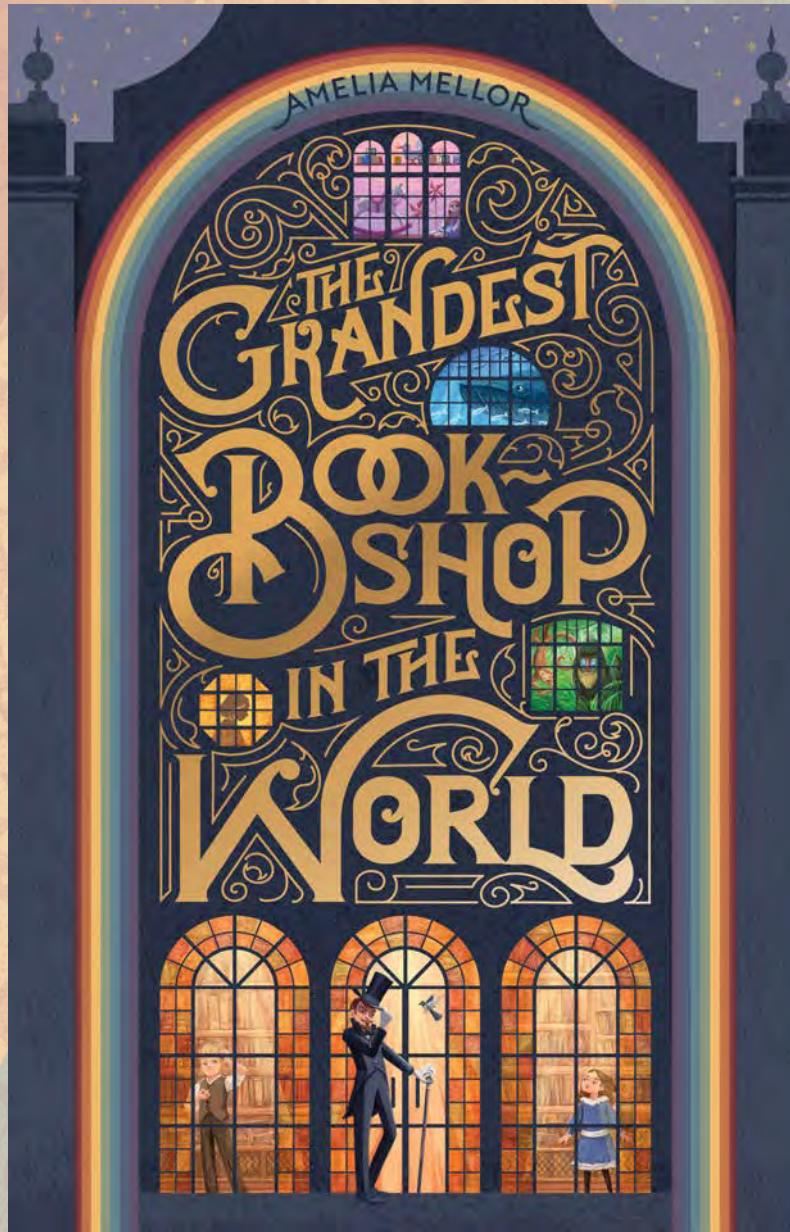


TEACHERS NOTES



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
Amelia Mellor

SUITABLE FOR
Ages 9-12

THEMES

- The importance of family
- Problem solving
- Secrets and deception
- Pre-Federation Australia
- Growing up

CONTENTS OF THIS PACK

- Overview of *The Grandest Bookshop in the World* (this page)
- ‘Before we begin reading’ discussion and activities (pages 2 to 4)
- Text study, organised thematically (pages 5 to 18)
- ‘After we’ve finished reading’ activities (pages 18 to 19)

DESCRIPTION

Pearl and Vally Cole live in a bookshop. And not just any bookshop. In 1893, Cole’s Book Arcade in Melbourne is the grandest bookshop in the world, brimming with every curiosity imaginable. Each day brings fresh delights for the siblings: voice-changing sweets, talking parrots, a new story written just for them by their eccentric father.

When Pearl and Vally learn that Pa has risked the Arcade – and himself – in a shocking deal with the mysterious Obscurosmith, the siblings hatch a plan. Soon they are swept into a dangerous game with impossibly high stakes: defeat seven challenges by the stroke of midnight and both the Arcade and their father will be restored. But if they fail Pearl and Vally won’t just lose Pa – they’ll forget that he and the Arcade ever existed.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amelia Mellor began her writing career as her secondary school’s resident playwright in Year 11. As part of her creative writing course at the University of Melbourne, she completed a thesis on the reinvention of the Industrial Revolution in children’s fantasy literature. In 2018, she won the May Gibbs Children’s Literature Trust’s Ian Wilson Memorial Fellowship for *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*. Her other writing credits include a 2018 ASA Award Mentorship and a finalist place in the 2016 Grace Marion Wilson Emerging Writers’ Contest. When she isn’t writing, Amelia enjoys hiking, gardening and drawing. She is an English teacher in regional Victoria.



BEFORE WE BEGIN READING



CIRCUMTEXTUALITY ACTIVITY: HOW THE TEXT IS PRESENTED

Curriculum areas:

- English: Text structure and organisation; Literature and context; Responding to literature; Interpreting, analysing, evaluating

Ask students to write a paragraph about their expectations of this book based on its cover illustration and title.

Questions to consider:

- *The Grandest Bookshop in the World* displays the shopfront of Cole's Book Arcade, along with many elements of the novel. Ask the students to guess what might happen behind those bookshop windows.
- Does the building look familiar? Could students guess which period of history this building originated?
- What do the characters' expressions and body language suggest about their respective roles in the book?
- Why is there a rainbow encircling the shopfront? What significance will this play?

INTERTEXTUALITY ACTIVITY: TEXT-TO-TEXT CONNECTIONS

Curriculum areas:

- English: Responding to literature; Literature and context; Language for interaction

When we pick up a book, we immediately judge it by its cover: from the cover art and design, we can guess what the book will be about and who it is for. The book cover of *The Grandest Bookshop in the World* provides an excellent opportunity to discuss visual clues about novel genres.

About the middle grade genre

The primary audience for middle grade novels is children aged 9 to 12. Middle grade novels are more complex than junior fiction novels in their plots, characterisation, character arcs, and language. Books in this genre typically have main characters who are aged within the range of their primary audience. Regardless of whether middle grade novels are set in a realistic or fantasy world, their characters are usually on a journey to discover their identity, and this often involves developing new friendships and navigating changes in relationships.

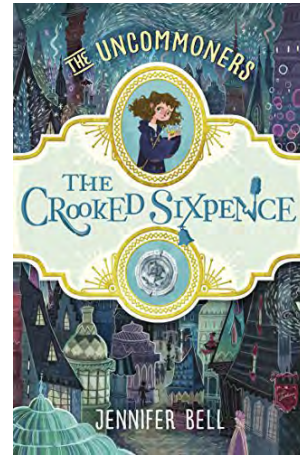
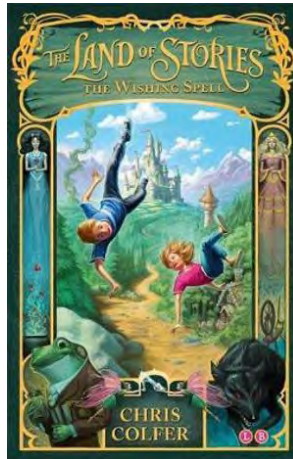
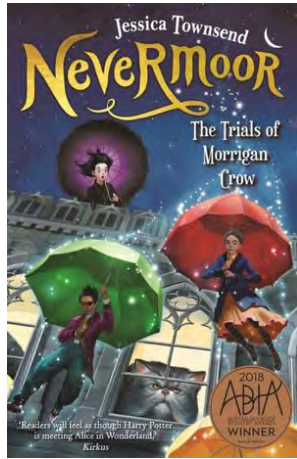
About this book's genre

The Grandest Bookshop in the World is a middle grade novel that blends historical fiction and low fantasy. Its cover contains similarities to novels in both of these sub-genres.

Where should we shelve this book?

Ask students to research books in the middle grade genre and see if they can find book covers that are similar (and/or different!) in style. **Search tips:** middle grade novels; middle grade magical realism; middle grade fantasy novels; middle grade historical fiction; Australian middle grade novels.

Here are some examples to start the discussion:



PUZZLE EXERCISE

This riddle, inspired by the riddles that featured in *Cole's Funny Picture Book*, appears in *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*. Can anyone guess the answer? (See page 19 to find the answer!)

BEGINNING IN ANGUISH, SURROUNDED BY CARE,
YOU'LL FIND I RESIDE IN THE MIDST OF DESPAIR.

I DWELL IN THE MOUNTAINS, THE PLAINS AND THE WAVES;
SEEN NEVER IN BIRTH, YET ALWAYS IN GRAVES.

I APPEAR IN THE BANQUET, EACH PARTY AND GAME;
THE MIDDLE OF WAR, YET IN PEACE JUST THE SAME.

I AM FOUND IN THE DARKNESS, BUT NOT IN THE LIGHT;
IN PAIRS OR ALONE, BUT IN CROWDS, OUT OF SIGHT.

I'M SILENT IN HEAVEN, UNSEEN WITHIN HELL,
THOUGH ABSENT IN GREETING, I'LL JOIN YOUR FAREWELL.

WHAT AM I?

TEXT STUDY

INTRATEXTUALITY (TEXT-TO-SELF CONNECTIONS)

EXTRATEXTUALITY (TEXT-TO-WORLD CONNECTIONS)

THEME: THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

Curriculum areas in this section:

- English: Responding to literature; Interpreting, analysing, evaluating; Interacting with others; Expressing and developing ideas; Creating texts
- History: Historical sources as evidence; continuity and change

This book revolves around the Cole family and their ability to move through their grief for Ruby, the Cole sibling who passed away. We learn that Ruby bridged the gap between the siblings, and her death has left a space between them. Despite Pa's efforts to bring Ruby back, the family must accept that Ruby has gone. The game that Pearl and Vally play against the Obscurosmith helps bring the family closer together through requiring them to understand and appreciate each other in new ways. Additionally, the threat of losing their memories of time spent together as a family is a reminder to cherish each other and to not let the memories fade.

Theme extract 1

Ivy fidgeted with the end of one of her plaits. 'She might get better.'

'I know it's hard, Ivy,' said Vally, with unexpected gentleness. 'She looks just like Ruby. But you mustn't fall for it. It's a trick.'

'I just wish ...' Ivy's chin crinkled. 'I just wish we didn't have to be sad about her anymore.'

No one could think of anything to say to that. Pearl thought they probably all wished they didn't have to be sad. They'd spent good years with Ruby, and good years without Ruby. Why couldn't Pearl hold onto those, without the hook of Ruby's loss twisting in her chest? It was like hitting her shin on the same piece of furniture in the dark. Why was that in her way, again? Why did it hurt so much, again? [p.130]

Discussion points

- In this extract, the siblings are talking about the copy of Ruby (Garnet), and the loss of the real Ruby. We can learn a lot about what the characters are feeling from what they do as well as what they say. How can we tell that the characters are sad without them saying so?
- What do you think Pearl means by *the hook of Ruby's loss twisting in her chest*? Why do you think the author has written this, rather than simply saying 'Pearl felt sad'?
- In the 1890s, when this book is set, almost a quarter of children born in Australia died before the age of 14, mostly as babies. Ruby's fatal illness would be treated quite easily today. The author changes several historical details in this story, but did not change the fact of Ruby Cole's death. What might be some reasons for this?

Theme extract 2

Vally was about to argue with her when he noticed the open, hopeful look on her face. She wasn't brushing him off. That slight note of provocation in her voice wasn't saying, you're a coward, but come on, cheer up, don't be hard on yourself. Which meant a lot, coming from the Constant Irritation.

That was a horrible nickname, now that he thought about it. She wasn't a constant irritation. She was loud, and she didn't always know how to think things through. But she wasn't stupid. Every time she had argued with him since the game began, it was only because she was trying to help him reach the goal they shared. The goal of saving Pa. [p.164]

Discussion points

- In this extract, Vally realises that his nickname for Pearl – the Constant Irritation – isn't fair to her. Can you find the moment where Vally realises that he has misread Pearl's intentions?
- This is when Vally realises that he and Pearl share the same goal and that they are a team. Think back to what the Obscurosmith said: *be good sports if not friends*. Do you think Vally and Pearl are just good teammates, or do you think they've become friends?

Theme extract 3

Her eyes had a pleading look – and Vally was surprised to realise why. Linda felt left out. She didn't belong to any of the little groups within their family. She was not a big brother, nor a little sister, nor a parent, but somewhere in between. She had more in common with Lily, their older cousin, than with any of her siblings. By the time Eddie had been old enough to play with her, he'd already had Vally tottering after him. Besides, she must have been used to her loneliness by then. She used to join in with family games – hide-and-seek, chasey, anything with rules – but when the others made believe, she would turn them down and read instead. For the first time, Vally wondered if that was what she'd really wanted. [p.119]

Discussion points

- What does this extract tell us about how Vally views Linda, the eldest sibling?
- What can we learn about Linda's role in the family?
- Does this scene make you think differently about Linda?

Theme discussion points – Literary devices

This book is narrated in third-person perspective. This means that the main character is not telling the story from their point-of-view (which would mean using the word 'I' a lot), or addressing the reader directly (which would mean using the word 'you' a lot).

The author limits the perspective to Pearl and Vally. But we learn about the other characters, too. The author describes the other characters in a clever way: she introduces us to the rest of the Cole family by describing them as Pearl or Vally see them. Consider this technique in the extracts below.

Theme extract and discussion points

Pa's cluttered office, like Pa himself, was both newfangled and quaint. The shelves were lined with gold-embossed leather books, and threadbare cloth books, and crisp card-bound books from the Arcade presses. Beside the antique gas lamp stood the big electric telephone, with its funny talking trumpet and the shrill bells that chattered when a call came in. [p.10]

- What impression does this extract give you of Pa? Notice how Pa is only mentioned once.
- As the book progresses, we realise that Pa and the Arcade are very much intertwined. When the Arcade starts to fade and fall apart, so does Pa. Look through pages 160–161 in chapter thirteen, and pages 179–180 in chapter fifteen. Can you find other examples of the connection between the Arcade and Pa?

Theme extract and discussion points

Valentine Cole was losing his brother. He knew it from the moment Gao Meilin, the waitress, set their afternoon tea down on the table. ... Eddie wasn't even looking at it. His eyes were on Meilin, in her tight gold qipao. Eddie had changed a lot recently. He was the same height now as their big sister. The boyish roundness had left his face, giving definition to an angular jaw, which he was now shaving every second day. Vally didn't think he'd ever have Eddie's confident good looks. He had his father's oval face: the kind that managed to look childlike even with a luxuriant beard.

- What does this extract tell you about Eddie?
- This extract is narrated from Vally's perspective. How does this extract make you feel for Vally?
- Can you spot the ways that the author has used comparison and contrast to show us what the characters look like?
- How else does this scene help you to understand what Vally and Eddie look like?

COMPARATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY

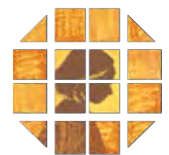
Comparing Families

A lot has changed in one hundred and thirty years! In 1893, fathers rarely did housework, and middle- and upper-class mothers rarely had careers. (We see both Mr and Mrs Cole working in the family business.) Many wealthy families had servants. In poor families, mothers worked and children could work when they turned ten. Single parents were usually widows or widowers who were not single by choice; same-sex marriage was unheard-of; and marriages rarely broke-up. Multicultural families were more common than you might think, but faced more prejudice than they do today. It was common for families to have lots of children (there are six Cole siblings), and for some of those children to die young. Exotic pets were allowed in Australia – the Cole children grew up with dogs and a cat, but also monkeys and parrots. Travel and communication took a long time, so it was harder to visit extended family if they lived far away.

Write a paragraph comparing your family with the Coles. How is your family similar or different? Compare:

- | | |
|------------|----------------------|
| - Children | - Work and housework |
| - Adults | - Extended family |
| - Pets | |

Share your answers as a class!



THEME: PROBLEM SOLVING

Curriculum areas in this section:

- English: Examining literature; Responding to literature; Creating literature; Language for interaction
- Critical and Creative Thinking: Reasoning

Pearl and Vally Cole face seemingly impossible odds in their game against the Obscurosmith. Not only are they under pressure from extremely high stakes, but their opponent is a trickster who has woven hidden dangers into the game. However, the children win the game because they are excellent problem-solvers, and because they pool their strengths together to play as an effective team. We learn that each Cole family member has a capability that will help them all to progress in the game. Importantly, while magic is used in the book, it isn't what helps or saves the Cole children: they tackle challenges with their application of knowledge and skills.

Theme extract 1

Eddie was already onto it. 'So we've got cherry blossom – good education. Broken stems – something about breaking. And dipladenia ... you are too bold.'

Vally sat upright on the bed. His face was pale.

'Vally?' Pearl nudged him. 'Did you forget something else?'

'No,' he moaned. 'I've remembered something. That slapping noise downstairs ...' He gave Pearl a pleading look, but she couldn't recall a slapping noise.

'Well, come on,' said Eddie. 'Out with it.'

Vally turned to him with a look of pure dread. 'It's the Whipping Machine.' [p.162]

Discussion points

- When reading this extract, do you understand how the clues ('good education', 'something about breaking', and 'you are too bold') lead Vally to think of the Whipping Machine?
- Do you think that the Whipping Machine really existed in the Victorian era?

Tips: While caning was a common form of punishment for schoolchildren in the Victorian era and beyond, the Whipping Machine was a Cole invention that appeared in *Cole's Funny Picture Book!*

Discussion points – literary devices

Re-read pages 91 to 93, beginning from *A shard shot out of the corner of the Window to the Deep* through to ... *and the water sucked Vally under.*

- How did you feel when you read this scene? Did you notice any changes in your breathing while you were reading it?
- Did you want to read faster at any point in these pages?
- Did you think that Vally would guess the answer to the riddle?
- Did you think that the Obscurosmith would let Pearl and Vally be dragged underwater?

Consider the extract below. Verbs in this extract are used to make the action feel more dramatic. Can you identify the verbs here?

The corner of the tank burst open with such tremendous force that it splattered against the opposite wall and snuffed out one of the gas lamps.

ACTIVITY: CREATIVE WRITING OR ART OR DRAMA

Invent a new department!

Ask students to form small groups for this writing/drawing exercise! Students should re-read chapters eight and/or twelve to commence this exercise because they are tasked with inventing their own new department within the Arcade and implementing a challenge within it that Pearl and Vally must face. The challenge could be as large or as small as the group wishes. Students can choose to use one of the below puzzles, or they could create their own.

The activity could be completed as a

- creative story, complete with both descriptions and dialogue.
- poster-making exercise, with students compiling drawings of the new department and its challenge accompanied by text descriptions.
- drama exercise, with students acting out the department and its challenge. Students could choose one person in the group to be a narrator (describing the department) and select other members to be Cole children completing the challenge.

The riddles and puzzles below, adapted from *Cole's Funny Picture Book*, are a starting point for possible challenges.

Teachers, print distribute these puzzles to groups without showing other groups. Answers can be found on page 19!

PUZZLE A:

I went for a walk and got it.
When I looked for it, I
couldn't find it, so I brought it
home with me.
When I found it, I threw it
away.

PUZZLE B:

An old invention, made today.
I work all through the night.
Few people would give me
away.
Undressed, I'm an ugly sight.

PUZZLE C:

Although I've neither legs nor
feet,
I'm only useful when I go;
I have no mouth, but yet I tell
What hundreds want to know.

PUZZLE D:

Write your name in one letter.

PUZZLE E:

A number as strange as a number can be:
It is more than eight hundred and seventy-
three!
But when cut in half, you'll see very plain,
The total is nothing – how can you explain?



CODE-BREAKER ACTIVITY: FLORIOGRAPHY

The Obscurosmith reveals his challenges through flowers, and the Cole children use a flower dictionary to decipher the Obscurosmith's codes. During the Victorian era, flowers, plants and herbs were used to convey special meanings. People could send a message to each other through a particular flower. Remember, this was a time when people did not discuss their feelings and where social graces were most important, so using a plant to send a message wasn't too unusual!

Your task is to identify the meanings of the flowers on this page. Most of these flowers appear in *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*. For additional clues, use the picture below! (Find the answers on page 19!)

APPLE BLOSSOM

BUTTERCUP

CANTERBURY BELL

CHERRY BLOSSOM

CORNFLOWER

CRESS

CARNATION. RED

DAISY

ENGLISH IVY

FUCHSIA. RED

HOLLYHOCK. AUSTRALIAN

HONEYSUCKLE

HYACINTH. BLUE

IRIS

MAGNOLIA. WHITE

MAGNOLIA. PURPLE

OLEANDER

PANSY. YELLOW

POPPY. RED

ROSE. RED

ROSE. WILD

ROSE. WHITE

SCARLET LYCHNIS

SPEEDWELL

STRAWBERRY BLOSSOM

SWEETPEA

TIGER LILY. ORANGE

VENUS FLYTRAP



THEME: DECEPTION AND KEEPING SECRETS

Curriculum areas in this section:

- English: Phonics and word knowledge; language variation and change; examining literature

There are many secrets in *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*. The most obvious example of deception is the Obscurosmith himself, whose motives are shady and who makes up new rules as the game progresses. But there is deceit within the Cole family, too. The first big secret is Pa's original deal with the Obscurosmith and the consequent copy of Ruby in the attic. But we learn that members of the Cole family all keep secrets from each other, from Pearl's deal with the Obscurosmith, and her pact with Vally to complete the game without the other siblings, to Vally and Eddie keeping their school canings a secret from the girls. The thread of secrecy runs throughout the book, but as the novel progresses, we see the characters becoming more open and honest with each other, helping them to bond more as a family.

Theme extract

Pearl was about to join him when Eddie stepped in front of him, blocking the way out. 'You three found out that our sister was alive, and you didn't tell us.' ... 'You know it's wrong to tell lies, don't you, Ivy?' He grabbed Ivy's arm. 'Who did this?' [p.125]

Discussion points

- Is there ever a 'right' time to lie? When/why?
- Why do you think that Pearl and Vally were keeping the copy of Ruby a secret from their other siblings and their mother?
- How do you think Eddie feels in this scene?
- Should Pearl and Vally have told their siblings and parents sooner about the deal with the Obscurosmith? Why/why not? Why do you think they didn't?

Theme extract

'You said we would have twenty-eight hours!' she protested.

'You do,' said the Obscurosmith, fiddling with the wheels on his cane. 'The next few will simply pass a little faster.'

'You can't do that,' Vally said. 'An hour is an hour.'

'Is it? Haven't you ever lost an afternoon in the blink of an eye, or had a school day last eternity?' [p.188]

Discussion points

- The Obscurosmith is cunning and leaves loopholes in his deals so that he can change the rules as he goes. Do you think this is fair?
- Read the last line of the extract again. Do you agree with what the Obscurosmith is saying here? What do you think the Obscurosmith is teaching Pearl and Vally about time?



LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

Heaps of Homonyms

'You'll have twenty-eight hours to play seven rounds.'

'Why seven?' asked Pearl.

'Because there are seven colours. Because there are seven Coles. Because it's odd, and looks sinister.'

[p.73]



The Obscurosmith likes to play with words, take metaphors literally, and deliberately misinterpret what people say. For example, in the extract above, he uses the word 'odd' to mean both strange and numbers that are not even.

Words that are spelled and pronounced the same but have different meanings – like odd – are called homonyms. Get into small teams and write down as many homonyms as you can think of in five minutes. After five minutes, share your answers. You get one point for every homonym that another team did not think of, so make sure you don't shout them for the whole class to hear! The team with the largest number of original homonyms wins.

THEME: PRE-FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

Curriculum areas in this section:

- English: Creating texts; Creating literature; Expressing and developing ideas; Interpreting, analysing, evaluating; Responding to literature; Interacting with others
- History: Chronology; Continuity and change; Historical significance; The Australian colonies; Australia as a nation

The Grandest Bookshop in the World is a fascinating blend of historical fact and creative fiction. The Cole family and Cole's Book Arcade really did exist! The Arcade was located in the centre of Melbourne and it was a must-visit destination for book-lovers. Filled with energy and whimsy, it was a literary theme park that recreated the sense of wonder that EW Cole felt when he read books. It had a room of illusions, a jungle in a glasshouse, a lolly shop, talking parrots and even a house band. Amelia Mellor's Book Arcade takes inspiration from the real Arcade and makes it even more wondrous through magical elements. This book is set wholly within the Book Arcade, and through Pearl and Vally's interactions with staff, customers, and family members, we get a glimpse of Victorian-era fashion, gender roles and social etiquette.



Before discussing elements of the world-building, ask the students:

- Which elements of the Book Arcade do you think are imagined, and which were part of the real Book Arcade?
- Can you imagine a Book Arcade like Cole's existing today? Why/why not?

Theme discussion: Fashion and gender norms in pre-Federation Australia

Theme extract 1

'I'd rather wear the trousers.'

'Well, I'd rather be a sugar glider, Vally, but we can't always get what we want.'

'Why a sugar glider?'

'I like them. Anyway, men can wear skirts.'

'Name one who does.'

'Monks. And Scotsmen. And Ancient Greeks.'

'Robes and kilts are completely different.'

Pearl rolled her eyes. 'It's just cloth, Val. It's not going to turn you into a girl.'

'Are you sure?' He tugged the skirt, as if to shake any hidden magic out of it. [p.104]



Theme extract 2

'She's wearing shorts! Like a boy!' The future girl looked so free in the summer heat: bare brown legs flashing past, and nobody telling her to mind her manners. Pearl tore her gaze from the mirror to look at Garnet in astonishment. 'Rational Dress must have really caught on!' [p.255]

Theme extract 3

'Nobody that Pearl could see was tight-laced into an hourglass shape, or strangling on a starched shirt-collar. One child had twinkling lights in their shoes; whether enchantment or electricity, she couldn't tell.' [p.258]

Discussion points

- What do these extracts tell you about the dress code of the Victorian era?
- What has changed since this time? What is similar?
- Do you think Pearl was ahead of her time in telling Val that clothes are just 'bits of cloth'?

Historical tip: The Rational Dress that Pearl describes refers to the Rational Dress movement, whose members advocated for women to wear clothes that were lighter and less restrictive than the corsets and heavy skirts and dresses worn by women at the time. This Victorian-era movement originated with Amelia Bloomer, who championed practical trousers rather than heavy layers of skirts. E.W. Cole supported Rational Dress, believing that organ-crushing corsets were as harmful as smoking, and he published pamphlets of 'Foolish and Useful Fashions' to amuse and educate the public. But women weren't the only ones who risked their health to fit societal expectations in Victorian times: men often wore very stiff shirt collars to help them keep their heads straight and high, and falling asleep in such a collar could choke a man to death.

Theme discussion: Pre-Federation Australian society

Theme extract 1

The street was wide, clean stone. Instead of a poor boy sweeping, a man rode a little machine with whirring brooms affixed to it. And the colours. Such rich, vivid colours: the clothing, the window displays, the trams, and the people, who were every beautiful shade of humanity. She could even see a person whose arms were blue and green with tattoos. [P. 255]

- What does this extract show you about society in the Victorian era compared to present day?

- What does Pearl mean by the phrase ‘every beautiful shade of humanity’?
- Why is Pearl surprised to see a person with tattoos on their arms?

Theme extract 2

... the Arcade had a rainbow staff to match its rainbow sign. The jeweller was Indian. The Tea Salon staff were Chinese. And Mr Gabriel, head of Non-Fiction Enquiries, was a Mauritian with vitiligo. [p.29]

- What do you think the phrase ‘rainbow staff’ means?
- Do you think it was unusual to see people from India, China and Mauritius in Melbourne during the Victorian era? Why/why not?

Theme extract 3

Pearl wasn't sure of her own beliefs, but she liked Pa's way of looking at it: Let The World Be Your Country, And To Do Good Be Your Religion. [p.38]

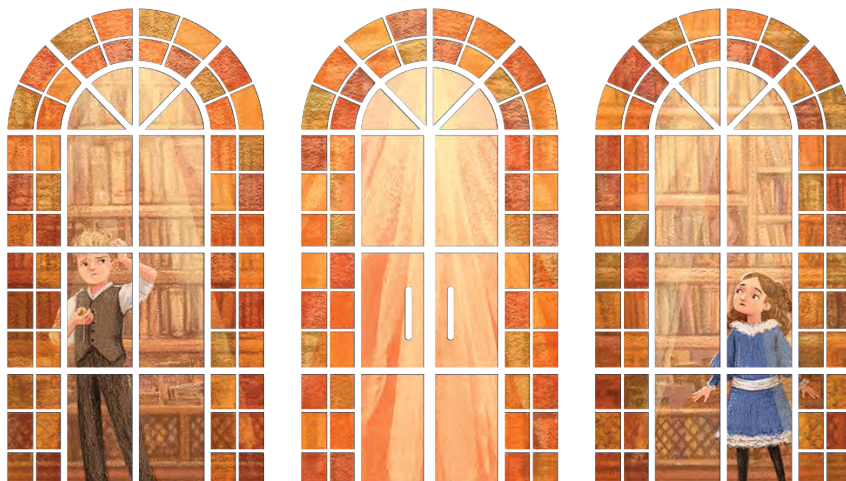
- What do you think this means: *Let The World Be Your Country, And To Do Good Be Your Religion?*

Theme extract and discussion: education

It wasn't a quiet, dusty library, either. It was dazzling, dynamic, with decorations hanging from the ceiling; girls with elaborate braids chatting round a table; a tiny child pulling out a picture book to show his father. By one wall sat a row of people from Ivy's age to Pa's, their class and creed indeterminable by their odd clothes. [p.260]

- What do you think Pearl means when she describes a row of people of all ages, ‘their class and creed indeterminable by their odd clothes’?
- How do you think libraries in the Victorian era compare with libraries these days?

Historical tip: The Cole children are unusual because, unlike many Victorian children, they have a say in their own education. Mandatory education began in 1872, and the typical school of Pearl and Vally's time was based on memorising facts and strict discipline. Class discussions and creative projects did not occur. Schools did not have a ‘community’ as they do today. Boys and girls were usually separated, and children who were left-handed or had learning difficulties were punished until they showed the ‘correct’ behaviour. E.W. Cole was a great believer in the power of education, but not in the education system of his time.



LITERACY ACTIVITY

Creative Writing – Future Mirror

Throughout the book, we learn that Pa Cole has some pretty big ideas about what the world might look like in ‘the third millennium’. In Chapter 22, Pearl sees a vision of modern-day Melbourne and learns that some of her father’s visions for the future have come true!

Some of the things that the real E.W. Cole predicted have come to pass since his time include

- Flying machines
- Large networks of telephones and railways
- Comfortable clothing being in fashion (Rational Dress)
- Federation (of Australia, not the world)
- The Condensed Library of the Future (Cole predicted we would edit the information down to 100 books; instead, we can condense paper and film onto the internet without losing any information.)
- Increased life expectancy
- Smoking being recognised as unhealthy

Some things that he predicted are still improving:

- Gender equality
- Humane care for the elderly, sick and disabled
- Global literacy
- The end of racism
- The end of world hunger

And, of course, a few things have happened that even Cole couldn’t imagine.

Read Pearl’s vision in chapter 22 again. Now imagine you have a magic mirror that will show you the world in the 2150s: one hundred and thirty years from now. What kind of future would you like your great-great-grandchildren to live in? Ideas to consider:

- What will people wear in your perfect future?
- How will they travel?
- Who (or what) might have different rights?
- How will they treat diseases and injuries?
- How will they learn, and where will their information come from?
- What personal technology will they have?
- What problems from our time have they solved?
- What things from our time would they dislike, or believe to be wrong?
- What good things from our time might not exist in the 2150s?

Finish off your story by describing what you would do after seeing the future. Would you run and tell someone? Go and start inventing something you saw? Jump into the mirror and travel through time?

RESEARCH AND ORAL PRESENTATION ACTIVITY

Notable and Notorious Australians

Who else might have visited the grandest bookshop in the world? Using the list below, research the life and accomplishments of someone who lived in Australia between the Gold Rush and Federation (1850s-1901). Your task is to compile a short biography of your notable or notorious historical figure and present this to the class in the form of a short speech.

Questions to consider: When were they born? When did they die? What was their cultural background? What famous or infamous achievements are they known for? Did they know another notable Australian? What impact did they leave on Australian society? And lastly, what do you think of this person's achievements? What can we learn from them today?

Indigenous Australians:

- Tommy Windich – explorer
- Marion Leane Smith – nurse in the First World War
- William Barak - artist
- Umbarra ('King' Merriman) - leader
- Truganini – survivor
- Fanny Cochrane Smith – first person to record Indigenous stories and songs

Men and women from European backgrounds:

- Peter Lalor – workers' rights activist, politician
- Ned Kelly – bushranger
- Valentine Keating and the Crutchie Push – disabled criminal gang
- Burke and Wills – explorers
- Sir Henry Parkes – politician, the 'father of Federation'
- Banjo Paterson – poet
- Catherine Helen Spence – suffragette
- Dame Nellie Melba – opera singer
- Miles Franklin – writer
- Saint Mary MacKillop – championed education for the poor
- Daisy May Bates - welfare worker in Indigenous communities
- Edith Cowan - first woman in Parliament
- Elizabeth Jessie Hickman – bushranger

People from Asian backgrounds:

- Mei 'Quong' Tart – entrepreneur, activist
- Louis Ah Muoy – community leader
- Shri Pammull – opal trader
- William Ah Ket – Australia's first Asian lawyer
- Chee Dock Nomchong - philanthropist
- Mary Nomchong - artist

THEME: GROWING UP

Curriculum areas in this section:

- **English: Expressing and developing ideas; Language for interaction; Interpreting, analysing, evaluating**
- **Personal and Social Capability: Development of resilience; Relationships and diversity**

Like many middle-grade heroes, Pearl and Vally grow through their adventures. This novel is especially focused on loss as a part of growing up. The Coles have a fear of loss, intensified by the death of Ruby. As the Book Arcade falls apart around them, and their father weakens with it, Pearl and Vally are forced to confront the temporary nature of all things, including their unusual and exciting childhood. Throughout the novel, the siblings have a heightened awareness of the passing of time, and they experience great anxiety when time seems to pass faster than it should. Vally in particular has a sense of melancholy at realising the things he enjoyed when he was younger no longer interest him in the same way. Vally and Pearl's unease and sorrow at these realisations are compounded by the siblings' gradual loss of their childhood memories in Cole's Book Arcade. But Pearl's epiphany that all things pass in time, and that the only thing she can do about this is preserve and enjoy them while she has the chance, reminds us that while Cole's Book Arcade no longer stands, the fact that it existed at all should be celebrated, as should the people we have loved and lost.

Theme extract 1

The benches, which had once come up to Vally's waist, were now at thigh level. His sister blended into the palette of vivid nursery colours ...

He realised, with some disappointment, that the things on which his eye lingered were also the most bland. A cricket bat, with a pair of clean white shin guards. A penny-farthing bicycle, hanging from the ceiling. It was still strange, thinking of himself as thirteen. When Pa was thirteen, he'd had to spend all his daylight hours working on his stepfather's farm. He'd hoed the ground and chopped wood to keep his mother and stepfather and all ten of his siblings alive through the hideous English winter. And then when he was Linda's age, he'd said goodbye and had never spoken a word to them again. [p.197]

Discussion questions

- How do you think Vally feels about the way his father grew up, working 'all his daylight hours'?
- In this passage, Vally reflects on growing up in both the 1840s and the 1890s. Throughout the novel, he struggles with the feeling of still being a kid in contrast with the societal expectation that he is a 'young man'. In the 1800s, people didn't think of teenagers as a distinct age group. How has growing up changed since then?
- Do you think most people your age are maturing faster or slower than Victorian-era children? Is this a good thing?

Theme extract 2

She'd never had the patience before to wait for spoilsport Val to get through all his hold ons and let's think about its. He'd been a stick-in-the-mud. And she'd been a bull at a gate. [p.218]

Discussion questions

- What does Pearl mean by *a stick-in-the-mud* and *a bull at a gate*?
- What does this moment tell us about resolving conflict?
- When did you first start learning to reflect on your actions from someone else's point of view?

Theme extract 3

Human lives were short. Seventy or eighty years, if they were lucky.

And Ruby – sweet Ruby, who danced like a fairy – had not even had that.

'You're right,' Pearl said. 'Everything will come to an end. The point is to enjoy it while it lasts.'
[p.262]

Discussion questions

- What do you think Pearl means by this: *Everything will come to an end. The point is to enjoy it while it lasts*?
- Think of something that has come to an end for you – living in a certain house, playing games you liked when you were little, losing a pet. How do you feel about it now compared to how you felt about it at the time?

LITERACY ACTIVITY

My character arc

Write a short account of an important event that helped you grow or change. Perhaps you faced a fear, helped someone in a difficult time, lost a loved one, or realised something about yourself or someone else that you didn't know before. You should write about yourself using a first-person perspective. Structure your account as a reflective piece, writing about your important event in the past (using phrases like 'on that day ...', etc.) and using your present-day feelings to reflect on the event (employing phrases like 'I know now that ...').

AFTER WE'VE FINISHED READING ACTIVITIES

BOOK REVIEW

What did you think of *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*?

Write a book review containing your thoughts on the novel. Don't forget to include:

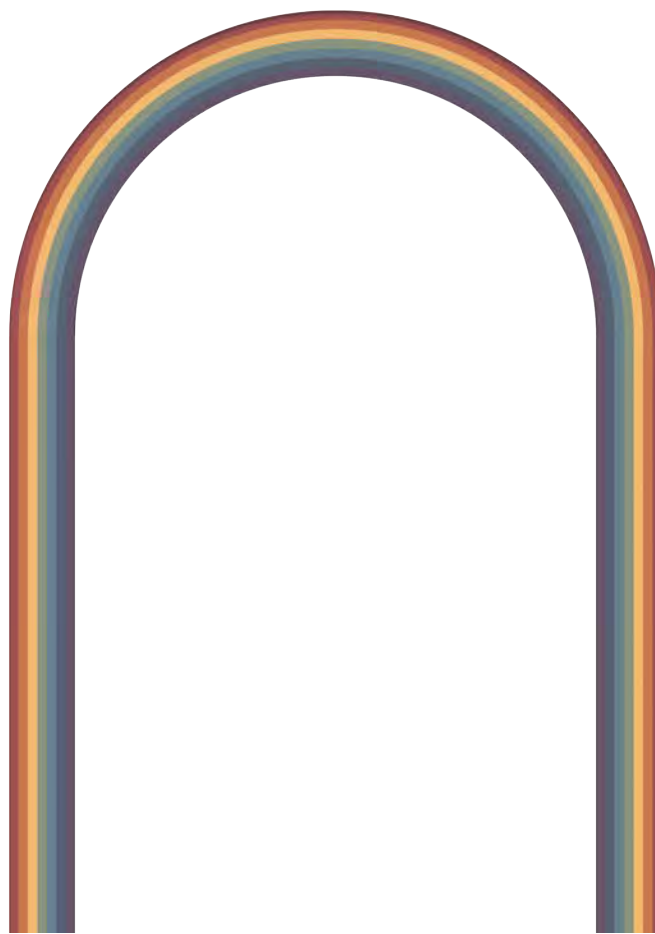
- The author's name.
- The publisher's name.
- What the book is about.
- What you liked about it.
- What you didn't like about it.
- Would you recommend it to your friends?



VISIT THE WORLD'S GRANDEST BOOKSHOPS

Using photos from the links below, have a class discussion about

- Where in the world this bookshop could be located.
 - What the students think of these bookshops. Are they traditional? Unexpected? How do they compare with local bookshops?
 - Have students been to any unusual bookshops or libraries?
 - Where would they most like to go from all of these choices?
- <https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/fiction/most-beautiful-bookshops-from-around-the-world>
 - <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140327-worlds-most-beautiful-bookshops>
 - <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/articles/13-beautiful-bookstores-world/>



Page 4 Puzzle answer: the letter 'A'.

Page 9. Puzzle A answer: A splinter, or a pebble in your shoe. Puzzle B answer: A bed. Puzzle C answer: A watch. Puzzle D answer: Write a huge letter and then write your name inside it! Puzzle E answers: The number can be 888 or infinity. (If you draw a line through 888, or cut the paper on which it is written in half, you get 000 000, or, if you cut the page in half, you get 000.)

Page 10. Floriography Puzzle answers. Apple blossom: I prefer you before all. Buttercup: childish. Canterbury bell: your letter received. Cherry blossom: good education. Cornflower, blue: be gentle with me. Cress: stability/balance. Carnation, red: deep love. Daisy: I love you truly. English ivy: marriage proposal. Fuchsia, red: I like your taste. Hollyhock, Australian (cheeseweed): wildness. Honeysuckle: devoted affection. Hyacinth, blue: your loveliness charms me. Iris: I send a message. Magnolia, white: sweetness. Magnolia, purple: royalty. Oleander: beware. Pansy, yellow: Thinking of you. Poppy, red: I am not free. Rose, red: romance. Rose, wild: pleasure and pain. Rose, white: I cannot. Scarlet lychnis: brilliant eye. Speedwell: semblance/appearance. Strawberry blossom: perfection. Sweet pea: delicate beauty. Tiger lily, orange: hate. Venus flytrap: deceit.