, and what you learned about yourself in doing that.

'Autumn Leaves' by Wendy Chen, p. 221

Research the White Australia Policy and summarise it briefly. Why was it introduced and what were the long-lasting effects of the policy?

Write a story using the prompt 'Falling leaves return to their roots.'

'How to Be Different' by Michelle Aung Thin, p. 235

What do you think it means to fit in? What does it mean to be different?

Write about what it means to you to be Australian.

'The Last Stop' by Alice Pung, p. 249

How did the trip to China in this story change the narrator and make him reassess people outside his own experience?

Write about a trip that changed your life and made you see a place or a group of people differently.

'Border Crossings' by Rebecca Lim, p. 267

What does it mean to be 'privileged'? Do you think there are levels of privilege?

What does Lim mean in saying *Every person is islands* (p. 275)?

Write a diary entry about the ways that you feel 'outside'.

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