

From the award-winning author of *The Bone Sparrow*



THE GARGOYLE

ZANA FRAILLON • ROSS MORGAN

TEACHERS RESOURCES

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Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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INTRODUCTION

He's old, this gargoyle. Very old. Older than me. Older than anyone. He looks tired. If I had a seat, I would give it to him.

He shuffles past me and stands near the door and watches the city smushing past. I think I hear him sigh. An echoey, achy, hollow sort of sigh, like the wind when it gusts down lanes and through tunnels and in and out of the big drains that stretch under the city.

This is the poignant and moving story of an old gargoyle, forced off his rooftop to make way for a new development in a barren cityscape, and the child who encounters him on an overcrowded train. When the gargoyle is ordered off the train, he leaves his suitcase behind. The child opens the case and unleashes the gargoyle's many memories of the city and its inhabitants. When the case crumbles, leaving nothing but a small seed, the child decides to find a place to bring the gargoyle, and the soul of the city, back.

From Zana Fraillon, one of Australia's most critically acclaimed writers for children, and Ross Morgan, a fine artist of renown, comes this extraordinarily creative work.

This is an unforgettable story about preservation and conservation, aging and legacies which will leave a forever imprint on your heart.

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes are covered in this book which might be related to the Australian Curriculum, including:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

Several themes and topics are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:
<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>>

GARGOYLES AND GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

Discussion Point: The word ‘Gargoyle’ is derived from the old French ‘*gargouille*’, meaning throat, and was used to describe carved lions and spouts on classical buildings. The variety of their design multiplied as time passed. Examine images of them and discuss with students the various animals and mythological creatures they relate to. They were also said to have the power to ward off evil spirits. Research the design of gargoyles and their relationship to Gothic architecture.

Activity: Did you know that the spouts which often protrude from a gargoyle’s mouth had a practical purpose? They were like downpipes on contemporary gutters, designed to direct water away from the walls of the building to the ground below. Research both the symbolic and the practical purpose of gargoyles.

Discussion Point: This unit may lend itself to research into Gothic architecture and cathedral building. Read about such buildings and examine some images of gargoyles. David Macaulay’s classic work *Cathedral* (2013; 1973) is a useful resource.

AGEING

No-one seems to notice how much difficulty he is having.

No-one helps him or offers him their seat.

Not even when he looks at the sign that says, *Please vacate this seat for passengers who need it.* (pp 6–7)

Discussion Point: The gargoyle is symbolic of age and how old things are often not valued or even ignored in our society. The scene in the train reminds us all of the respect we should pay to older people. Sadly, they are often not given such due respect. How should we respect elderly people? What activities might we engage in to honour elderly people?

CONSERVATION

Discussion Point: How should we value the things we have, rather than seeking to replace them with something newer?

Discussion Point: This book juxtaposes the conservation of architecture with that of preserving nature. The planting of a tree is symbolic of such preservation for the future. Discuss these interconnected ideas.

LEGACIES AND MEMORIES

Moments on moments on moments explode from its depths, shaking the windows and rattling the doors. Blazing moments of great happinesses and fiery sadnesses, flickers of endless days and infinite nights, of moons waxing and waning, of stars dying and being born, of roots twisting and spreading, of trees whispering, of people singing and dancing, marching and storming, of being and being lost. Moments of despair. Moments of hope. Of dreaming. Moments that mean nothing. Moments that mean everything. (p 23)

Discussion Point: The gargoyle is a repository of memories. He represents all the ages that have passed and the people who have inhabited those eons. His suitcase, which the boy opens, contains ‘bubbles’ of memories. Discuss the importance of memories to an individual and to society. Discuss the significance of ancestors and the stories they might have to tell those who come after them.

Activity: The final three spreads show the boy planting the seedling, then a little older watering the tree, and then as an old man in a lush garden with the tree fully grown and the man walking behind his grandchildren – the next generation. How is the theme of re-growth symbolically related to the cherishing of memories? [See **Author’s Notes** for further thoughts on this topic.]

HOMELESSNESS

‘He’s a gargoyle,’ I explain. ‘He doesn’t have a ticket.’ (p 15)

Discussion Point: The gargoyle has been forced from his home on a rooftop and is attempting to travel with only a small case containing his memories. The man on the train grumbles about the puddle the gargoyle makes in the carriage, and the ticket collector forces him to leave the carriage and issues him with a fine. Often homeless people are dismissed by people who fail to recognise the underlying social issues which have caused them to become homeless. They are often ignored or disparaged. How are homeless people treated in society? How should they be treated? [See **Author’s Notes** for further thoughts on this topic.]

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

Activity: **Literary Devices** are used in the following quote:

He shuffles past me and stands near the door and watches the city smushing past. I think I hear him sigh. An echoey, achy, hollow sort of sigh, like the wind when it gusts down lanes and through tunnels and in and out of the big drains that stretch under the city. (pp 8–9)

Discuss the effect of the language used in this quote.

Activity: **Repetition** is also used to powerful effect, for example in the following quote:

I wonder where he is going. I wonder where he has been. I wonder what he has seen, perched high on a roof for all those years. I wonder what is in his case that makes it so very, very heavy. He looks at me. I think he is wondering about me too. (p 12)

What effect does the repetition in this sentence have on the reader?

Activity: Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the written and visual text. [See also **Author's Notes** below.]

Activity: Write your own story about a gargoyle.

Activity: Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the word 'gargoyle'.

VISUAL LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>

The visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below.

Activity: **Examine the cover** of this book and discuss the feelings it conveys and the information it suggests about the text, before you read it. It depicts the gargoyle sitting under a street lamp with his suitcase beside him and a puddle beneath him. This is seen against a brick wall in a sombre blue colour. Read the text and then consider the cover again. (The title page shows the same image as the one on the cover on a blank white page.) Design your own cover for the book.

Activity: The **endpapers** are solid colour. If they were decorative, what pattern would you design for them? Use a grid and replicate an image (or several images) relevant to this text.

Discussion Point: The **format** of the book is square. How does the **layout of the storyboard** and the **format and design** of the book influence your reading of it?

Activity: On his website Ross Morgan states that he is ‘fascinated with the visual narrative, and loves developing characters, stories, and environments’. Examine the interaction between the boy and the gargoyle and how emotion is conveyed in these drawings via facial expression and body language.

Discussion Point: The final artwork for *The Gargoyle* was hand painted using acrylic paint and paint markers on MDF board. The **colours** used in this book are moody, atmospheric and sombre in hue. This palette carries a poignant, emotional weight. Ross Morgan also enjoys including found objects in his work and imbues them with feeling and character. He has spoken of a childhood prowling amongst junkyards, and of the fact that he likes to include such old abandoned objects in his work (Davis, 2023). Discuss the techniques used in Ross Morgan’s artwork.

Activity: As an exhibiting fine artist, Ross Morgan says on his website that he ‘often explores his drawings and paintings as a collective series or sequence, giving the viewer an experience of storytelling through pictures’. In picture book art, the reader’s perspective in observing strong left to right movement across a double page spread is also important, encouraging the reader to follow the action sequentially in a filmic way. Read the book closely and observe this mode of visual storytelling. [See **Illustrator’s Notes**.]

Activity: Invite students to draw a gargoyle. Consult online drawing tutorials such as: ‘How to Draw a Gargoyle’, *Sketchok*, <https://sketchok.com/other/monsters-and-fantasy-creatures/how-to-draw-a-gargoyle/>.

Activity: Paint or collage a scene featuring a gargoyle to accompany the story you wrote above. Create a classroom mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheet 1** below.]

Activity: Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. [See **Bibliography**.] [See also **Worksheet 2**.]

CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. **Colour in images of gargoyles.** [See **Bibliography.**] You might also collage an image of a gargoyle. [See **Worksheet 1.**]
2. **Create a gargoyle mask.** [See **Worksheet 3.**]
3. **Create a poster** to advertise this book.
4. **Draw a cathedral building and design gargoyles to adorn its rooftop.**
5. **Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography.**]

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

Activity: Research gargoyles and Gothic architecture online. [See **Bibliography.**]

FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Research the work of Zana Fraillon. Compare this to her other books.
- Research the work of Ross Morgan. Compare this to his previous picture book.
- Students might research this book in comparison to reading other picture books and junior fiction about Gargoyles such as those listed in the **Bibliography.**
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider is suggested by this text.

CONCLUSION

This is a timeless tale about the passing of time and the importance of legacies and memories. The restorative power of nature, as well as the alluring permanence of human creativity and artistry, are celebrated in a moving story about passing on something of beauty to subsequent generations.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The Gargoyle is the direct result of a writing exercise that my friends (all of whom happen to be authors) and I came up with one day. We decided that we should all write a picture book to bring to the group the following week so we could workshop them together. This was the first (and last) time we gave each other a task, but from that, the seeds of *The Gargoyle* were planted. As soon as I left the café, the first words of the story came to me. *There's a Gargoyle on the train...* By that afternoon, I had finished. It sounds like the story emerged quickly, and in some ways it did – but the truth of it is, it had been simmering somewhere within me for a very long time.

I have always loved gargoyles. I love their unknowingness and their hybridity. The way they seem to shift in the shadows and shuffle in the evening light. The way it is so easy to believe that they crack from their stone skin in the dark of night and prowl our city streets. And I love the way they so often go unnoticed, perched at the very tops of buildings, yet observing everything. I often wonder at all they must have seen. All the small little moments of being that they were witness to. The oldest gargoyles in the world are thousands of years old. They would have witnessed changes to their environment so huge, that it is almost impossible for us to imagine. What stories do gargoyles hold within their stone? What would we do with those stories if we could hear them? What must they think of the world they see beneath their feet now? And what will they continue to see of the world as they gaze down for another thousand years to come? Gargoyles are a connection through deep time – linking us to the distant past and equally to the distant future. One of the questions I have been exploring lately, is the idea that we are all future ancestors. What we do now, will impact all those who come after us - long, long into the future. We are all custodians of this earth for those who come after – what sort of earth are we willing to leave behind? When I see a gargoyle, I am reminded of this, and I wonder, what stories of *us* will these gargoyles tell?

Before the writing exercise has been set, before I had known I would be writing about gargoyles, I had been talking with some of the elders in my life – asking them for stories their elders had told them, asking about how the world had changed, marvelling at their answers and knowledge of seemingly obscure facts, and wondering how I hadn't thought to ask for this knowledge, for these memories before - and they commented on how often they felt invisible now. 'You reach a certain age, and suddenly people don't see you anymore'. And I thought of the gargoyles, unseen on those roofs, so full of stories and the wisdom that comes with witnessing; crafted with such care and skill to provide safety to those within the building, and then so easily forgotten, or abandoned in the name of modernity and progress. I thought then that perhaps I would write a story about the way we treat the elders in our community. It would be a story of ancestorship and deep time and the environment, and I realised that a gargoyle would be the perfect character to carry such huge themes for young people. But I couldn't work out what that story would look like – it had no shape. Just an old, wise, gargoyle perched on a dilapidated building, waiting for the right question to be asked. And I didn't know what that question was.

That gargoyle watched and waited for my question for months. A year probably. I'd forget about him for a while, and then remember suddenly and feel his gaze upon me even stronger than before. And then one day I happened to be sitting on a train with my children when a ticket inspector boarded and asked for our tickets. The elderly man sitting opposite me didn't have a valid ticket. He explained that he was currently experiencing homelessness, and as soon as he received his pension he would top up his ticket, but he needed to get into the city where volunteers were providing meals for those who needed them. The ticket inspector didn't respond, but instead began to issue the man a fine for not having a ticket. As he was writing the fine, he asked the man first for his name, and then for his address. At this point the man and I looked at each other in disbelief, and we both said at the same time, that he had just explained he was homeless right now, and therefore didn't have an address. I offered to give the man my ticket, but by this time the inspector had decided to 'let him off' with a warning. I was shocked and horrified at the disregard and disrespect that this man was treated with. We chatted for a while and it was clear that for this man, being treated in this way was not unusual. Every day he was subjected to the harsh judgment of strangers. This man had seen a lot in his life. He had a wealth of knowledge and countless stories to tell. If only people would listen. And there was the gargoyle again, watching, waiting.

I had written about homelessness before. I knew that like the gargoyles that go mostly unseen and unnoticed by the busy bustle of people getting from Point A to Point B, those experiencing homelessness in our society are too quickly ignored, forgotten, abandoned. Too easily made invisible. On any given night, there are over 100,000 people in Australia without a home. Homeless services are forced to turn away hundreds of people a night. The number of those experiencing homelessness is rising steadily as the rental crisis and increased cost of living continue to push more and more people out of secure housing. And yet, the federal government has planned to cut \$65.5 million in funding from homelessness services from 1 July 2023. According to *Homelessness Australia*, this cut is equivalent to approximately 650 homelessness workers around the country, and will result in more people, including women and children fleeing family violence, from getting the help they need to avoid homelessness.

It was only a few days later when my writing group met, and we tasked ourselves to write a picture book. And there was the gargoyle. And suddenly I knew exactly what question I wanted to ask him. It was the question I wanted to ask my elders and the man on the train. It is the question I want to ask everyone. What are the stories you want to pass on? What are the stories the earth can't bear to lose? Because if we know each other's stories, those stories that are too important to forget, then we can learn to ancestor better.

When those first words of *The Gargoyle* popped into my mind, I realised I wasn't just writing about ancestorship and the environment and deep time. I was writing about those who are made invisible. I was writing about how the world could change if more of us stopped and listened. I was writing about imagining the sort of world we want to live in, and how the smallest, tiniest seeds of change are all that we need. I was writing about hope. For the earth. For us, for our children, for

our elders, for those yet to come. And a picture book for young people, could hold all of that. Because young people remember to ask the important questions. They know to ask for stories.

ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

The Gargoyle

I spent a lot of time researching and developing the look of the gargoyle character and all his complexities. His posture and expressions are very deliberate, and his physical features are inspired by a combination of several animal characteristics and architectural functions.

Looking to nature, old statues and architectural forms for inspiration I decided to make this special gargoyle a four-legged creature. He naturally stands on a roof top using all four legs with his long neck looking down. His overall appearance and body gestures were inspired by several creatures including: a green tree frog, squirrel monkey, mongoose, bulldog and tortoise. His wings were inspired by a bat and dragon. Generally, the gargoyle's body was inspired by creatures that stand on four legs naturally, but could temporarily stand on two if necessary (like for dragging a heavy suitcase onto a train).

You may notice the gargoyle has a slight hunched look. This is based on the fact that he is not only a four-legged creature, but he has been on a rooftop for centuries looking down. When he does occasionally stand on two feet it is natural for him to look or hunch towards the ground. I have an early memory of one of my great uncles who used a walking stick. I clearly remember him having a posture where his head seemed lower than the rest of his body, as if he was ready to walk on all fours. He always sat quietly in the corner of a big family gathering and fell asleep hunched against his walking stick. This early memory kept playing in my head as I was creating the gargoyle.

Another key aspect of the gargoyle's character design is very practical and based on the very early architectural intentions of a gargoyle.

Architecturally the gargoyle acts like an old-fashioned down pipe. They were added to buildings and castles to serve a very important structural purpose – preventing the rain from running down the walls and protecting the overall building from water damage. More complex gargoyles became ornate sculptures often in the shape of a creature and even had drainage that went through the middle of their body (often deliberately causing water to run out of their mouth/throat). I really embraced this concept and used it on the page that shows his leaking mouth. As if the gargoyle still had some remaining rusty water in his old pipes and the movement of the train made it spill out.

Because the gargoyle is made of stone, I really wanted his facial expressions to be subtle (almost unchanging). I tried to imagine what it would be like quietly sitting above a city and watching it change over centuries. I felt the gargoyle would need

to be extremely wise, patient, gentle and empathetic. I ended up making a little plasticine sculpture of his face to sketch his expression from multiple angles and lighting. His face was inspired by a tortoise, frog and bulldog.

The Boy

The inspiration for the boy character was one of my lovely nephews. He generously acted out parts of the story so I could take photos and create some different poses and expressions throughout the story. His dad even pretended to be the gargoyle, so he had someone to interact with.

The Case

I was very lucky to have an old worn-out suitcase of my mother's. It worked perfectly as a base prop, and my nephew used it in many of the reference photos I took.

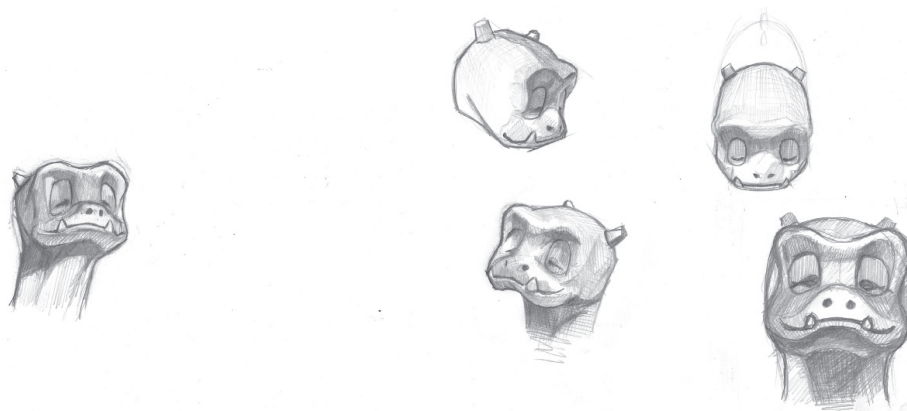
The Train

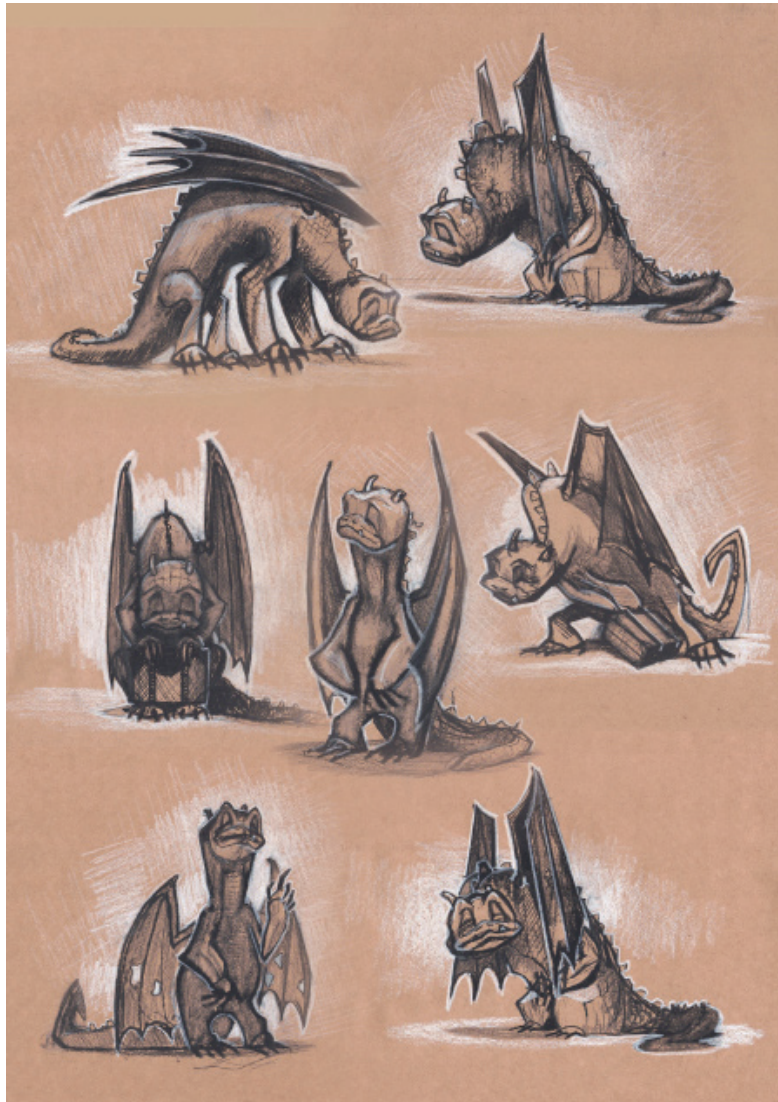
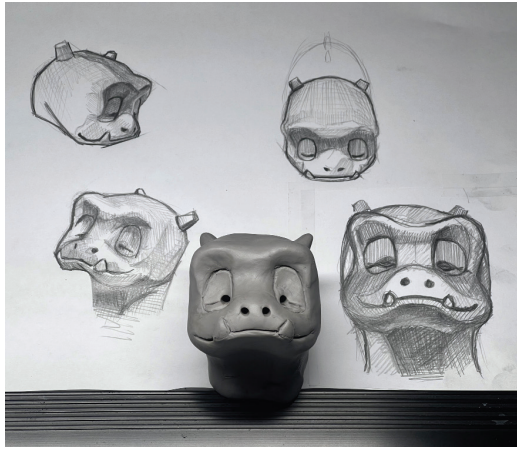
I initially thought of setting the story in a 'steam train' era but I felt the story visually needed to capture multiple generations of time, so I decided on using a more contemporary style train. Adding further layers of graffiti, rust and neglect made it feel even older. I was inspired by black and white photos of subway trains in the 1970's and 1980's.

If you look closely on the memories page you will find some bubbles that show the different eras of passenger travel. From horse and cart to steam train and modern railcars.

The City

The background city in this story is subtly based on my memories living and working among the semi-industrial environments and abandoned spaces throughout South Australia. I am inspired by spaces that have layers of peeling paint, rust, and crumbling bricks. I especially love seeing nature find its way back into those spaces.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zana Fraillon (she/her) was born in Naarm (Melbourne), but spent her early childhood in San Francisco. Her 2016 novel, *The Bone Sparrow*, won the ABIA Book of the Year for Older Children, the Readings Young Adult Book Prize and the Amnesty CILIP Honour. It was also shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, the Queensland Literary Awards, the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, the Gold Inky and the CILIP Carnegie Medal.

Her book *The Lost Soul Atlas* won the 2020 Aurealis Award for Best Children's Fiction and was shortlisted for the 2021 Children's Book Council Award for Book of the Year: Older Readers. *Wisp*, illustrated by Grahame Baker-Smith was published in 2018. Her most recent picture book, *The Curiosities*, illustrated by Phil Lesnie, was a 2021 Aurealis Award winner. She published a verse novel *The Way of Dog* in 2022. *The Raven's Song* co-written with Bren MacDibble was also published in 2022. See: <https://www.zanafrailon.com/>

See also:

Lavi, Tali, 'Know the Author; Zana Fraillon', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, Vol 33, Issue 2, May 2018, pp 8–10.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ross Morgan is a fine artist and illustrator from Adelaide, South Australia. From an early age, Ross enjoyed exploring the rural environment filled with creatures, abandoned structures and objects of yesteryear. He also practised drawing, painting, and arts and crafts projects at the kitchen table, encouraged by his mother. These early experiences were key in establishing his life-long interest in drawing and painting.

He completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of South Australia in 2000. Since then, he has been exhibiting in solo and group exhibitions and running an independent studio practice.

Some of Ross's major awards include being selected as a semi-finalist in Doug Moran National Portrait Prize (2014), a three-time finalist in the Kennedy Art Prize (2017, 2018 and 2021) and winner of the John Shaw Neilson Acquisitive Art Prize in 2015.

In 2019, Ross won Raising Literacy Australia's Emerging Author and Illustrator Mentoring Project. This led to his first illustrated book, *Molly Moores has a House Like Yours*, written by Kaliah Tsakalidis and published in 2020. In 2021, he was shortlisted for the SCBWI Australian Picture Book Illustrator Award as an Emerging Illustrator. He has two books due to be published: *Hedgehog the Wonder Dog* by Dannika Patterson (Ford Street, 2022) and *Glow* (Walker Books) which is forthcoming.

See: <https://www.rossmorgan.com.au/>

See also:

Davis, Sarah, 'Author-Illustrator Episode #10: Ross Morgan', Brisbane Writers Festival (58.03 mins.), *YouTube*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0Y_7FPuYEw

This is an excellent interview about his background, influences and process. It offers insights into his work, and into this book.

Possingham, Bec, 'What Makes an Artist: Ross Morgan – Progressive Surrealist', *Bluethumb*, 21 April 2016,

<https://bluethumb.com.au/blog/artists/what-makes-an-artist-ross-morgan-progressive-surrealist/>

WORKSHEETS

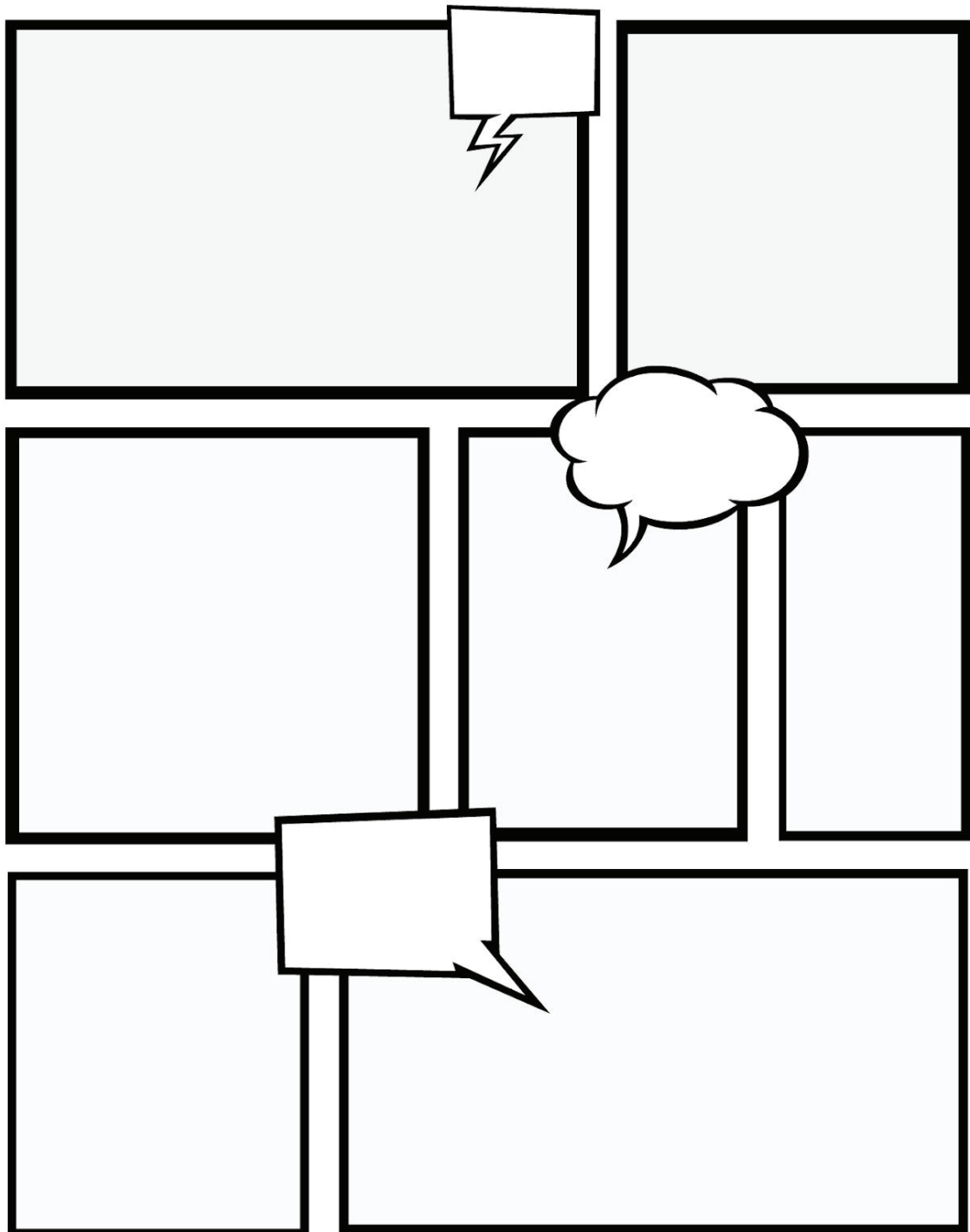
WORKSHEET 1. COLLAGE THIS IMAGE



From: 'Gargoyle Coloring Page' *Super Colouring* <https://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/gargoyle-0>

WORKSHEET 2. GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge using a photocopier to give you more space.



Comic Book Template viewed at:

<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/365706432212821426/>

WORKSHEET 3. GARGOYLE MASK

Enlarge the gargoyle mask below on A3 paper then glue to craft paper and cut it out. Then add elastic to the sides to put over your head.



From: *Woo! Jr Kids Activities* <https://www.woojr.com/printable-halloween-masks/halloween-masks-creepy/>

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PICTURE BOOKS

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- Prelutsky, Jack, *The Gargoyle on the Roof: Poems*, Ill. by Peter Sis, HarperCollins, 2006; Greenwillow, 1999.
- Traver, Teresa, *Spooky and the Gargoyle*, Thousand Acre Woods Books, 2019.
- Wild, Margaret, *The Stone Lion*, Ill. by Rita Voutila, Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2016. [Note: This is not about a gargoyle, but has relevance as a stone carving.]

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- Eager, Lindsay, *The Pickpocket and the Gargoyle*, Walker Books, 2022.
- French, Vivian, *Lottie Luna and the Giant Gargoyle*, Ill. By Nathan Reid. HarperCollins, 2021.
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- Shelley, T.C., *The Monster Who Wasn't*, Bloomsbury, 2019.
- Wallace, Suzanne, *The Man Who made Gargoyles*, Ill. by Ramir Quintana, Xlibris US, 2014

NON-FICTION

Note: Most titles below are published for adults but could provide useful teaching resources.

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Coffman, Frank, *The Gargoylicon: Imaginings and Images of the Gargoyle in Literature and Art*, Lulu Press, 2022.

Macaulay, David, *Cathedral*, Clarion Books, 2013; Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1973.
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WEBSITES - TEACHING RESOURCES

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'The Grotesque World of Gargoyles', *Ancient Origins*, 31 December 2020,
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.