

1992

Prose fiction preferences of lower secondary urban Aboriginal boys

Stephen James White
Edith Cowan University

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**PROSE FICTION PREFERENCES OF LOWER SECONDARY URBAN
ABORIGINAL BOYS**

BY

Stephen James White Dip. of Teach.

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of
Eachelor of Education with Honours
at the School of Education, Edith Cowan University**

Date of Submission: 15/3/1993

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the prose fiction preferences of lower secondary urban Aboriginal boys. The Likert scale scores from the 2 x 4 factorial design were analysed using an ANOVA test of significance. It was found that the research group significantly preferred action genres to non-action genres, Aboriginal characterisations to white Australian characterisations, and contemporary story extracts to traditional story extracts.

DECLARATION

"I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in text."

Signature.....

Date..... 12/31/1993

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was made possible through the support of several people to whom I express my gratitude.

Mr. Sean Monahan, from the Education Department at the Edith Cowan University has been most supportive in his role as supervisor. His constructive criticisms and helpful suggestions have been of considerable value to myself whilst preparing this thesis.

I thank my wife, Lorraine Hammond, for granting me unlimited access to 'her' computer. In addition, her diligent proof reading and words of advice were always appreciated.

I thank the Computing Department at Willetton Senior High School for their support and assistance in the production of this document.

Finally, I thank my parents for their patience and understanding through the years.

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CHAPTER 1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

In recent years, teachers across the curriculum have been encouraged to explore and use the cultural diversity present in most classrooms. The same approach has also been, as would be expected, encouraged in Aboriginal education. The department of Employment, Education and Training (1989) in issuing its "National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy" stated that the curriculum should "value and recognise the cultural background of the students" (p. 3).

However, whilst this objective is certainly laudable, it needs to be approached with due care, particularly in Aboriginal Education. Aboriginal culture is extremely diverse, "the term Aboriginal describes a great variety of people ranging from metropolitan and rural dwellers to tribal groupings" (Noble, 1980, p. 4). Consequently, learning strategies appropriate for one group might not be appropriate for another group.

Significance of Study

This study has been prompted by the perception (from personal experience) that many English teachers assume that Aboriginal culture is homogeneous. Consequently, some

teachers are inadvertently selecting prose fiction unrelated to some of their students' life experiences. For instance, Dreamtime stories would seem to be more appropriate for Aboriginal boys living a more traditional lifestyle. Furthermore, the dearth of research in this area suggests that texts found on various prescribed recommended reading lists for Aboriginal students are of 'assumed' relevance.

Therefore, this study will attempt to establish certain facts about lower secondary urban Aboriginal boys' prose fiction preferences. English teachers can use this information when they select reading resources for the above mentioned group.

Finally, it needs to be stressed that whilst the philosophical ramifications of this study are obviously important, their exploration is not a primary intent of this research. Questions can be raised concerning the morality of the 'street kid' action genre and arguments can be made for the educational value of Dreamtime stories across the curriculum. However, it is premature to address these questions before we have comprehensive data concerning Aboriginal prose fiction preferences.

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to investigate the prose

fiction reading preferences, and the basis for these preferences, of urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys. The hypotheses presented are:

- 1 Urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys will prefer action genre extracts significantly more than other extracts.
- 2 Urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys will prefer one of the racial characterisations, either white Australian or Aboriginal, significantly more than the other.
- 3 Urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys will prefer contemporary extracts significantly more than traditional extracts.

Limitations and Definitions

The findings of this study will not necessarily reflect the prose fiction reading preferences of all urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys in Western Australia. The small sample size and the exclusion of other urban areas, namely Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie-Boulder limit the study's generalisability.

To understand this study the following terms require explanation:

Research Group:

The urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys (subjects) used in the study.

Aboriginal:

According to the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Commission one must, to be considered Aboriginal: identify with the Aboriginal community, be accepted by that same community, and have an Aboriginal ancestor.

Urban Aboriginal:

Urban Aborigines are those Aborigines who reside in the cities and large towns of Australia. Typically, these people have considerable contact with Western cultural motifs. However, there can be a problem with this definition because it is based on the geographical location of an Aboriginal person. It is possible that many 'urban Aborigines' are very recent arrivals to an urban setting. Traditional Aborigines normally reside in remote areas and, therefore, have limited access to Western cultural motifs.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**Introduction**

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of literature specifically researching the topic. Therefore the review will, for the most part, present a generalised overview of related literature, and from this, develop an argument relevant to this study.

This review of literature will provide an overview of three areas.

- (a) theories and related models of reading,
- (b) the constructed cultural identity of urban Aborigines, and
- (c) specific prose fiction preferences of the research group.

Areas (a) and (b) are important to this study for a number of reasons. The reading theories indicate the significance of student background knowledge to the reading process. The review of urban cultural identity will reveal the world view of the research group. The first two areas of research under review collectively demonstrate the need to establish a relationship between the content of prose fiction and student cultural identity. Area (c) will be less generalised, dealing with literature specific to this area of study.

Reading Theories

The following review of reading theories will demonstrate that the background knowledge a reader brings to a text expedites the reading process. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the background knowledge a child brings to a particular text.

There have been a number of different reading theories which have held prominence in the last 30 years. During that time the focus has shifted from "outside-in" theories to "inside-out" theories to "interactive" theories (Warner 1973, Cambourne 1979). The "interactive " theories reconciled both preceding theories and in addition, spawned the concomitant "schema" theory of reading.

"Outside-in" theorists, including Gough (1984) and Samuels (1985) believe that the reading process always begins with the text. Cambourne (1979) provided a description of the reading process as perceived by the "outside-in" theorists: "the reading process begins with the inward flow of graphic information from the page. This information proceeds to the inside of the reader's head in a strictly linear fashion where it is analysed, bit by bit, until some meaningful interpretation occurs in the brain" (1979, p. 7).

"Inside-out" theorists, such as Goodman (1976) and Smith

(1978) assert that the process of reading begins with the vast store of understanding accumulated by the individual during his\her life time. This store includes real world knowledge and an understanding of language conventions. Using this bank of understanding, and responding to selected features of print before them, readers attempt to reconstruct the author's meaning.

The "inside-out" theory gained wide acceptance because the "inside-out" theorists could point to evidence on how we process print. For instance, research conducted by Chapman (1983) and Freebody (1985) indicated that: "Much of the processing at a visual level... comes after we have read the text in our mind, and they (Chapman & Peabody) provide clearly established evidence that the more we concentrate upon processing visual information the less we are able to process the meaning" (Kemp, 1987, p. 11). Cambourne (1979) suggested: "that the way a word is pronounced is determined in many instances by its meaning, and that in fact meaning must be worked out before pronunciation" (Cambourne, 1979, p. 78). Cambourne (1979) demonstrated this point by citing the following example: "the lead singer is heavy", as opposed to: "the lead sinker is heavy" (Cambourne, 1979, p. 85). Obviously, the reader must be aware of the different meanings, if the word 'lead' is to be pronounced correctly.

Nevertheless, "outside-in" theorists, namely Samuels (1985), argued, that if the text is not central to the successful negotiation of print then conceivably one could read a blank page. Furthermore, there were also doubts raised as to whether a competent reader processed print the same as an incompetent reader.

Many critics of the "inside-out" theory, such as Charles (1991), have argued that the adoption of the "inside-out" theory has produced a demonstrable decline in literacy standards in schools throughout the Western world. They believe that this demonstrates that the practical application of the "inside-out" theory has failed. A study, *Sponsored Reading Failure*, undertaken by Turner in Great Britain (cited in Charles, 1991, p. 10), indicates: "that the proportion of non-readers amongst seven year-old pupils in England has risen from 10 to 15 percent in the last five years".

Australia has a reading program very similar to that of Great Britain. Harrison (cited in Charles, 1991, p. 10) believes that Australia's position mirrors that of Great Britain: "if we were to test properly we would doubtless come up with similar data for our own seven year olds".

However, one must also realise that numerous other

variables may be contributing to the decline of school-age literacy, if indeed it is declining. A recent paper by Kenneth Rowe (cited in Charles, 1991, p. 11) listed factors he believes are adversely affecting students' reading performance: "attitudes towards reading; reading activity at home; family's socio-economic status; attentiveness in the classroom". Furthermore, Thomson (1987) has asserted that television is an enormous distraction to both parents and teachers attempting to encourage children to read. In addition, Whitehead's Schools Council (1977) findings showed that particularly poor readers tended to watch more television than competent readers.

Obviously, considerable debate existed, and to some extent still exists, over the relative merits of both theories. It would seem extremely difficult to determine whether the application of the "inside-out" theory of reading or the holistic approach in contemporary classrooms has produced a decline in school-age literacy, or whether other social variables have been more significant.

Efforts have been made to reconcile the theoretical conflicts, Rumelhart (1975) developed the "interactive theory". Essentially, this model suggests that readers process print using "inside-out" processes, but do

occasionally 'shift gears' to use the "outside-in" processes (Pearson 1979).

Rumelhart (1975) stated that competent readers rely heavily on their prior knowledge of the world, and the conventions of the language, but nevertheless engage "outside-in" processes when the text is unfamiliar. Schema theorists, such as Adams & Collins (1979), Hacker (1980), Sebesta, Calder & Cleland (1982), and Rand (1984) see reading as an interactive relationship between the print and prior knowledge of the reader. This theory is derived from the "interactive" theory, its only addition being that it provides a theory on how background information is formulated and accessed.

"A 'Schema' is an organised body of knowledge about the world. Schemata may be informational, linguistic and affective. An individual has hundreds of schemata, some of which are comprehensive and large, with other schemata embedded within them, and others which represent smaller units of knowledge" (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p. 7). The inherent knowledge of a schema is applied to virtually every facet of human existence, whether it be driving a car or reading a book. It could be explained as a manual for every human task attempted. "The goal of schema theory is to specify how the reader's knowledge interacts with and shapes the information on the page and how that knowledge

must be organised to support this interaction" (Adams & Collins, 1979 as cited Hacker, 1980, p. 867).

Implications for English Teachers

The "interactive" theory of reading, and the "schema" theory place considerable importance on student prior knowledge. English teachers should acknowledge the significance of these theories when they go about the task of selecting prose fiction for lower secondary urban Aboriginal boys. If students are going to use their prior knowledge they need to be given reading material which is relevant to their backgrounds. "Very little identification of meaning will take place if the subject matter of what is being read is completely removed from the experience of the reader" (Latham and Sloan, 1979, p. 11).

There are many theorists who believe that a relationship between improved comprehension and culturally relevant reading books exists. Thomson (1987) stated that if students are to improve both their reading skills and enjoyment of reading, teachers should "encourage students to make links continually between the world of the text and the world of their personal experiences" (Thomson, 1987, p. 83). Goodman (1978) devised an instrument to aid in the assessment of the cultural relevance of texts. Essentially, the test measured the relevance of different aspects of the story, such as setting, characterisations,

language and theme. The accompanying study found that: "when literature was more highly relevant in some or most of the above categories, then children read better and with more understanding and enjoyment... the ideal curriculum for teaching children... is one which builds on... common experience" (Goodman, 1978 as cited by Smith, 1981, p. 7). Johns (1986) is even more emphatic stating that: "matching students with appropriate instructional materials is the most important contribution teachers can make to their reading programs" (Johns, 1986, p. 9). The only qualification is that offered by Arnold (1989) who champions the capacity of reading to broaden one's horizon: "this is the virtue of wider reading... it develops our skills of self-perception and insight into others' ideas and actions" (Arnold, 1989, p. 3). Whilst one cannot dismiss the broadening powers of reading, it is also important to realise that one must move from the familiar to the unfamiliar, or the known to the unknown, so that one gradually acquires a grasp of the world. To do otherwise would be to throw students in at the 'deep end'.

The importance of prior knowledge also applies to the students' familiarity with genre conventions. Some research, such as, Mandler & Johnson (1977), Stein & Glenn (1979) and Hacker (1980) has found that children as young as four have developed schemata of the structural patterns of stories. "This implicit knowledge of story structure provides a valuable contextual framework for comprehension"

(Smith 1978, p. 80). If an English teacher was aware of a lower secondary urban Aboriginal male student preference for a particular genre, this in turn could be used to improve that student's comprehension processes. Obviously, the students would bring additional background knowledge to a preferred genre because they would be more conversant with its genre conventions.

The Construction of Urban Aboriginal Identity

So far, this review has indicated that student background knowledge, in the form of schemata and life experiences, is of paramount importance to the reading process. It is logical that if English teachers are going to select prose fiction on the basis of the urban Aboriginal cultural background or interpretation of the world, they need to understand what this cultural background is.

The work of Genovese (1975), Asad (1979) and Wolf (1982) has influenced our perceptions of Aboriginality.

Collectively they argued that cultural construction is a consequence of one's interaction with one's environment. Consequently, their ideas refuted the notion that all Aboriginal culture is steeped in the past.

This idea was revolutionary when one considers the earlier perceptions of Aboriginality. For many years, anthropologists had difficulty defining "Aboriginality". Initially, some research including Bennett (1969) and Berndt (1971) suggested that all Aborigines were steps along a cultural continuum ranging from tribal Aborigines to those who were almost totally assimilated into Western culture. However, this early research tended to suggest that the tribal Aborigine was representative of the 'pure' Aboriginal culture.

Later research has, however, rejected this cultural continuum theory. Wolf (1982), Jordan (1984) and Eckermann (1988) have asserted that urban Aborigines have constructed a cultural identity which is a separate entity within itself. This cultural identity is seen as a valid response to the environment in which they live. Eckermann (1988) in elaborating this understanding of urban identity stated:

Instead of adopting as benchmarks, some ideal, some true cultural traditions, and then examining how far urban/rural groups have moved from such traditions... it is time to examine what groups do believe in, act upon, and accept these valid expressions of adaption to their environments, as valid expressions of their own present functioning cultural traditions.

(Eckermann 1988, p. 32)

Wolf (1982) is similar in sentiment, stating that:

In the rough and tumble of social interaction, groups are known to exploit the ambiguities of or valences to them, to borrow forms more expressive of their interests, or to create wholly new forms to answer changed circumstances. (Wolf 1982, as cited by Cowlshaw, 1988, p. 88).

Essentially, this means that all cultural construction, or development is very much a product of its social context. In relation to urban Aborigines this is particularly important because obviously their considerable contact with Western cultural motifs has produced a culture that incorporates many of these cultural motifs.

Eckermann himself, in a study conducted with Watts & Dixon (1984), found that contemporary urban Aboriginal life is not based on traditional kinship and communal sharing as once generally thought. The researchers interviewed 77 urban (and rural) Aboriginal households in Queensland and New South Wales asking the interviewees questions concerning the source of their household's income. Analysis of the interviews showed that, "not all income was shared by the whole household... (and the) people interviewed displayed a preference for individualism in decision-making" (Eckermann, Watts & Dixon, 1984, pp. 33-34). Any appearance of traditional kinship and communal sharing is, according to the study, the result of contact with and the subsequent influence of poor itinerant whites. Sharing monies and accommodation is seen as a response to economic pressures. One needs to remember that the researchers were requesting information on personal finances which some people could perceive as being intrusive. This being the case, it is possible that some subjects might have been a little reticent to divulge true

information. Nevertheless, in the absence of contradictory evidence the findings deserve serious attention.

Snow & Noble (1986) in reviewing the theories and opinions of many anthropologists concluded that urban Aboriginal life is in fact very similar to that of the dominant Western culture:

They (urban Aborigines) share the values of white Australians: they attend the same churches; have favourable attitudes towards education; they value individuality more than the collectivity of their kin group; and are more oriented towards the future than to the present or past. (Eckermann, 1973; Lippmann, 1973; Rowely, 1971; Watts, 1972; as cited by Snow & Noble, 1986, p. 41).

A significant study was also undertaken by Snow & Noble (1986) in which 83 urban Aboriginal subjects (43 males, 40 females) were given an Aboriginality scale constructed to assess whether they identified with Europeans or "Koories" (Aborigines). Factor analyses revealed that the Aboriginality scale was divided into two clusters. The first factor accounted for 52.3% of the variance. It was titled the "lost" factor, these were people who identified with white Europeans. The second factor accounted for

47.7% of the variance, it was titled the "Koori" factor, these were people who identified with the Koories. Results from the discriminant analyses showed that those who identified with the Koories had a more positive self concept. In addition, it was revealed that although the Koories identified with their own reference group they had particularly positive perceptions of white Australians.

The results of this study are certainly interesting, and the fact that it was the first study to attempt to investigate urban Aboriginal cultural reference groups underlines its significance. However, the particularly small sample size and the acknowledgement of the researchers that certain questions were inadvertently omitted makes one cautious when considering the results. Nevertheless, the results do shed a little light on the possible composition of the urban Aboriginal cultural identity. It would seem that about half of urban Aborigines identify with a European reference group. The other group, about a half, though identifying with the Koori group, are certainly conversant with European cultural motifs.

However, urban Aboriginal cultural identity has been influenced by other factors. Their marginal contact with traditional Aboriginal groups and their mixed racial blood, which has seen them discriminated against both

socially and politically, has necessitated the development of a different culture, one which adapts to these factors (Snow & Noble 1986) Therefore, it would be mischievous to assume that urban Aboriginal is little more than a duplicate of the dominant Western culture.

The thrust of the above research demonstrates that contemporary urban Aboriginal culture is far removed from traditional Aboriginal culture and that urban Aborigines have a cultural identity similar to, but different from that of the dominant Western culture. Whilst the traditionalists might hanker for some clearly traditional Aboriginal sense of identity, the reality suggests that urban Aborigines, at least, have developed a Westernised sense of identity. The development of this identity is, nevertheless, a valid cultural response to the environment in which they live. Accordingly, this cultural identity is in no way inferior or subordinate to the culture of traditional Aborigines or white Australians.

Implications For English Teachers

The thrust of this research is important to English teachers of urban Aboriginal boys. If English teachers are not aware of this group's cultural construction, or simply assume that Aborigines are culturally homogeneous they could inadvertantly select prose fiction unrelated to the group's life experiences, and in doing so hinder the

students' development of comprehension processes.

To overcome this problem, Hyland (1980) suggests, "in selecting prose fiction books for Aboriginal children, the librarian/teacher should know something about their particular culture and home background" (Hyland, 1980, p. 24). Hyland continues, stressing that different reading resources are needed when teaching tribal Aboriginal students as opposed to urban Aboriginal students. It is important to remember that not all Aboriginal students will have an intrinsic interest in the Dreamtime and other traditional fables. "Aborigines are not a monolithic group. Any categorisation and policy which do not take account of this are either useless/harmful or both" (Jordan, 1984, p. 289).

Whether the research group will prefer white Australian characterisation to Aboriginal characterisation is debatable. One would expect that if there is prose fiction that truly represents urban Aboriginal cultural identity then it will, indeed, be preferred. However, at the moment a lot of prose fiction given to urban Aboriginal boys tends to represent traditional, or tribal Aboriginality. This prose fiction is more foreign to urban Aborigines than white Australian prose fiction. It would seem likely that emerging writers, like Archie Weller, who reflect the urban Aboriginal existence will become preferred authors of

students similar to those in the research group. It is unfortunate that at the moment Archie Weller is perhaps the only writer really representing this group of people.

Lower Secondary Urban Aboriginal Boys' Prose Fiction Preferences

To my knowledge, no published studies have specifically investigated Aboriginal prose fiction genre preferences. The only related 'research' in this area is that of Thompson (1983). His anecdotal observations indicated that male student Aborigines may have a preference for action/thriller films. It would appear reasonable to assume that these students might also have an interest in action prose fiction. However, Thompson's work was with traditional Aborigines.

On the basis of the conclusions derived from *The Construction of Urban Aboriginal Identity* literature review it would seem appropriate to examine the prose fiction preferences of white Australian boys. Thomson (1987), conducted a study which examined the prose fiction preferences of predominantly white adolescent Australians. The study was conducted at Bathurst at different intervals, namely 1978 and 1984. The students were asked to complete questionnaires, indicating prose fiction preferences. The boys in these studies demonstrated a clear preference for action orientated stories. Thomson (1987) asserted that

the boys: "reading preferences... were very similar to their film and television preferences" (Thomson, 1987, p. 21). Invariably these boys preferred television and films that contained: "non-stop action and excitement" (Thomson, 1987, p. 21). Obviously, the findings of this study are not concerned with the prose fiction preferences of urban Aborigines. Nevertheless, the findings are relevant because urban Aboriginal boys have probably constructed a cultural identity similar to other Australian boys. Furthermore, both groups are significantly influenced by film and television.

The views of these writers indicate that the given group has a clear preference for the action prose fiction genre. These findings also suggest that an alignment exists between the social context (television habits) of the given group and their prose fiction preferences.

Preferred Characterisations in Prose Fiction

There is, to my knowledge, no research that examines the preferred prose fiction characterisations of urban Aboriginal boys. However, Snow & Noble's (1986) study of the preferred cultural reference group of urban Aborigines touched upon the preferred television characters of urban and rural Aborigines. It was concluded that, "no support was obtained for the hypothesis that Koories would be more

likely to identify with black characters seen on television" (Snow & Noble, 1986, p. 47). Once again this research was not gender specific, and there are doubts about the size of the sample group and interview question omissions. But, nevertheless it could be argued that the number of subjects who preferred white characters would have, in different circumstances, been larger because "(the) sample was drawn from a community in which there is little overt discrimination against Koories... Armidale has a good reputation with Koories" (Snow & Noble, 1986, p. 46). It is plausible that in such circumstances the subjects might have had a more positive self concept than is typical of many other urban Aborigines. Because Snow & Noble's (1986) study is suggesting that a relationship exists between self concept and preferred characters one could expect that in a more disadvantaged community the preference for white characters would be greater.

Conversely, Hyland (1980) found that traditional Aboriginal students situated on Groote Eylandt did actually prefer prose fiction with Aboriginal characters. Upon reading Colin Thiele's (1975) Storm Boy the students were, "thrilled that an Aboriginal was recognised, and seeing and reading about him was exciting" (Hyland, 1980, p. 26). This would suggest that the traditional Aboriginal students have a more positive self concept than their urban counterparts and that the story Storm Boy was culturally

relevant to them.

Implications For English Teachers

Obviously, if English teachers are aware of urban Aboriginal boys' preferences in respect to elements of prose fiction, such as genre (style) and characterisation they can select reading resources in accordance with these preferences.

There appears to be a possibility that because of negative self concepts many lower secondary urban Aboriginal students will prefer European characters. I would argue that whilst in the long term this is not a desirable situation, it can be used to the students' advantage in the short term. Poor academic performance could be contributing to this negative self concept, and it is certainly possible that improved reading comprehension will bring about improved academic performance. It seems likely that greater student interest in characterisations will motivate that same student to read, and accordingly improve his reading, which will also improve general academic performance. Therefore, and perhaps paradoxically, the use of white characters in prose fiction for the research group could help improve academic performance which in turn could improve their self concept which in turn could induce cultural alignment with their own cultural identity. Furthermore, it is obviously preferable for English

teachers to make decisions for the urban Aboriginal boys on the basis of facts rather than untested assumptions. This holds true regardless of how socially unpalatable the information may be.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**Introduction**

Due to the nature of this research, a study consisting of two parts was considered appropriate: (a) obtaining students' preferences using a 2 x 4 factorial design and (b) exploring students' reasons for their preferences using a qualitative interview approach. This chapter discusses the following in relation to the methodology of this study: 2 x 4 factorial design, the construction of the study instrument, the interview approach, the forms of interview, the interview schedule, recording of the interview, selection of subjects, procedure and data analysis.

Design

The 2 x 4 factorial design allows the simultaneous testing of multiple variables. The variables of the study are race and genre. For the purposes of this research, the 2 x 4 factorial design is appropriate because it makes it possible to investigate the relationship between race, genre and text preferences. The subjects made 40 judgements in each cell (20 subjects each judging two extracts in each cell).

Table 1 Subject Judgements

	Street Kid	Horror	Teenage Psy- chological	Traditional
Aboriginal Characters.	40	40	40	40
White Australian Characters.	40	40	40	40

Likert Scale

A Likert scale was used as a method for obtaining subject prose preferences. Each subject was asked to place a point value on each extract; in other words, the subjects made value judgements. The Likert scale demonstrated to the subjects that their judgements were important, and not necessarily right or wrong. This awareness may have relaxed the subjects, and in doing so, expedited the subsequent *nonschedule standardised* interviews.

The scale was considered appropriate because it provided information both on extracts enjoyed and extracts not enjoyed.

The format of the Likert scale was as follows:

Table 2 Likert Scale Format

Would you choose this book to read?

Definitely not	Probably not	Maybe	Probably	Yes, Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

Construction of the Design Instrument (Prose Fiction Anthology)

An anthology of 32 extracts organised into eight categories and four genres was constructed.

- (1) Street kid action with white Australian characters.
- (2) Street kid action with Aboriginal characters.
- (3) Horror and action with white Australian characters.
- (4) Horror and action with Aboriginal characters.
- (5) Teenage psychological stories with white Australian characters.
- (6) Teenage psychological stories with Aboriginal characters.
- (7) Traditional stories with white Australian characters.
- (8) Traditional stories with Aboriginal characters.

Table 3 Extract Details

Extract	Genre Type	Characterisation Type	Author
1	Horror	White Australian	S.King
2	Traditional	Aboriginal	A.Reed
3	Teenage-Psy.	Aboriginal	S.Morgan
4	Horror	White Australian	M.Wilding
5	Street kid	Aboriginal	A.Weller
6	Horror	Aboriginal	S.King
7	Teenage-Psy.	White Australian	C.Amsden
8	Traditional	Aboriginal	A.Reed

9	Traditional	White Australian	Aesop
10	Street kid	White Australian	A.Weller
11	Street kid	Aboriginal	A.Weller
12	Street kid	White Australian	C.Johnson
13	Horror	Aboriginal	S.King
14	Teenage-Psy.	White Australian	J.Davis
15	Teenage-Psy.	Aboriginal	A.Freer
16	Traditional	White Australian	Aesop
17	Traditional	White Australian	Aesop
18	Street kid	Aboriginal	C.Johnson
19	Teenage-Psy.	White Australian	A.Freer
20	Teenage-Psy.	Aboriginal	C.Amsden
21	Street kid	Aboriginal	A.Weller
22	Traditional	White Australian	Aesop
23	Horror	Aboriginal	S.King
24	Horror	Aboriginal	M.Wilding
25	Street kid	White Australian	A.Weller
26	Street kid	White Australian	A.Weller
27	Horror	White Australian	S.King
28	Teenage-Psy.	White Australian	S.Morgan
29	Traditional	Aboriginal	A.Reed
30	Horror	White Australian	S.King
31	Teenage-Psy.	Aboriginal	J.Davis
32	Traditional	Aboriginal	A.Reed

The extracts in genres (1), (2), (3) and (4) are the action extracts. The extracts in genres (5), (6), (7) and (8) are the other, or non-action extracts. The extracts in genres

(5) and (6) are the contemporary extracts. The extracts in genres (7) and (8) are the traditional extracts. Whilst the 'street kid' action extracts are contemporary, their scores, as indicated, will not be used when the ANOVA test of significance is calculated for the third research hypothesis. The 'street kid' action extracts are action oriented, consequently, it was decided that these action elements were unwanted variables when determining whether a preference existed for contemporary extracts as opposed to traditional extracts. The genres that have Aboriginal and white Australian characterisations are self-explanatory.

Table 4 The Allocation of Extracts into Genres and Characterisations

	Street Kid	Horror & Action	Teenage Psychological	Traditional
Aboriginal Characters.	4	4	4	4
European Characters.	4	4	4	4

The 32 extracts are drawn from 20 prose passages. To construct the anthology I read extensively in the adolescent prose fiction form. Many stories were rejected because they failed to meet certain requirements; Albert Facey's A Fortunate Life is one such example. Initially, it was thought that this text would have been appropriate because of its comparability with both the Morgan and Davis texts. However, I finally decided it was not modern enough

to be placed amongst the other relatively contemporary texts in the 'teenage psychological' genre.

Each genre grouping consists of eight passages. The 'street kid' genre passages are drawn from three Archie Weller short stories and a Colin Johnson story. These passages were used in two forms in this research: their original form and a rewritten form in which the characterisations were changed to white Australian. The 'horror & action' genre passages are drawn from three Stephen King stories and a Michael Wilding short story. These passages were used in two forms: their original format and a rewritten form with the characterisations changed to Aboriginal. The 'teenage psychological' genre has two passages drawn from the Kissing The Toad short story anthology, with one passage drawn from a Sally Morgan autobiography and one passage drawn from a Jack Davis autobiography. The two Kissing The Toad passages were used in two forms: their original form and a rewritten form in which the characterisations were changed to Aboriginal. The two autobiographical passages were used in two forms: their original form and a rewritten form in which the characterisations were changed to white Australian.

In the rewritten extracts the characterisations were minimally changed. In fact, the changes amounted to little more than the removal of obvious contrary racial references

and the removal of inappropriate names. The changes were made only to alter the perceptions of the subjects, consequently there was no need to redevelop characterisations. Extensive redevelopments of the characterisations would have made the rewritten extracts different from the original extracts. Furthermore, major characterisation changes would have reduced the contextual credibility of the extracts. To avoid undue change in the re-writes an introduction for each extract was provided. The introductions were used to clearly indicate the racial characterisations employed in the extracts and to provide relevant background information, such as setting amongst other things.

Obviously, the subjects could not have been given the same extract in both Aboriginal and European forms. Therefore, for each genre, each subject was given two Aboriginal and two European extracts, each one different. So in the first genre, for example, Group 1 received two Archie Weller passages presented in their original format; and one Archie Weller passage and the Colin Johnson passage presented in rewritten format. Group 2 received two Archie Weller passages presented in their rewritten format; and one Archie Weller passage and the Colin Johnson passage presented in their original format.

The 'traditional' genre did not have rewritten passages. Group 1 received different extracts from Group 2. Each group received two Aboriginal and two European extracts.

The extracts have been chosen and categorised into genres and sub-genres on the basis of the following: plot, the emphasis of the characterisations, and the stylistic characteristics of the prose concerned.

The 'street kid' sub-genre includes stories which depict realistic urban scenarios whilst employing the conventions of the action genre. The extracts in this genre do not utilise expository means to develop character, although the Colin Johnson extract which is taken from a novel has developed character in the earlier stages of the novel. Typically, these extracts tend to be plot driven, meaning that more emphasis is placed on the events of the stories rather than the development of characterisation. The action sequences are exciting and are presented with considerable attention to detail: "The second time he rams the CIB car, Colin Jackall's arm breaks with a snap like the click of his stolen rifle bolt" (Weller, 1986, p. 89). The dialogue is only a vehicle to promote the plot; for the most part, it does not offer insights into the characters' psyches: "Orright, ole man. Give us ya money quick!" (Weller, 1986, p. 44). In addition, the dialogue used in all the 'street kid' action extracts was Australian

vernacular. One would imagine that nearly all Australian adolescents are conversant with this speech pattern. The narrative perspective used in each 'street kid' extract is third person. This is consistent with the genre's plot emphasis. The genre does not endeavour to develop character; therefore, there is no great need to explore a particular character's innermost thoughts.

Collectively, these elements are popular with many adolescent boys because they mirror aspects of male adolescent behaviour. The relatively detached narrative perspective and lack of exposition perhaps reflect many boys' inability to be intimate and introspective. This genre's penchant for action and its minimisation of dialogue mirrors many boys' responses to conflict and other pressures. It would seem that this genre and its audience are simultaneously reinforcing each other. Finally, it should be mentioned that this genre is particularly masculine, and its protagonists are nearly always male.

The 'horror & action' sub-genre includes stories of a fantastical nature which by their very definition are action oriented. This genre is obviously very similar to the 'street kid' genre. The horror extracts are also written from third person narrative with all extracts tending to be plot driven and limited in their use of exposition. Once again, the minimal dialogue serves the

purpose of advancing the plot. The action sequences are also very descriptive, but unlike the 'street kid' extracts they describe events and things of a macabre and unreal nature. Hence, the two genres have an obviously different sense of reality.

The 'teenage psychological' genre stories are largely autobiographical. The Amsden extracts are written from third person limited point of view, whilst the others are written from first person point of view. The extracts are expository, and accordingly, character oriented. The plot events of the extracts are relatively insignificant. The extracts each explore different aspects of adolescence, although a common theme of loss and isolation seems evident. The thematic thrust of the extracts has minimised the use of dialogue, however, extract # 20's utilisation of speech does offer the reader an insight into a particular character's psyche: "...take her a single rose - a red one if youse can. Don't know if youse done that sort of thing before, and I suppose lots of people think that's old hat nowadays - but stuff 'em! Somethin' like that makes a person feel real special" (Amsden, 1987, pp. 68-69).

The 'traditional' stories are fables. The European stories were drawn from an anthology of Aesop's fables and the Aboriginal stories were drawn from an anthology of Dreamtime fables. Typically, these fables explore

questions of cultural morality. The elements of these traditional tales are mostly self-evident.

To guarantee reading comparability between extracts the 'Raygor Readability Estimate' has been applied to each extract. Essentially this estimate counts the number of proper nouns, the number of words exceeding six letters, the number of sentences and the average length of sentences. Used collectively, these elements indicate the relative reading difficulty of each extract, expressed as a school grade level. All extracts, according to the 'Raygor Readability Estimate' have comparable reading ages, the largest variance between any two extracts is 12 months. The maximum reading age of any one extract does not exceed 11 and an half years.

This instrument (anthology) has been developed because there is no other suitable instrument, to my knowledge, in existence. The instrument is seen as an effective method to determine subject prose fiction preferences. It seemed that the most straightforward means of determining lower secondary Aboriginal boys' prose fiction preferences was simply to get the boys to respond to a cross-section of prose fiction. Appropriate measures have been taken to control all variables. These include the typing of anthology extracts to eliminate print and aesthetic differences; and the absolute minimisation of anthology re-

writes, so that only aspects of characterisation are appreciably changed. Furthermore, the extracts were presented to the subjects in random order (as shown in Table 3).

All the extracts, with the exception of two taken from the Stephen King stories, were taken from texts that the subjects could be expected to read within an English classroom context. Therefore, the extracts were valid in terms of both subject matter and language.

The Interview Approach

As this study is in part concerned with subjects' perceptions, that is the meaning or understanding an individual attaches to prose fiction, an interview approach was an appropriate form of collecting data.

Kerlinger (1986) in outlining the main purposes of interviewing supports the suitability of the interview approach for this study. The reasons being, firstly, interviews can be used to supplement other methods of research, in this case the 2 x 4 factorial design. Secondly, an interview can be a main instrument of research, in this case to measure the variables of the research.

The value of the interview approach lies in its ability to

gather information about people's feelings and attitudes, and their reasons and explanations for certain things. The interview approach allows the interviewee to express his/her feelings or reasons directly and at whatever length needed.

Forms of Interviews

Forms of interviews vary across a continuum from the rigidly structured to the highly unstructured. Denzin (1978) classified interviews according to their degree of structuring and standardisation. He described three main forms of interviews: the schedule standardised interview, the nonschedule standardised interview and the nonstandardised interview.

For the purpose of this study it seemed that a nonschedule standardised interview was the most appropriate form of data collection. The interviewees needed to answer the same questions for reasons of increased comparability and facilitation of data organisation and analysis. However, the form of interview used needed to exhibit a degree of flexibility to counteract possible reticence on the subjects' behalf to articulate themselves. It was anticipated that the very nature of the interview, coupled with the presence of a tape recorder, would prove a little intimidating for young boys. Obviously, the nonschedule standardised interview's inherent flexibility allowed myself

to respond to the mood of each interviewee.

The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was developed using the research hypotheses as a base. The interview schedule was designed to collect information regarding:

- The subject.

- General aspects of the prose fiction extracts which were appealing and not appealing.

- Genre preferences.

- Characterisation preferences.

- Setting preferences.

- Other prose fiction genres which arouse interest.

The above categories and the corresponding questions were arranged in a logical sequence. The first question confirmed the relative urbanity of the subjects. The second question of the interview, aspects of prose fiction, was designed to allow the subjects to express their views without having to respond to potentially biased questions. This was seen as an appropriate introductory question which would simultaneously provide information whilst relaxing

the interviewee. Open-ended questions were constructed to allow the interviewee to reply at length or not. Hence, each interviewee could describe in detail their perceptions. The fourth question was the exception, this particular question was deliberately 'leading', for reasons to be discussed in the following section. The five nonscheduled standardised interview questions were:

- (1) Where were you born, and how long have you lived in Perth?
- (2) In the extracts that you enjoyed reading, what was it about those extracts that you enjoyed?
- (3) What types of films and television shows do you watch?
- (4) If you were to write your own story would it (a) have characters similar to you (b) take place in the past or in the present (c) take place in the bush or in the city and suburbs? Tell me why?
- (5) Do you enjoy reading other types of stories?

The Pilot Study

A pilot test was constructed in order to detect potential problems. During the test ten subjects were sampled from the target population. The subjects were asked to select

their five favourite extracts from an anthology of 20 extracts. The frequency of the subjects' selections were then counted, after which a chi square test was applied to the data. However, it was decided that this method of data collection was ineffective because it did not necessarily provide information about all the extracts. It was possible, although admittedly unlikely, that only 25% of the anthology would engender a response. This suggested that the application of a Likert scale would provide more meaningful and comprehensive data.

The interview schedule did not require the same comprehensive revision with the exception of the fourth question. Initially, an open-ended question was constructed asking the subjects to indicate preferred characterisations and settings. Unfortunately very few subjects offered answers to the question; consequently, it was decided that the subjects would be given limited alternatives in the actual study question. Whilst this reduced the variability of responses, it did ensure that the question would provide worthwhile data.

The fourth question aside, all the questions elicited appropriate answers, consequently, no adjustments to the wording of questions were needed.

Recording of the Interview

A major objective of this study was to gauge subjects' perceptions of prose fiction. The purpose of each interview is to record as fully and fairly as possible the interviewee's perspective. As the interviewee supplies a large amount of information which needs to be recalled exactly, verbatim records were essential. Initially, a few subjects objected to the use of the tape recorder, however, they changed their minds when they were told its presence would quicken the interview process.

The use of a tape recorder allowed the interviewer to concentrate on the interview. Rapport with the interviewee was essential. If I had taken notes I could not have effectively responded to the interviewee. The subjects were told that the use of a tape recorder would hasten the interview process. This explanation was accepted without comment from all the subjects.

Ethical Considerations

It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide a situation within which the subjects can respond comfortably, accurately and honestly. This highlights the need for confidentiality and anonymity. Those involved in the research, namely the subjects and school principals have been guaranteed confidentiality. All names, locations, and other identifying information have been

omitted or given alternative names.

All the subjects and their respective parents signed documents of informed consent. Finally, all the subjects were aware of the study's intent and realised that their involvement was voluntary. Each subject was free to withdraw from the study at any stage, however, no subjects exercised this option.

Selection of Subjects

Subjects for this study were selected from the population of lower secondary boys in Western Australian High Schools, both private and government. Initially there was no intention of making the study gender specific. However, it appeared that the prose fiction anthology's genres would hold more interest for boys than girls, particularly the action genres. Eventually it was decided that the criteria would be:

- = The subject was male
- The subject was Aboriginal.
- The subject lived in an urban setting.
- The subject attended an urban high school.
- The subject had a reading age of 12 years or above.
- The subject and his parent(s) had signed forms of informed consent.

Initially, it was anticipated that the sample size would number 30 subjects; however, the criterion that each subject must have a reading age of 12 years or above drastically reduced the total number of suitable subjects. The reading age of each subject was determined by each school's reading resource teacher.

Procedure

The 20 subjects were assigned to two groups of ten subjects. Each subject was presented with an anthology of 16 extracts. The extracts given to Group A (1-16) were not the same as those given to Group B (17-32). However, both groups did receive extracts drawn from identical genre categories. This arrangement stopped subjects receiving two versions of the same extract.

The subjects were then asked to read the 16 extracts silently over the duration of 90 minutes. The subjects were told that their selections, in addition to helping the study, would be used to aid in book selection for the school library. This explanation gave the subjects concrete reasons for undertaking the study.

The subjects were told to read and scale each extract in turn. After the subjects had completed their Likert scales a nonschedule standardised interview was conducted with each subject individually. The duration of each interview

(five questions) was approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The subject responses were recorded.

Data Analysis

The Likert scale scores from the 2 x 4 factorial design were analysed using an ANOVA test of significance. Each variable was tested for significance.

The data generated from the nonschedule standardised interview was analysed in accordance with Miles and Huberman's (1984) three 'concurrent flows of activity', namely, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing /verification.

Data reduction simplifies and transforms the data in such a way that conclusions can be drawn and verified. In this study data reduction was achieved by bounding the data to the interview questions, thus eliminating unrelated data. For instance, pregnant pauses, unclear utterances and solecisms were removed from the final interview transcripts. Obviously, the remaining data was the essence of the answer. An independent third party (fellow research student) was then given copies of both the 'raw' and the reduced data. The third party verified that the data removed was peripheral.

Data display, is defined as an organised set of information

that allows conclusion-drawing and action taking (Miles and Huberman, 1984). For this study, a frequency graph was considered to be well suited to the need of displaying the text. The frequency graph was organised according to the interview questions.

During the process of data collection and analysis, I was continually assessing the situation and drawing conclusions. It became immediately obvious, for instance, that the subjects were providing responses consistent with the research hypotheses.

However, as the nature of qualitative data is exploratory and as Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 15) described, "more likely to lead to serendipitous findings", the data lead me to go beyond the initial framework to discuss other significant findings, such as the apparent subject disparity between 'soapies' and similarly conceived prose fiction.

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results are presented in two sections. First of all, the results of the ANOVA Analysis are presented. Secondly, the responses from the interview have been displayed in graph form.

ANOVA ANALYSIS

In order to determine whether there was a difference between preferences for Aboriginal and white Australian characterisations or between preferences for different genres, a 2 x 4 x 20 Analysis of Variance was performed, using a fixed effects model. The three variables were (a) race (Aboriginal and white Australian), (b) genre (Action [street kid, horror]; Non-action [teenage psychological, traditional]), and (c) subjects.

The research hypothesis (# 1) that "urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys would prefer action extracts significantly more than other extracts" was supported. To determine whether there was a difference between the preferences for the action genres and non-action genres, genres 1 and 2 (action) were compared to genres 3 and 4 (non-action). As indicated, it was found that the preferences for the action genres ($M = 4.03$) were significantly higher than the preferences for non-action genres ($M = 2.95$), $F(1,24) = 25.01$, $p < .01$.

The research hypothesis (# 2) that "urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys would prefer one of the racial characterisations, either white Australian or Aboriginal significantly more than the other" was supported. The subjects showed a significant preference for Aboriginal characterisations ($M = 3.65$) over white Australian characterisations ($M = 3.53$), $F(1,8) = 13.36$, $p < .01$. There was a significant effect for genre, $F(3,24) = 107.24$, $p < .01$. There was no significant effect for subject, $F(8,24) = 1.92$, N.S. And the race by genre interactions was also not significant, $F(3,24) = 1.28$, N.S. The cell means are shown in Figure 1.

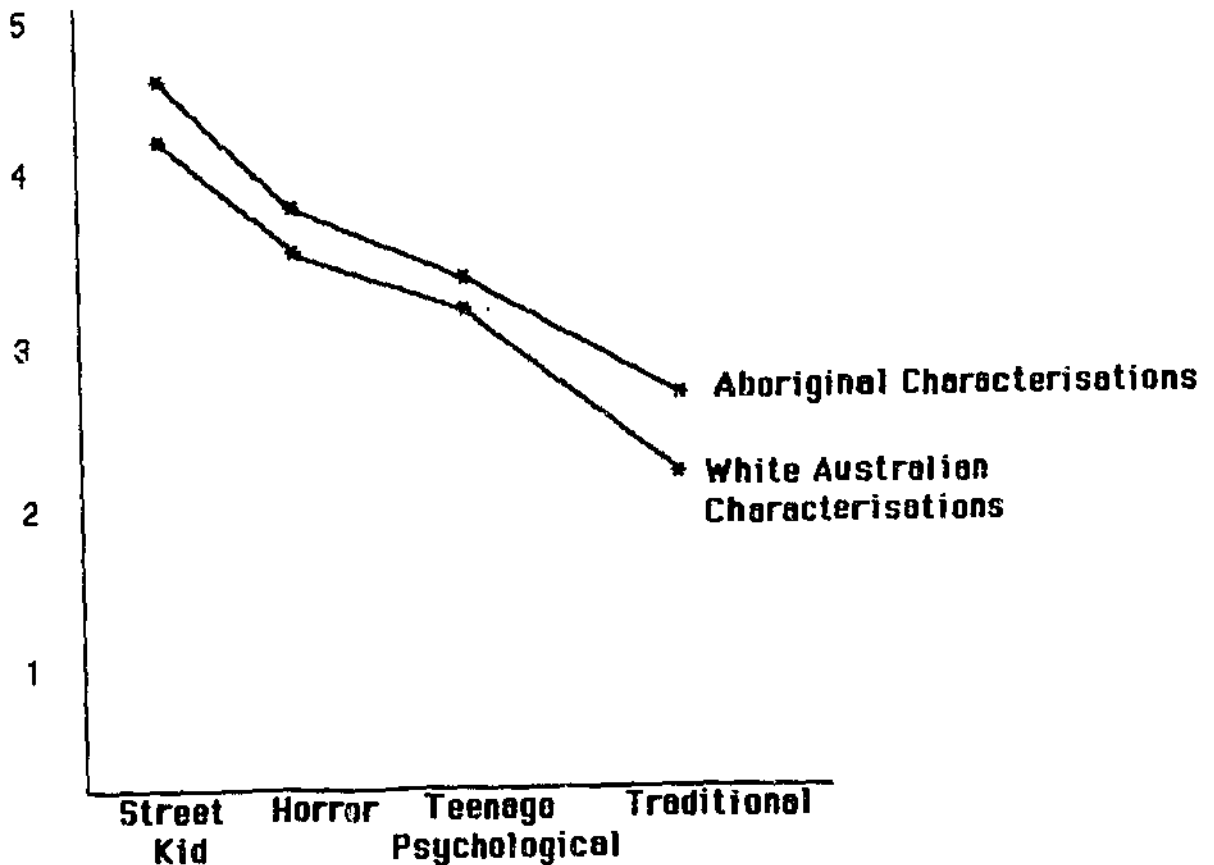


Figure 1. Means of Text Preferences by Genre and Race.

Table 5 Further Presentation of Cell Means

	Street Kid	Horror	Teenage	Traditional
Aboriginal	4.55	3.85	3.42	2.76
White Australian	4.18	3.55	3.25	2.35

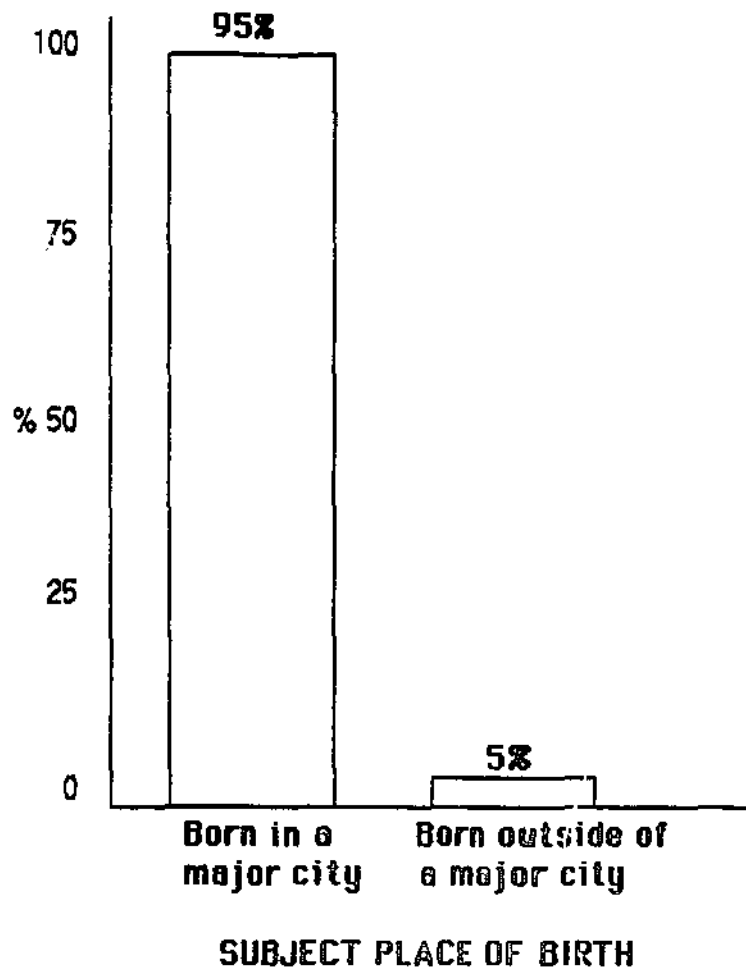
The research hypothesis (# 3) that "urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys would prefer contemporary extracts significantly more than traditional extracts" was supported. In order to determine whether there was difference between the preferences for the contemporary extracts and the traditional extracts, genre 3 (teenage psychological) was compared to genre 4 (traditional). As indicated, it was found that the preference for the contemporary extracts (teenage psychological) ($M = 3.34$) was significantly higher than the preferences for the traditional extracts ($M = 2.56$), $F(1,24) = 8.42$, $p < .05$.

Interview Question # 1

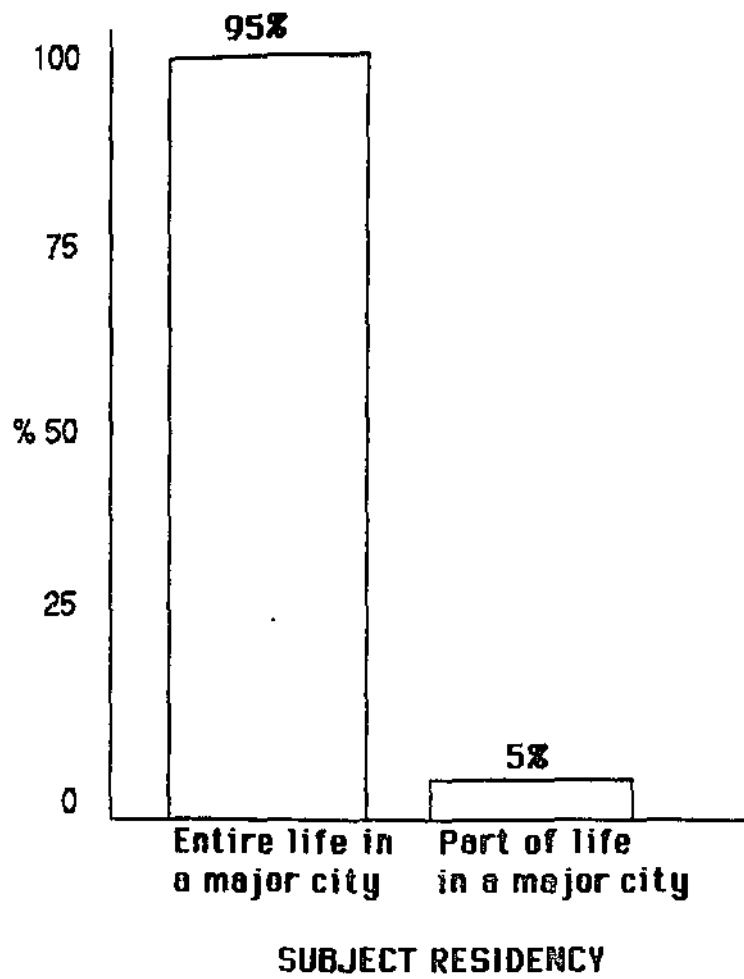
Where were you born, and how long have you lived in Perth ?
This question was intended to confirm the relative urbanity of the subjects. The responses revealed (as shown in Figures 2 & 3) that 95% of the subjects were born in a major city and have spent their entire life in a major

city. The sole exception was subject # 3 who shifted to Perth at the age of ten, and prior to that resided in a relatively large town (Moora).

Additional interview probing revealed that the majority of the subjects were first generation city dwellers. Most of the subjects' parents came from rural Western Australia. However, many of the subjects could not indicate their parents' exact place of birth. Some anthropologists will argue, as mentioned earlier, that the development of urban culture requires more than the mere physical location in an urban area. However, given the limited resources of this research, it would have been extremely difficult to find subjects who had a true urban 'ancestry'.



*Figure 2. Interview Question Part (1):
Where were you born?*



*Figure 3. Interview Question 1 Part (ii):
How long have you lived in a
major city?*

Interview Question # 2

In the extracts that you enjoyed reading, what was it about those extracts that you enjoyed ?

In response to this question (as shown in Figure 4) 85% of the subjects indicated that action was their preferred prose fiction element. Furthermore, many subjects demonstrated that their interest in fiction matches their interest in both television and film: "The werewolf story was good because it reminded me of American Werewolf in London -that's one of my favourite movies". The subjects in this particular study made no positive mention of those extracts that utilised exposition as a means to develop character, with the exception of subject # 18. This subject provided a very general answer, indicating that he found all the extracts "interesting". The subjects expressed an overwhelming interest in the more realistic action stories, as opposed to the horror/fantastical action stories. Interestingly, 30% of the subjects indicated a preference for Aboriginal characterisation, either directly, "I liked the stories that had Aborigines in them", or directly, "I liked that story when the Aborigines beat up those other white guys". No preference for white Australian characterisation was indicated. Four of the six subjects expressed a preference for Aboriginal characterisations involved in exciting situations. "I really liked the ones with those Aborigines in the car

chases".

Whilst the sole subject (# 3) born outside a major city did indicate a preference for "action and adventure" stories he also made mention of his interest in Dreamtime stories. A relationship may have existed between his early environment and his current orientations. Similarly, subject # 15 indicated an interest in the Davis extract, on the grounds that, "my Dad lived on one of those I think". This response was certainly not typical, and therefore, the subject's close association with the subject matter seems the only explanation for his choice.

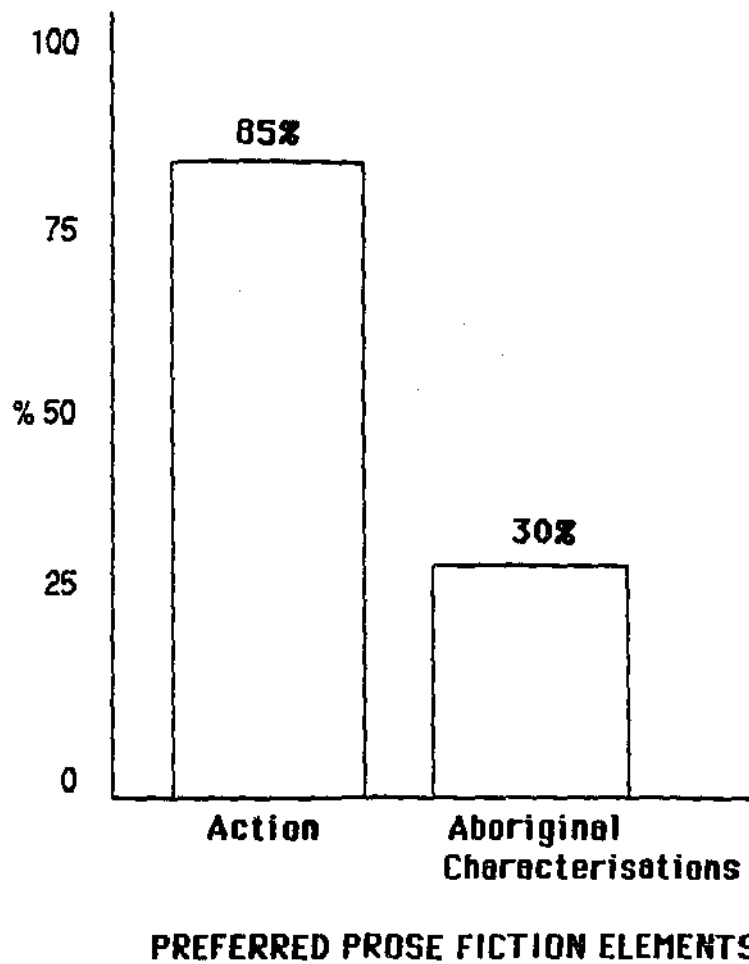


Figure 4. Interview Question 2 : In the extracts that you enjoyed reading, what was it about those extracts that you enjoyed ?

Interview Question # 3

What types of films and television shows do you enjoy ?

The data gathered from this particular question revealed that the research group has an overwhelming interest in action films. In fact, (as shown in Figure 5) 90% of the subjects expressed a preference for films, or film genres that utilise action, adventure and horror conventions. On closer inspection of the data it was found that only five of the 18 subjects actually expressed a preference or co-preference for horror films. This is consistent with the data produced from Question # 2, where a preference for relatively realistic action was demonstrated. Subject # 12's response was typical, "Action films are my favourites, especially Rambo and Terminator films".

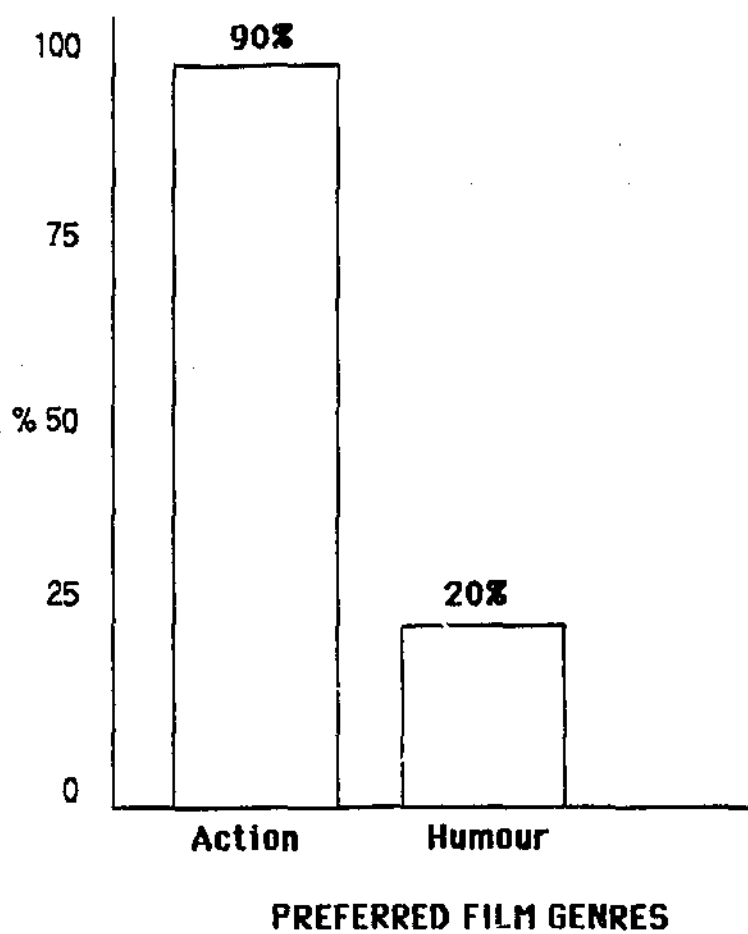
The remaining two subjects expressed a preference for comedy films. Another subject indicated an interest in comedy, in addition to his first preference.

The responses revealed an enormous interest in "soapies". In fact, (as shown in Figure 6) 55% of the subjects listed "soapies" as being amongst their favourite television programs. Other subjects mentioned situation comedies, such as Beverly Hills 90210 and Full House which are similar to the "soapies" in their construction. The other ten subjects selected television programs that were action

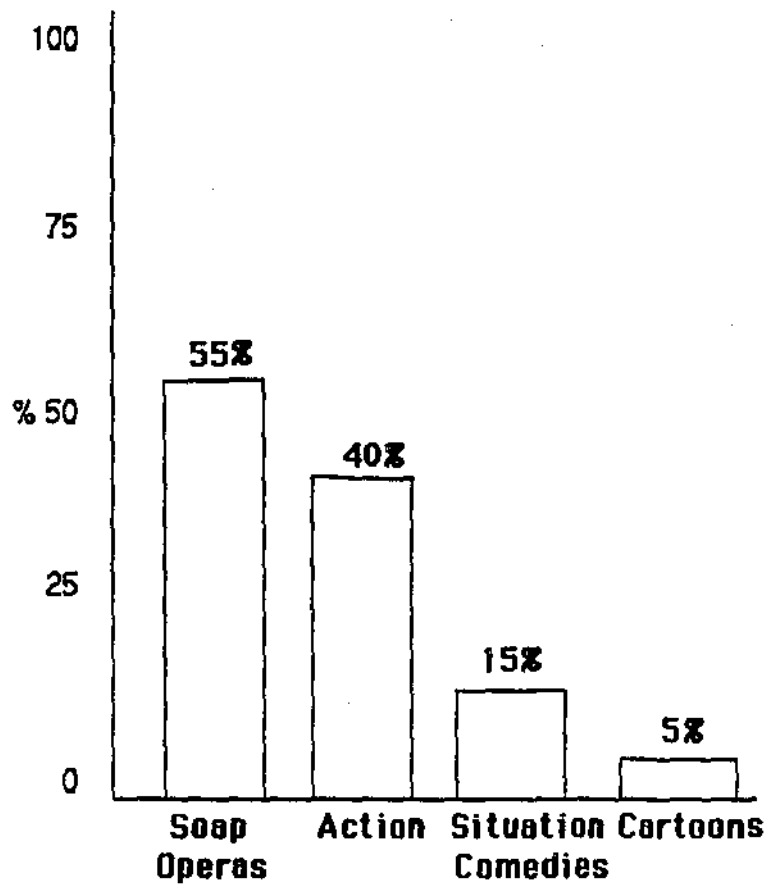
orientated. Programs such as, Miami Vice and Jake and the Fatman were mentioned. There is obviously a correlation between television shows such as Jake and the Fat Man and action films. However, there does not seem to be a correlation between the television soapies, and these films, and film genres selected.

Interestingly, three subjects indicated an interest in the television program Cops. This particular program is an example of a relatively new genre, "reality television". Supposedly, this style of television programming offers the audience realistic, unscripted action.

The two subjects (# 3 & # 15) who gave different responses for the previous two questions did not provide answers of any great significance for this question.



*Figure 5. Interview Question 3 Part (i):
What types of films do you enjoy?*



PREFERRED TELEVISION SHOWS

*Figure 6. Interview Question 3 Part (ii) :
What types of television shows
do you enjoy ?*

Interview Question # 4

If you were to write your own story would it (a) have characters similar to you (b) take place in the past or in the present (c) take place in the bush or in the city and suburbs. Tell me why ?

This question elicited many interesting responses. It was designed to indicate the relative orientations of the subjects. Collectively, the results demonstrate a preference for the familiar. This was evident in both characterisation and setting preferences.

In fact, (as shown in Figure 7) 65% of the subjects indicated a preference for characters similar to themselves, whilst only 25% indicated a preference for characters dissimilar to themselves. The other subjects were undecided. Those who preferred similar characterisations indicated a desire to develop character from first-hand experience. Those who preferred dissimilar characterisations to themselves cited reasons such as: "I would have people that are different to me or else it would be boring."

Most of the subjects indicated that they would write about teenage characters, whilst five subjects actually indicated a willingness to write about Aboriginal teenagers. The other ten subjects were not race specific in their choice

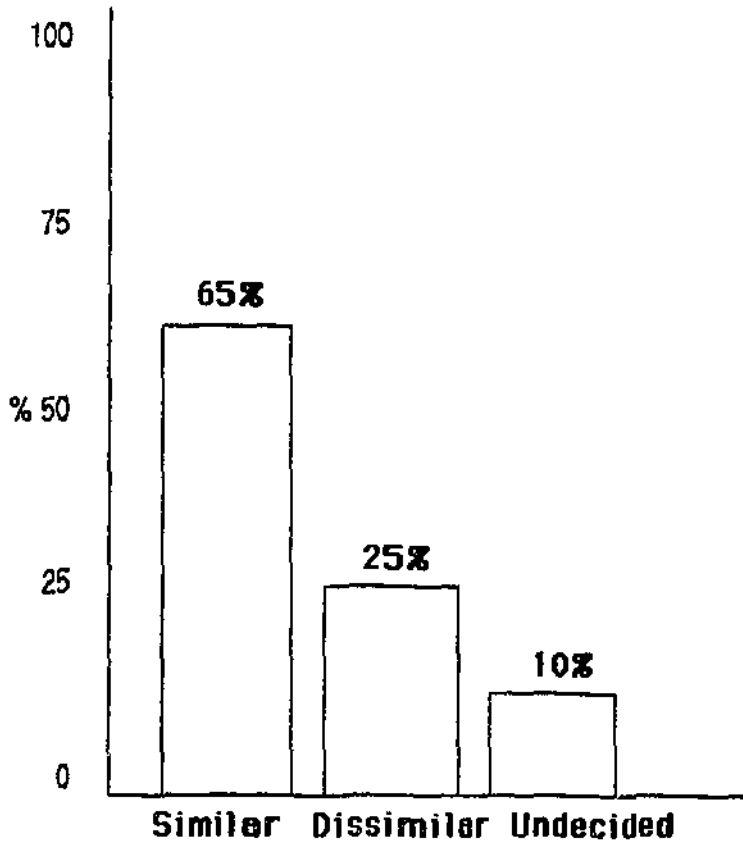
of characterisation.

Even more emphatically, (as shown in Figure 8) 80% of the subjects indicated a preference for stories set in the present, as opposed to 15% who preferred stories set in the past. Interestingly, very few subjects offered reasons as to why they preferred a particular time setting.

Additional interview probing elicited blank stares in most subjects; however, one subject did offer this explanation: "My story would take place now I think because then I would know what I was writing about."

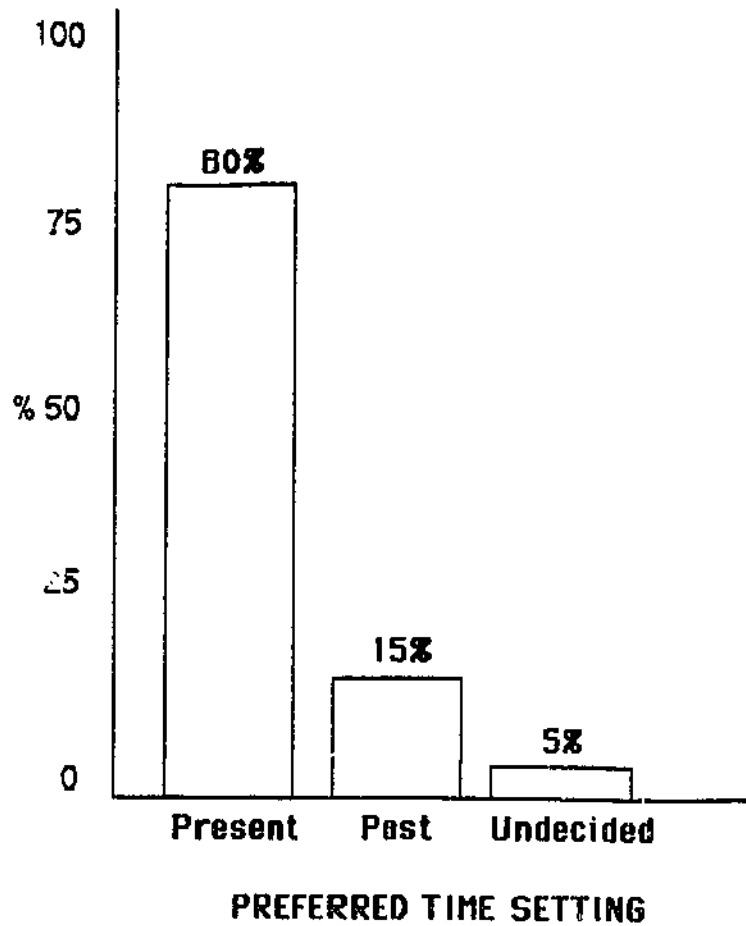
The results also indicated a preference for familiar physical settings. In fact, (as shown in Figure 9) 70% of the subjects preferred urban settings, as opposed to only 15% who preferred a rural setting. 15% of the subjects vacillated between the two setting alternatives. Those who preferred the urban settings have a perception that "exciting things" happen in the city. This subject's response was typical: "My story would take place.... in the city because that's where the action is". The few subjects who preferred rural settings were those subjects who seemed to have an affinity with the bush. As might be expected, the sole subject (# 3) born outside a city preferred a rural setting: "My story would take place in the bush because I like being in the bush. Sometimes my Dad takes me motorbike riding and Kangaroo shooting in the bush".

Once again subject # 15 gave a response out of the ordinary: "My story would be set in the past because I would like to write a Dreantime story". Four subjects indicated that they would set their own stories both in the bush and the past.

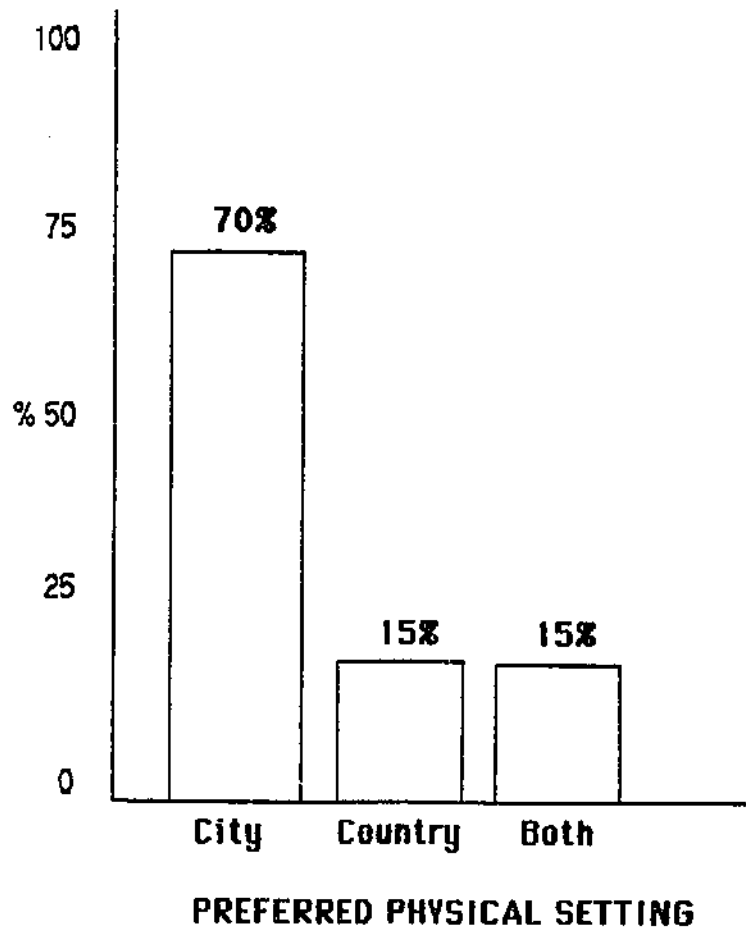


PREFERRED CHARACTERISATIONS

Figure 7. Interview Question 4 Part (i): If you were to write your own story would it have characters similar to you?



*Figure 8. Interview Question 4 Part (ii):
If you were to write your own
story would it take place in the
past or in the present ?*



*Figure 9. Interview Question 4 Part (iii):
If you were to write your own
story would it take place in the
bush or in the city and suburbs?*

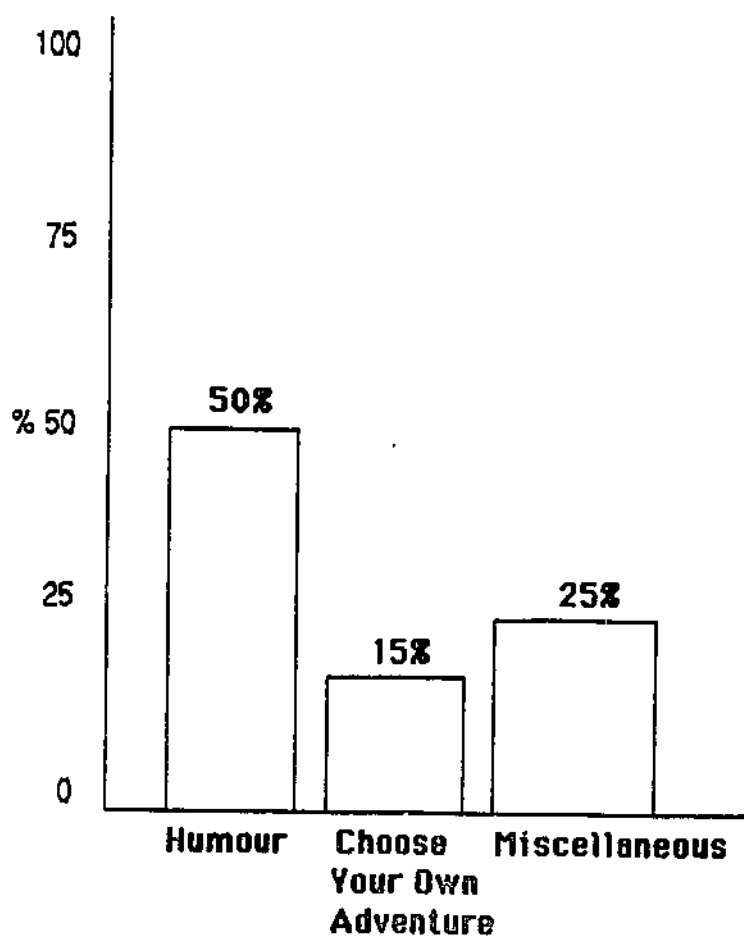
Interview Question # 5**Do you enjoy reading other types of stories ?**

This question was designed to indicate other possible preferred prose fiction preferences. In response, (as shown in Figure 10) 50% of the subjects indicated that they enjoyed reading humorous stories: "I like stories that make you laugh". The other ten subjects made reference to reading genres not unlike those included in the anthology. One subject expressed an interest in sport stories. Three subjects mentioned *Choose Your Own Adventure* stories, which are obviously action orientated.

Apart from mentioning an interest in humorous, or "funny" stories, many subjects made direct reference to specific authors. Both Roald Dahl and Paul Jennings proved very popular. Whilst these authors obviously write humorous stories, they also develop action orientated plot lines. Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is an example of this, whilst Jennings' Quirky Tales short story anthology is similarly constructed.

Surprisingly, subject # 3 offered no response, whilst subject # 15 indicated that: "I enjoy reading funny stories". Subject # 19 indicated an interest in Greek mythological stories, yet expressed no interest in Dreamtime stories in the earlier questions. In fact, he

said earlier that "old fashioned stories are dumb", obviously these answers demonstrate an inconsistency of response in this subject's answers.



PREFERRED "OTHER" READING

Figure 10. Interview Question 5: Do you enjoy reading other types of stories?

CHAPTER 5 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results from the present study. The research hypotheses will be discussed to provide a basis for linking the findings of the ANOVA Analysis with those of the *Nonschedule Standardised* Interview.

Research hypothesis # 1

Urban lower secondary boys will prefer action genre extracts significantly more than other genre extracts.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys have a preference for action oriented stories. The findings of this research are consistent with those of Thomson (1987). As previously mentioned, Thomson's Bathurst study indicated, among other things, the prose fiction preferences of a mainstream population of adolescents. He found that the boys were interested in "action-packed adventure" films and that their "major reading preferences.... were very similar to their film and television preferences". (Thomson, 1987, pp. 20-21). In addition, he found that boys had little interest in lengthy exposition, or anything else that was perceived to slow the pace of the story. The subjects in this particular study made no positive mention of those extracts that utilised expository means to develop character with the exception of subject # 18. Furthermore, and most importantly, like Thomson's subjects, the research

group's preferred prose fiction mirrored their penchant for action/horror films and videos. This could be considered important for two reasons: firstly, because it suggests that there is very little difference between the prose preferences of mainstream adolescents and urban Aboriginal boys, and secondly, because this finding confirms the importance of establishing a link between cultural context and prose fiction selections. Obviously, each subject's viewing habits are very much a part of their cultural or social context.

However, whilst the subjects in this study demonstrated a significant interest in horror stories, the more realistic action stories were preferred. The mean for the "street kid" action genre (both characterisations) was 4.37, as opposed to a mean of 3.7 for the "horror" action genre (both characterisations). Thomson's study made no mention of this apparent disparity between these two genres.

There appears little doubt that the subjects' preference for the 'street kid' genre was influenced by the popularity of the Archie Weller extracts. The collective scores for the three Weller extracts and the Johnson extract, derived from the Likert scale completely outscored all the other genres.

Furthermore, many subjects made direct reference to the

Weller extracts during the interview. It would seem that the perceived relevance of this writer to the life of the subjects was the reason for the overwhelming popularity of the extracts penned by him. The Weller extracts were action oriented, and contemporary in their use of the settings. Obviously, a correlation can be drawn between the content of these extracts, and the lifestyles of the subjects. During the interviews a few subjects mentioned that some of their friends and cousins lived similar lifestyles to those depicted in the Weller extracts: "I loved the car chase stories because some of my friends have told me about them".

In addition, the non-typical answers given by the subjects # 3 and # 15 also tended to indicate a correlation between social context and prose fiction preferences. Subject # 3, who was born in the country demonstrated considerable empathy for the 'bush'. Subject # 15, in keeping with his father's native settlement experiences expressed an interest in a Davis extract which explored Davis's similar experiences.

As indicated, the horror extracts were not as popular as the realistic action extracts, but were more popular than the other two genres. It would seem that the preference for these extracts was directly related to the subjects' viewing habits. From this one could conclude that perhaps

the subjects had vicariously identified with the characters seen in these extracts.

The 'teenage psychological' (M = 3.46) and 'traditional' (M = 2.56) extracts were obviously the least popular, and in that order. It seemed that the further the readers were removed from either the direct life experiences or television and movie preferences the less likely they were to enjoy an extract. It appears that experience, both real (everyday life), and vicarious (television/movies) was the greatest determinant in most subject selections. However, an ambiguity does exist. The subjects demonstrated no great desire to read the "teenage psychological" extracts, yet the interview data indicated a profound interest in 'soapies'. This is curious because both media explore adolescent concerns and problems. Hence you could have expected interest in both mediums to correlate, as they did between action prose fiction and action film. Perhaps the subjects are only prepared to acquire these stories through action and dialogue. This could be explained by the subjects' obvious disdain for exposition. The 'teenage psychological' extracts all used exposition to develop character, whilst the action oriented extracts were essentially plot driven. Furthermore, the non-action genres required a degree of inferential interpretation, as opposed to the action genres which required little more than literal interpretation.

Research Hypothesis # 2

Urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys will prefer one racial characterisation, either white Australian or Aboriginal significantly more than the other.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that lower secondary Aboriginal boys have a preference for Aboriginal characterisations. This is a particularly pleasing result because it suggests that the subjects have a positive self-concept. As mentioned earlier, the study conducted by Snow & Noble (1986) concluded that urban Aborigines' identification with either white Australian, or Aboriginal cultural motifs was determined by their level of self-esteem. Those that had a low self-esteem tended to identify with white cultural motifs, and conversely, those with a relatively high self-esteem tended to identify with Aboriginal cultural motifs.

In each genre the means for the extracts with Aboriginal characterisations were higher than those for white Australian characterisations. However, as indicated earlier, the subject matter was the most important factor influencing each subject selection. For instance, the 'street kid' action with white Australian characterisation ($M = 4.18$) proved more popular than the other three genres with Aboriginal characterisations ($M = 3.85, 3.42, 2.78$). The preference for Aboriginal characterisations was

demonstrated only when the genres were identical. A comparison between the means of the 'street kid' action genre with white Australian characterisations (M = 4.18) and the traditional genre with Aboriginal characterisations (M = 2.78) deserves close attention. The original impetus for the study came from my preception that traditional Dreamtime stories were not necessarily appropriate for urban Aboriginal students. This result lends vindication to that early perception.

Furthermore, the overwhelming importance of subject matter tends to suggest that the choice of characterisation is relatively unimportant, or at the very least, subservient to subject matter. Once again this appears to demonstrate the importance of providing urban Aboriginal students with reading material closely aligned to their interests and experiences. Obviously, the ideal situation would be to find prose fiction that has both appealing genres and Aboriginal characterisations. It would seem that only the writing of Archie Weller has achieved this end. His writing seems to have, as far as the subjects are concerned, the perfect marriage of subject matter and characterisation.

A number of subjects, when indicating the type of stories they would write alluded to this "ideal combination". Comments passed included: "My story would have lots of

Aboriginal teenagers, maybe like those ones in the car chases", "My story would have lots of teenagers like me. I would have these teenagers mixed up in lots of adventures" and "My story would have teenagers like me involved in lots of action".

Research Hypothesis # 3

Urban lower secondary Aboriginal boys will prefer contemporary story extracts significantly more than traditional story extracts.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that urban Aboriginal lower secondary boys will have a preference for contemporary story extracts ($M = 3.34$) over traditional story extracts ($M = 2.47$). This result is consistent with the other two results because it confirms that a nexus between the reader, and their life experience must be established. The subjects' only exposure to traditional Aboriginal lifestyles is through occasional contact with relatives. Obviously, this has less influence on their cultural construction than their everyday urban experiences.

The subjects seldom made direct reference to the contemporary extracts when responding to the interview questions. In fact, the only exception was subject # 15 who indicated a preference for Davis's extract on the

grounds that the author's experiences were similar to those endured by the subject's father. Apparently, the subject's father, like Davis, had been raised in an Aboriginal native settlement. However, the traditional extracts drew responses from two subjects. Once again, subject # 15 provided an interesting response, along with subject # 3 who also expressed an interest in Dreamtime stories. Subject # 3 stated that: "I sometimes write Dreamtime stories myself". Obviously, the other subjects were not like minded. Nevertheless, it does appear that whilst the traditional extracts were irrelevant to most of the subjects, they did impact strongly on a select few. Conversely, the contemporary extracts seemed to have been mildly accepted by the majority of the subjects, but, with the exception of Subject # 15, have not elicited passionate responses.

It also needs mentioning that whilst the contemporary extracts did prove more popular than the traditional extracts they were both decidedly unpopular when compared to the action extracts. Furthermore, one could query the claim that the Morgan and Davis extracts are contemporary. I acknowledge that they are not contemporary in respect to their settings; although this deficiency is somewhat mitigated by the contemporary issues and ideas explored in these extracts, namely, the disenfranchisement of Aboriginal families. These extracts were chosen

because they were the only relatively contemporary Aboriginal stories not using action conventions I could find. Thankfully, the other two extracts (originally white Australian characterisation) in the 'teenage psychological' genre are ostentatiously contemporary. Byron Rose and Sammy Dull are contemporary in both their choice of setting and subject matter.

Once again, the Aboriginal contemporary and Aboriginal traditional extracts were more popular than their white Australian counterparts. In the interviews, the white Australian contemporary and traditional extracts actually drew no response from the subjects. As mentioned earlier, this result is consistent with the theory that the popularity of any piece of prose fiction is determined by its relevance to everyday life. Whilst traditional Dreamtime stories aren't particularly relevant for urban Aborigines, it would appear, that they are more relevant than Aesop's fables.

CHAPTER 6 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this research are challenging. The notion that urban Aboriginal culture is a valid cultural entity within itself, does not sit well with those who see the restoration of traditional cultural motifs as the only solution to the problems faced by many Aborigines.

However, if we accept that urban Aborigines have developed a valid cultural identity, then we must also accept that this culture will be defined and interpreted by its own writers and artists.

The evidence of this research supports the theory that children select reading material that is relevant to their situation in life. The subjects demonstrated a preference for characters, events and settings that are, both realistically and vicariously, relevant to their lives. It is my belief that further evidence to support this theory will emerge as more urban Aboriginal people publish their stories. One could quite easily see the interest stimulated by Archie Weller being achieved by other writers. As more Aboriginal prose fiction becomes available a superior research anthology to the one used in this study could be developed.

Recommendation # 1

Prose fiction should be selected for urban Aboriginal reading programs on the grounds that it is truly relevant to the life experiences of urban Aborigines.

Prose fiction should be aligned to a child's vicarious experiences. For the most part, these vicarious experiences are derived from the television and film viewing of the child. The viewing habits of urban Aboriginal boys are very similar to those of white Australian boys. Both groups overwhelmingly prefer action/horror oriented television shows and films.

Recommendation # 2

Prose fiction should be selected for urban Aboriginal reading programs on the grounds that it is similar in content to the television shows and films experienced vicariously by urban Aboriginal boys.

To achieve a nexus between the urban Aboriginal reader and that reader's life and vicarious experiences there are other variables that need due attention, namely characterisation and setting. Contrary to the study conducted by Snow & Noble (1986), this research found that urban Aboriginal boys preferred Aboriginal characterisations. Whilst the importance of characterisation seemed to be secondary to the subjects'

genre considerations, it was nevertheless a factor in the relative popularity of any one extract. Obviously, the subjects believed that their lives were analagous to the Aboriginal characterisations. Whilst Aboriginal characteristions were preferred, it was obvious that the subjects wanted these characters in contemporary situations, both in terms of time and physical location.

This is consistent with both their real life and vicarious experiences. Their preferences for urban settings reflects their own urban lifestyles; and the settings of many of their favourite television shows and films. Likewise their preferences for contemporary time settings probably reflects their own contemporary lifestyles; and the time settings of many of their favourite television shows and films. Perhaps writers similar to Weller need to be actively encouraged to publish their stories.

Recommendation # 3

Prose fiction selected for urban Aboriginal boys should, if possible, include Aboriginal characterisations and contemporary settings.

Recommendations for Further Research

This entire area of research is in urgent need of further investigation. Much of the literature dealing specifically with prose fiction preferences is anecdotal. These

anecdotal reports need to be tested because appropriate reading resources are vital to the successful negotiation of print.

Research investigating the prose fiction preferences of Aboriginal girls, both traditional and urban would be of enormous value. The prose fiction preferences of traditional Aboriginal boys is another obvious area that requires research. Whilst the prose fiction preferences of Aborigines with ages different from those included in this study also requires research.

Furthermore, the research undertaken in this study explores only a limited number of variables. Other variables need to be explored, such as: other genres, other aspects of style, liking for or dislike of things like "detailed or minimal description", "complex or minimal plots".

There needs to be further investigation of urban (and rural) Aboriginal identity. The seminal research of Snow & Noble (1986) which explored many untouched areas, particularly the preferred cultural reference groups of urban Aborigines deserves the attention of other researchers. If teachers had greater information about this cultural identity, reading books could be selected to fit this identity.

Conclusion

I acknowledge that at times all students must be given reading material which is completely foreign to their various experiences. This allows students to increase their understanding of the world. However, with so many Aboriginal students experiencing difficulty with the task of reading, it becomes important to get those students reading. An adoption of this study's recommendations would perhaps prompt urban Aboriginal boys to begin reading prose fiction.

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Appendix A Research Instrument: Prose Fiction Anthology

EXTRACT # 1

In this passage two white Australian teenagers are being chased by a murderous foe clutching a knife. Their situation is worse still because they must also overcome a wall of birds intent on blocking their path. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Australia.

Halfway up the stairs, Liz and Alan were stopped. They ran into a yielding, suspended wall of birds and simply could make no progress against it. The air fluttered and hummed with sparrows. Liz shrieked in terror and fury.

The birds did not turn on them, did not attack them; they just thwarted them. All the sparrows in the world, it seemed, has been drawn here, to the second storey of the Beaumont house in Castle Rock.

"Down!" Alan shouted at her. "Maybe we can crawl under them!"

They dropped to their knees. Progress was possible at first, although not pleasant; they found themselves crawling over a crunching, bleeding carpet of sparrows at least eighteen inches deep. Then they ran into that wall again. Looking under the hem of the afghan, Alan could see a crowded, confused mass that beggared description. The sparrows on the stair-risers were being crushed. Layers and layers of the living-but soon to be dead-stood on the top of them. Farther up-perhaps three feet off the stairs-sparrows flew in a kind of suicide traffic zone, colliding and falling, some rising and flying again, others squirming in the masses of their fallen mates with broken legs or wings. Sparrows, Alan remembered, could not hover.

From somewhere above them, on the other side of this grotesque living barrier, a man screamed.

Liz seized him, pulled him close. "What can we do?" she screamed. "What can we do, Alan?"

He didn't answer her. Because the answer was nothing. There was nothing they could do.

Stark came toward Alan with the razor in his right hand. Thad backed toward the slowly moving study door with his eyes on the blade. He snatched up another pencil from the desk.

"That ain't gonna do you no good." Stark said. Not now." Then his eyes shifted to the door. It had opened wide enough, and the sparrows flowed in, a river of them...and they flowed at George Stark. In an instant his expression became one of horror...and understanding.

"No!" he screamed, and began to slash at them with Alexis Machine's straight-razor. "No, I won't go back! You can't make me!"

EXTRACT #2

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this Aboriginal Dreamtime story the adventures of a brave warrior are told. Toolalla fought the descendant of the giant emu. This story took place a long time ago.

On the edge of the lagoon Toolalla was poised like a carved statue staring across the marshy waste. The Kurrea of the Boobera Lagoon had terrorised the people who depended on the wild life of the swamp and lake for their food, and they had appealed to Toolalla, who was a renowned warrior and hunter, to put an end to the monster. If the Kurrea had confined his attention to ducks, swans and fish, the tribes people could have tolerated him, but no man dared paddle his canoe on the lagoon, nor even fish from the bank, because the Kurrea had developed a taste for human flesh. Sometimes he had even left the shelter of the quiet water and had ploughed long furrows through the soil in his search for tasty morsels of human flesh.

Toolalla strained his eyes as he peered through the early morning mists. There was a ripple on the oily water, and quietly and menacingly a vast bulk emerged from a deep hole. Its eyes glared balefully at the hunter. Toolalla's arm went back, the woomera jerked forwards and his spear hurtled through the air, struck the Kurrea, and bounced off his skin, falling into the water with a splash. Time after time Toolalla hurled his spears until none were left. The Kurrea swam through the reeds at the edge of the lagoon and charged up the bank, his mouth wide open, his fangs flickering between his teeth.

The hunter did not linger. The dust spurted from his heels as he raced through the scrub. He had no hope of escaping, but he was determined to run until he dropped. The Kurrea gained on him quickly. His body was partly submerged in the ground, and the soil piled up against his breast like the bow wave of a canoe.

Toolalla veered to the left. In the distance he had caught sight of a bumble tree, and he wondered whether he could reach it before he was caught by the Kurrea. The bumble tree was the mother-in-law of the Kurrea and was the only living thing he feared. The hunter reached the tree and clung to it. The monster skidded to a halt and turned round in panic when he saw his mother-in-law. A deep hole was formed by the movement. Then the Kurrea raced back through the channel he had made in pursuit of Toolalla.

The experience was a salutary one. He still needed food, and he preyed on the animal life of the lagoon, but no longer did he seize men. In fact the appearance of a canoe was enough to send him scurrying back to the bottomless hole where he had made his home. The channels he had made in search of human victims, including the one that had been formed during his final excursion in pursuit of Toolalla,

were filled with water in the rainy season, but at other times they were quite dry.

The Kurrea no longer haunts the lagoon, but his descendants are the Gowarkees, the giant emus with black feathers and red legs which live in the swampy country near the home of Balame.

EXTRACT # 3

In this passage an Aboriginal man writes about his childhood years. As a boy he was taken from his mother and sent to a Native mission in Perth. At the time he could not understand why he was taken from his mother and placed in the hands of strangers. The events of the entire story took place in Western Australia 60 years ago.

When we left Corunna Downs for the Swan Native and Half-Caste Mission, we had to travel through Marble Bar and then to Port Hedland. We caught the ship, the Ballara, me, my brother Albert, Pixie and Dudley Drake-Brockman. Albert and I travelled steerage. Sometimes, I'd sneak out and head towards the front of the boat to see what was going on. Dudley Drake-Brockman would always catch me and shout, 'Get back to where you belong!'

It was a fine day when we arrived in Fremantle. We were taken straight to the mission, near the banks of the Swan River in Guildford.

The first thing they did was christen us. Canon Burton and Sophie McKintosh were our godparents. We were christened 'Corunna', they didn't give us our father's name. That's when I got the name Arthur, too. Albert had always been called Albert.

For a long time, I was very worried about my mother. She had always been good to me. She loved me. Albert didn't seem to mind so much, I think he was too frightened to mind anything. You see, we couldn't understand why they'd taken us away. We weren't their family. The mission wasn't anyone's family. They called us inmates, all us kids, we were all inmates, just like prison.

We soon found out there were bullies at the mission. I suppose you get them everywhere. There was one that wanted to try us out. I was worried about Albert, I knew he couldn't fight his way out of a wet paper bag. I had to take his part. I'd tackle whoever was beating up Albert and finish them off. They never tackled me again and they learnt not to touch Albert, because he was my brother. There was one bully there, he had everyone bluffed except me. He'd throw stones at me, call me names, but he'd never tackle me. When it came to knuckles, I got my fist in first.

EXTRACT #4

In this passage a white Australian boy is made to confront his worst fears when his female baby sitter places him into a bed of insects. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Australia.

One evening she took him to his bedroom at the usual time - his parents were at a concert - and helped him to undress.

He feared her touch, that one of her scarlet nails might draw his blood.

"Where are my pyjamas ? he asked, fearful in the musicless house.

"In bed," she said. And when he walked over to the bed in his nakedness to find them, she pulled back the upper sheet in one swift movement, and pushed him naked into bed, with a squashing, crushing, splintering, pulping sound, down amongst a collection, so laboriously assembled, of cicadas, Christmas beetles, woodbugs, ants, caterpillars, worms, snails, slugs, tarantulas, blow flies, moths, grubs.

He screamed, his scream an uncontrolled single ceaseless howl of horror, a scream of helpless terror as, his eyes pressed against her excited cleavage, his back, his legs, his buttocks, crawled and itched and slimed with all the maimed and trapped, and self devouring, resisting, awoken insects.

And she pushed him into the slippery scaly pulp till, with a dreadful force, he thrust her away, thrust her off balance and onto the floor, and ran, screaming, howling, naked through the house, the garden, the street, screaming one single high note as he ran, smeared over with slime and crushed paste and dying living insects, being eaten and stung and torn as he ran, his eyes blinded and his mouth and nostrils filled to suffocation, his flesh being eaten from his bones and pumped and drilled full of eggs and parasites and borers, burrowing through his entrails, his heart, his throat, his mind.

"Come back," she called to him, "Lionel, come back. Now you will be cured. Come back Lionel, now there will be no need to scream."

But he ran, impelled on his single ceaseless note of terror, and he would never come back.

EXTRACT #5

In this passage three Aboriginal teenage boys become involved in a high speed police chase. However, one of the boys realises that he has returned to a way of life he thought he had left behind. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Perth.

Elgin is remote from the others. Just him and his car and the road.

They are almost at Guilford when they zoom past a speed trap.

Caesar hears the eerie wailing and jerks around.

"Hey couz, bloody munadj'ave got us!"

Fear settles like a mist over the remnants of the tribe.

"Old tight. When I tell ya to run, ya bloody run-understand?" Elgin says, through clenched teeth.

More cars join in the chase: two blue vans and a CIB car. They bay and howl like hounds after the fox.

"I'll stop 'em!" screams Caesar, and loads the magazine of his .303.

Six bullets.

He leans out the back window of the swaying cab so the wind whips his hair back and shrieks through the curls.

He fires the rifle and the bullet whines away. Fires again and again.

On his last shot, the bullet smashes through the windscreen of the foremost van, so it slows to an abrupt halt. The RTA car also stops, but the others come relentlessly onwards.

The CIB car comes up alongside them. They think they are Starsky and Hutch, in their olive-green Kingswood. Elgin sees the fat, pale face of Detective-Sergeant Fathers peering in at them.

Slides over to the other side of the road in an attempt to block off the CIB car.

It only comes up on the other side of the road, so Elgin rams the taxi into it.

Twice he smashes the taxi against the car, desperately trying to escape. He has visions of smirking Fathers and his mates, like white toadstools growing on Elgin's black rotting body, down in the forest of Central police station.

The second time he rams the CIB car, Caesar Jackell's arm breaks with a snap like the click of his stolen rifle bolt.

He gives a cry of pain.

Just over the Swan River bridge, Elgin slams on the brakes. The taxi careers up onto the footpath.

"Run! Run!" he yells, and is out sprinting even before the car has stopped. Down over the bank and towards the river.

EXTRACT #6

In this passage an Aboriginal boy sleeping alone on a cold winter's night is awakened by a strange scratching sound. When he investigates the sound he is confronted by animal he has never seen before. The action of the entire story takes place in present day rural Australia.

The scratching comes again. Someone's dog, he thinks, lost and wanting to be let in. That's all it is... but still, he pauses. It would be inhuman to leave it out there in the cold, he thinks (not that it is much warmer in here; in spite of the battery-powered heater, he can see the cold cloud of his breath)-but still he hesitates. A cold finger of fear is probing just below his heart. This has been a bad season in the bush; there have been omens of evil on the land. Arnie has his father's Aboriginal blood strong in his veins; and he doesn't like the feel of things.

Before he can decide what to do about his visitor, the low-pitched whining rises to a snarl. There is a thud as some thing incredibly heavy hits the door... draws back...hits again. The door trembles in its frame, and a puff of snow billows in from the top.

Arnie stares around, looking for something to shore it up with, but before he can do more than reach for the filmy chair he has been sitting in, the snarling thing strikes the door again with incredible force, splintering it from top to bottom.

It holds for a moment longer, bowed in on a vertical line, and lodged in it, kicking and lunging, its snout wrinkled back in a snarl, its yellow eyes blazing, it is the biggest dingo Arnie has ever seen...

And its snarls sound terribly like words.

The door splinters, groans, gives. In a moment the thing will be inside.

In the corner, amongst a welter of tools, a pick leans against the wall. Arnie lunges for it and seizes it as the dingo thrusts its way inside and crouches, its yellow eyes gleaming at the cornered man. Its ears are flattened back, furry triangles. Its tongue lolls. Behind it, snow gusts through a door that has been shattered down the centre.

It springs with a snarl, and Arnie swings the pick.

Once.

EXTRACT #7

In this passage a white Australian teenage boy is struggling to maintain his relationship with his pregnant girlfriend. Eventually, on the advice of a drunk and homeless derelict he vows to return to her. The events of the entire story take place in and around present day Kings Cross, Sydney.

'Well, seems youse the one in the wrong in this particular case, mate, and if ya care for her like youse say, then youse better start learnin' to swallow some of that pride and apologise to the girl. 'Sides, she's probably been worried sick about you, on top of everything else she's going through. And especially if she does have to go and get operated on, the girl's going to need all the support she can get.' Byron takes another swig. 'Hey, I know watcha can do, Jeff. When you go back and see her, if that's what ya decide to do, take her a single rose - a red one if youse can. Don't know if youse done that sort a thing before, and I suppose lots a people think that's old hat nowadays - but stuff 'em! Somethin' like that makes a person feel real special. Mind, you'll still have to do the rest yourself.'

Although he knows Byron is right, Jeff grows nervous at the thought of facing Liz.

'Sounds like a good idea Byron but...'

'That's right, youse a bit of a pauper at the moment. Never mind, up ya get and take this. That should get youse the prettiest rose in the Cross and... oh, youse got to get yourself back to Bondi too, don't ya?' Pausing, a smile slowly overcomes the concern on Byron's face. 'Tell ya watcha do, mate. First, get yourself a ticket. Then, with the bit youse got left over, go and see the lady selling flowers just outside the station. Tell her that Byron sent ya and you'll be right.'

Taking the money, Jeff feels guilty for having received - for the second time - the charity of a homeless derelict. He thinks for a moment and then, reaching into his pocket, produces the stick. 'Here, Byron, take this. Yeah, I know you're a tobacco and grog man but, well, maybe if you see John or Eddy at the Mat Tal sometime... well anyways, please take it.'

'Thank you kindly, mate. I'm sure they'd appreciate it. Well, youse take care of yourself - and Liz too. I guess... well I guess I might see ya sometime if you happen to be by Rushcutter's. I'm here most days...'

Jeff can see that of all the miseries Byron has suffered, loneliness is far the greatest. 'You can count on it, mate. You're not going to get rid of me that easily.' And with a firm handshake, he departs and heads back towards Kings Cross.

'Byron? Byron who?' Jeff shuffles with embarrassment as the haggish-looking lady questions him. 'Oh, youse don't mean Lord Byron, do you? Well, that's different, then.' She

selects a single rose from her bucket, wraps it and then promptly presents it to Jeff, When money is offered, she shakes her head. 'Keep it, mate. It's worth it just to hear that the ol' bastard is still kicking.'

Jeff wonders...

EXTRACT #8

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this Aboriginal Dreamtime story an explanation is given for why dugongs swim in the ocean and stay far away from the land. This story took place a long time ago.

Dugong and her brothers, the Cockatoos, were camped at the mouth of the river where food was plentiful. It was nearly midday and the heat waves were dancing above the hot sand. Dugong lay fast asleep among the rushes while her brothers went off on a hunting expedition.

"She will be quite safe here," they said. "No one can see her."

They did not know that Chicken Hawk was on the far side of the swamp. He was a lazy man.

"If I set fire to the rushes they will burn nicely on a day like this," he thought. "Then I will be able to get my food more easily."

He twirled his fire stick vigorously, and soon a wisp of smoke rose in the still air. The tinder glowed and the dry grass he had packed around it caught fire. The flames swept across the lagoon. Chicken Hawk waded across as soon as they had died down and stumbled over the body of Dugong. He looked at the burnt flesh, recognised the young woman, and ran away quickly with fear in his heart, because he knew that her brothers, the Cockatoos, were fighting men.

Meanwhile they had seen the sudden flight of birds above the swamp, and the pall of smoke that hung over it.

"Our sister!" they cried, and ran along the beach and up to the swamp. The charred ends of the reeds were crumbling to ash and dropping into the water. They searched among them until they found their sister's body and lifted her tenderly in their arms. She stirred slightly and her eyelids fluttered.

"Who did it?" they asked. "Who tried to kill you and burn our homes?"

She could not speak. They laid her in a warm pool of water.

"Lie there, little sister. The water will heal your burns. We will find the man who has done this. He will never try to light a fire again when we have finished with him!"

They waded through the swamp and picked up Chicken Hawk's trail on the far side.

"It is Kalalang the Chicken Hawk!" they cried. The trail led them inland across a bare stony plain where they could keep the trail in sight only because they were skilled huntsmen, and down to the beach. Chicken Hawk had waded through a stream and had climbed a tree, but the eagle-eyed hunters soon found him. They dragged him down and beat him with their spears until he was bruised and bleeding in a hundred places.

"Let me go!" he called feebly. "I am dying already. I did not mean to hurt your sister. I did not know she was lying among the reeds.

"We've punished him enough," said one of the Cockatoos. "He will never come back to our camping place by the shore again."

Chicken Hawk dragged himself painfully into the scrub and made his way inland, never daring to go down to the shore again. The Cockatoos went back to find their sister, but she had gone. She had had enough of men. She had swum out of the swamp and down the river to the sea, which she had discovered is a much better place for Dugongs than the land.

EXTRACT #9

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this European fable the wolf shows that those who expect rewards for good deeds will often be disappointed, and that helping someone is enough a reward in itself. This story took place a long time ago.

One day a wolf came upon a fine fat hen and, thinking this would be an admirable meal, he ate the poor creature to the last feather. Alas for the wolf - with his final mouthful a sharp bone became securely stuck in his throat.

He coughed and spluttered and the tears ran from his eyes, but despite all his efforts he could not dislodge it. In the greatest agony he ran up and down through the woods looking for help.

The wolf begged for relief from each and every animal he met. With each encounter he hinted that a handsome reward would be given if the bone could be removed from his throat. However, his manner was known to many of the animals and they were unwilling to lend him their aid.

The lion and the leopard pretended not to hear his anguished cries; the crow and the raven flapped high into the trees, away from his snarling jaws; the fox and the bear were wary of a trick and went about their business; even the donkey refused to help - at least that's how it seemed, for he merely brayed and continued munching thorns.

At last, as the day drew on, the wolf came upon a crane dipping among the reeds by the waterside. She listened to the wolf's request and, on hearing the promise of a reward, she agreed to help.

Peering deep into the wolf's throat the crane could see the sharp bone stuck fast. Reaching down with her beak and with her long neck curving between the fearsome jaws, she slowly drew it out.

Modestly, the crane asked for the promised reward but the wolf grinned widely, his sharp teeth sparkling in the sunlight. "You ungrateful creature!" he snapped. "Have I not given you your life? How many can place their head in a wolf's jaws and live to tell the tale? Your tasty head has been withdrawn safely, is that not reward enough?"

EXTRACT #10

In this passage a white Australian teenage boy's life takes a turn for the worst when he meets up with some very reckless friends. Doug and his friends stumble from one criminal mishap to another. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Perth.

Doug's eyes, still bright from his dreams, focused on the gang of leering skinheads who had nonchalantly formed a semi-circle around the two.

They had come from Fremantle that morning, stomping and romping like wild horses, out to find a fight they could win or a woman for the night. Now it seemed they had found both at the same time.

Skinny Doug hunched into his clothes and stared bleakly at the grinning, shaved-headed, big-booted boys. A few passers-by stopped to watch curiously, but most of them scurried away from the danger zone. The music from the show leaped and shimmered like imps, slid like snakes and sprang like gremlins around the silent tableau.

'Oh, look, Joey, she dropped her Teddy bear,' one of the boys says, mock reproachful. 'You shouldn't ought to of done that,' and he bent and picked up the sodden prize that had been won with such joy and laughter. With a grin like a starving wolf, he handed it to Jenny, who took it silently, with large, fearful eyes and backed towards Doug.

'Don't yer fink Benny deserves a kiss fer savin' yer bear from drownin', Mary?' another retorted, amidst chuckles.

'Her true love might not like that,' said a third. 'You her boyfriend, you skinny little runt?' sneered Joey as the gang moved closer.

Doug's hand fell lovingly over his grandfather's cut-throat razor snuggling in his pocket. All the members of Floyd's gang carried a weapon. It made them feel really big to be risking a sentence if the cops caught them armed with a dangerous weapons in public. Pretty Boy Floyd had a pocket knife honed as sharp as his cunning and Silver had a flick-knife he had bought from Taiwan Hui. But Doug had his grandfather's old fashioned razor, a lethal weapon indeed.

'Rack off,' he muttered. The skinheads laughed. They intended to beat up this weedy youth.

Joey closed in. In a blur of white his face was slashed open while Jenny screamed and Doug struck again. This time Benny went down, yelling, with a cut across his stomach. Then the other eight boys came in like dogs around a kangaroo.

Jenny went screaming off, crying for Floyd and Silver. Doug went under.

It was a brutal fight. Doug's razor found one more victim before beefy hands tore it from his grasp and a blow from a piece of iron stupefied him. He was helpless for a few vital seconds while blows and kicks rained upon his puny body.

Then big boy Floyd leapt like the devil into the pack,

crashing two heads together and sending their owners reeling. Stocky Silver took on one more and two of the Greyboys took on the rest.

Into Doug's blurred, frightened vision swam an ugly, angry red face. Joining his knobbly fists together, he connected with the face and the skinhead went crashing back into the silent fighters dashed on the canvas tent.

EXTRACT #11

In this passage three Aboriginal teenage boys hold up a service station and kidnap the owner's daughter. However, contact with the owner's daughter leads the boys to a greater understanding of themselves. The action of the entire story takes place in present day rural Western Australia.

"Orrright, ole man. Give us ya monies, quick way!", the leader shouts nervously. He is scared and uncertain of the plan his younger cousin has suggested only minutes before. "Next place we'll'old up, Elvis," Perry grinned from the back seat. Driving along on the grey ribbon of road, leading them to tomorrow's life-if they got there.

There is a fear as well as anger in the old man's pale eyes so the boy feels powerful. This is his big chance to become someone. All his life he has been kicked into the dust of his dirty existence and made to eat leftovers. But now he is in control.

Going to be rich and famous.

"Urry up, Elvis. Stop clownin' around. Ya want the munadj to come, or what?" hisses the second youngster by the door. He is small and dark, with a deadpan face and blank brown eyes. There is a hardness about him as his lips draw back in a vicious snarl. He caresses his shotgun in knobbly brown hands as his eyes flicker warily around the room. His heavy black mane curls back from his forehead and cascades down over his shoulders.

He huddles into his flapping old greatcoat and sneers at the old man. A silver-painted skull grins from the ragged black T-shirt stretching across his wide chest. Flat brown feet are planted on the dusty floor. No boots for him.

Both youths wear blue denim caps. But Perry's is faded and patched, like his denim trousers.

The only new thing about the boy is the shotgun.

"Now, don't try nothin' smart, ole man, else Wolf'ere will blow ya guts, understand?" Elvis says, confident again.

He knows where he stands now. Just a scared old mechanic here. Useless rusted nuts and bolts. A half-car, looking ugly in the garage.

Elvis strides over to the till and wrenches it open. Perry glides softly over to the cool drink vendor and puts two cans in his coat pockets. Grins slowly at his older cousin who is lifting out handfuls of money. It flashes and tinkles in the naked glare of the yellow, swinging light. He is lucky, for the man hasn't been to the bank all week so all the takings nestle there. A smile lights up gangling Elvis' flat face. A happy gleam shines in his worried eyes, for a brief second.

"Come on, Elvis. What, ya growin' the bloody stuff, or somphin'?"

Elvis swings around grinning to join his anxious companion, and it is then that he sees the girl squeezed

into a cobwebby space between the two shelves holding odd parts of engines. She is slim and small with long brown hair. Her round blue eyes are full of fear.

Elvis jabs a blunt finger at her. "She's comin' with us, just so's ya don't tell the p'lice too soon," and he drags her roughly from her hiding place.

The old man awakens from his stupor.

"Leave her alone, you little black larrikin!" He grabs a spanner. But the smaller youth is beside him in a second. Smash the shotgun butt across the white-grey face. Slam him down on the floor. Mad eyes alight with a viciousness that shakes his small body.

EXTRACT #12

In this passage a white Australian teenage boy just released from jail turns to stealing as a means of survival. However, his life of crime leads to inevitable consequences. The action of the entire story took place in Perth and the surrounding country side about 30 years ago.

The youth moves quietly, hood pulled up over his head, raindrops on eyelashes turning the street lights into rainbow shining gems. Running water splashes over his boot tops, soaks his socks and clamps his jeans damply to long native shanks.

Swell night, real dark and everything fresh like new from the rain. Real beautiful in a way, all aheave with the storm. Real crazy-mad night for a night cat, too numb to feel the cold. He feels belonging in this dark, not like in the day, outcast and naked. Nigger-nigger-go-away-day.

Avenue ends at the shopping centre and not a soul about. Faint light through a plate glass window. He peers inside, making out counter and packed shelves. Grouse night. Everything's grouse, except how the hell to reach the back of this place.

He remembers a narrow alley and makes around to it, keeping close to the darker side. Loitering with intent! Hands feel out a six foot corrugated iron gate and clutch the top. Edge hurts but is too blunt to cut. One foot on block and padlock. He heaves up and straddles. Gate creaks. He drops, sinks into soft mud and crouches, listening with panting breath. Nothing but the rain and the wind. Desert boots ruined, but otherwise everything going fine. Hard for him to make out the selected shop from the side. He peers through a small window towards a faint light- no one there, store-room stacked with cardboard cartons, faintly lit through panelled glass door of the front shop.

He feels round the small window and finds that the putty is rotting and flaking off. If the pane was out he might be able to reach the half turned key in the back door. Screw-driver swipes off putty and jerks out tacks. He slips the jemmy edge under the pane and eases the glass until it is almost free. Good. Just one last little jab. Crash! Shatter of glass on metal. Hell! He freezes and crouches with nerves strung tight. Faint sound on sensitive eardrums. Someone turning in bed. Probably some lousy jew who counts his money every night!

Hand reaches through the window, fumbles towards the key and pulls it out. Hard to turn. Ah! That's got it. He slips through and shuts the door, pauses inside, dripping water from drenched clothes, face hot and feet icy cold. He peers about, mind and body alert. Door into the shop unlocked. Enters warily, remembering the old night cop.

He finds the cash drawer on the counter and forces the cheap lock. Stuffs notes and silver into deep pockets and darts swiftly to collect sharp clothes. Finds an empty

carton and shoves them inside.

Grouse, fifty quid at least and all these new threads.
Rent taken care of and money over for sharp shoes.
Swingiest cat in town!

Off now before luck runs out. Locks the back door and
leaves the key in for kicks.

EXTRACT # 13

In this passage four Aboriginal teenagers (two boys and two girls) decide to spend a fun afternoon rafting on the local lake. However, the afternoon takes an horrific turn when an oil slick assumes a life of its own. The action of the entire story takes place in a present day Australian town.

Then Josette's hand touched the water-her forefinger only, sending out one delicate ripple in a ring-and the black patch surged over it. Morton heard her gasp in the air, and suddenly the blankness left her eyes. What replaced it was agony.

The black, viscous substance ran up her arm like mud...and under it, Morton saw her skin dissolving. She opened her mouth and screamed. At the same moment she began to tilt outward. She waved her other hand blindly at Morton and he grabbed for it. Their fingers brushed. Her eyes met his, and she still looked hellish. Then she fell outward and splashed into the water.

The black thing flowed over the spot where she had landed.

"What happened?" Timara was screaming behind them. "What happened? Did she fall in? What happened to her?" Morton made as if to dive in after her and Jack pushed him backwards with casual force. "No," he said in a frightened voice that was utterly unlike Jack.

All three of them saw her flail to the surface. Her arms came up waving-no, not arms. One arm. The other was covered with a black membrane that hung in flaps and folds of something that looked a little like a rolled roast of beef.

"Help!" Josette screamed. Her eyes glared at them, away from them, away-her eyes were like lanterns being waved aimlessly in the dark. She beats the water into a froth. "Help it hurts please help it hurts IT HURTS IT HURRRRRR-"

Morton had fallen when Jack pushed him. Now he got up from the boards of the raft and stumbled forward again, unable to ignore that voice. He tried to jump in and Jack grabbed him, wrapping his big arms around Morton's thin chest.

"No, she's dead," he whispered harshly. "Can't you see that? She's dead."

Thick blackness suddenly poured across Josette's face like a drape, and her screams were first muffled and then cut off entirely. Now the black stuff seemed to bind her in crisscrossing ropes. Morton could see it sinking into her like acid, and when her jugular vein gave way in a dark pumping jet, he saw the thing send out a pseudopod after the escaping blood. He could not believe what he was seeing, could not understand it...but there was no doubt, no sensation of losing his mind, no belief that he was dreaming.

EXTRACT # 14

In this passage a white Australian boy leaves home with his brother for the first time to take up a farming position. The experience of travelling broadens his horizons. The events of the entire story took place in Western Australia 60 years ago.

It was 1932 and I was fourteen years of age. Mother and father reasoned it was better if I left school. Harold had left school the previous year. Tommy, who was now twenty years old, was employed by a Mr Cross, a travelling dentist. Mr Cross used to travel all over the state and Tommy would be away from home for about four months at a time. He was lucky inasmuch as he had regular employment, as it was almost impossible to get part-time work, let alone a permanent job. My father's brother, Uncle Ben, wrote to father and offered to teach Harold and I farming skills if we were prepared to travel to his farm. I always had an adventurous spirit and the prospect of going to Moora sounded exciting and I was eager to go. My brother Harold was just as excited as I was. Father was reluctant to let us go, but because employment was practically nil in Yarloop, he decided to let us.

Mother scrimped and saved to buy suitable clothing. One of the things she bought us was a new pair of shoes each. There we were, two boys wearing shoes for the first time in our lives and leaving home for the first time also. After tearful goodbyes on Mother's part and almost on mine, and a gruff goodbye and a quick handshake from father, we excitedly, and with some trepidation, boarded the Bunbury to Perth passenger train on the way to Moora. Immediately the train started on its journey I took off my shoes and socks. Harold did likewise.

We arrived in Perth on a Saturday at three o'clock in the afternoon. A man, a friend of fathers, was waiting for us, he drove us to Bennett House, a hostel for travelling youths in Bennett Street, East Perth. We were shown our room on the verandah by three giggling girls. At the evening meal we sat with the staff in the kitchen while the matron, who ran the hostel along with her husband, ate in the dining room.

To my brother and I Perth was a huge place and as there was no train to Moora until Monday we had all day Sunday to ourselves. One of the girls suggested we go to the pictures.

So the five of us walked into Perth to see the movies and as it was a Sunday evening admission to the pictures was a silver coin. That is, you could see the the film, which was usually an hour long, for threepence. We arrived back at Bennett House tired from the walk into town and we thankfully went to bed.

EXTRACT #15

In this passage an Aboriginal teenage boy ponders life without his best friend. Whilst he is terribly lonely and misses his friend greatly, he realises that the friendship has provided him with the strength to face the future. The events of the entire story take place in present day Perth.

The night Sammy Dull died I was walking alone through the streets of Belmont. I was terribly alone, my family were still living at the Aboriginal camp in a distant corner of the state. I was starving hungry, I'd hardly eaten all day, but I was having no luck. Henny Penny, Mc Donalds. Cap't Bream, Kentucky Fried - they were all closed. Belmont's a goddamned awful place after 11 o'clock. Everyone goes inside, shuts their doors and turns out their lights. I hate being out on the streets with everyone else all tucked away in their cosy little homes.

I didn't mind so much when I had Sammy. I had things to do, I wasn't bored. Sometimes I wish he hadn't died, but not often. I know that might sound weird but it's what Sammy wanted. Life was a kind of contract he had to abide by, but only for as long as he was needed. The only thing I regret is that I wasn't there when he left. I guess he wouldn't have wanted me hanging round, watching and asking stupid questions. But I reckon I'd feel better now if I'd seen him go, seen that he was okay.

That was the big problem with Sam. Whatever happened, he was always okay. Take the time I met him. I was walking down the main street, down past Woolworths, when I first saw him. There he was, sitting all rugged-up in the cruddy blue bus shelter. It was a real cold night. In fact, that night was colder than any other night I could remember. But there he was, just sitting there with this dog. Big grey dog, all shaggy and moth-eaten. I'm sure everyone knows someone with a dog just like it.

I couldn't just walk past without saying hello, so I asked him what his dog's name was. Maybe I should have asked him what his own name was first, but I wasn't that good with whites back then. He told me the dog had no name and that it wasn't really his. He said it was a stray that had latched onto him down the coast someplace and he didn't have the heart to abandon it. I thought that was real nice because it isn't any fun having no one to look after you. When I told him that, he wrinkled up his brow, just like this, and asked me how I knew. I told him about Mum and Norman and the relations. He shook his head and let me sit down beside him.

My head hardly came to his shoulder, he was so tall. I'd never seen anyone so tall before. I thought to myself how much it must take to keep such a big body warm, but I thought it best not to ask him. Sometimes people get pretty touchy about what they look like. I patted No Name and asked Sam what his own name was. Then I asked him if I

could call him Sammy. I like nicknames better than proper names. Sammy never minded me calling him that.

EXTRACT #16

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this European fable it is shown that the loss of freedom is too high a price to pay for revenge. This story took place a long time ago.

A long time ago a wild horse lived and grazed in a vast green meadow. The meadow was wide and provided the sweetest grass for feeding - no other animal came there and the horse had it all to himself.

One day, much to the dismay of the horse, an antlered stag leaped into the meadow and, trampling around, trod down much of the horse's fine grass. This greatly annoyed the horse, and, unable to prevent the stag's destructive behaviour, he galloped away toward a man who was passing by.

"Sir," said the horse, "please stop and help me to punish that intruder before all my grazing land is spoiled."

The man looked back towards the stag who was still leaping about wildly, trampling and stomping; then turning to the horse he said, "Yes, I will help you to be revenged, but first you must let me place a bit in your mouth for a bridle, and a saddle on your back so that I may mount you. I will provide weapons and then, together, we will be able to overpower that wilful beast."

The horse agreed eagerly and all was made ready; then with the man mounted on his back he gave chase to the stag. The hunt was short and the stag was soon overcome and slain, which pleased the horse.

He turned to thank the man for his aid but found he could not move his head freely; there was no answer except a sharp tug on the bridle attached to the hard bit in his mouth.

"No need to thank me, horse," said the man, "it is I who should thank you. Until now I did not know how useful you could be, nor how swiftly you could carry me across the land. Your revenge has been rewarding to me for in the future I will keep you as my servant.

Thus from that day to this the horse has been the slave of man.

EXTRACT #17

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this European fable the mouse shows that no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. This story took place a long time ago.

Along while ago in a country far away there lived a fierce and handsome lion. Once, when weary from hunting and faint from the heat of the day, he returned home to his lair and fell in to a deep sleep.

While he slept a small mouse passed by and, not looking where he was going, absent-mindedly wandered into the lion's den. His tiny eyes slowly grew accustomed to the gloom and, as they did so, they opened wider and wider - there, confronting him, was the most fearsome creature he had ever seen. For a brief moment he was rooted to the spot in terror, then in a sudden panic he sprang towards the door. In so doing he stumbled and tripped over the lion's nose and woke him.

The frightened mouse scrambled frantically to pick himself up, but the lion's great paw clapped down upon him. He thought his end had surely come. And it is true the lion would have made a meal of him there and then, had not the mouse found his voice.

"Spare me, mighty one," he pleaded. I have offended you, I know, but your paw is too honorable to stain with the blood of so insignificant prey."

The great lion looked quizzically at the mouse and considered the matter without speaking. Then, as the mouse lay there trembling, he lifted his paw and allowed his tiny prisoner to go free. Hardly believing his good fortune, the mouse scampered away with hardly a backward look, fleeing as fast as he could out into the forest.

Now it happened that not long afterwards, the lion was once again hunting in the woods and by mischance fell into a trap set by some hunters. He struggled desperately to escape from the net entangling him but to no avail. Angry and with no hope of freedom, he set up a mighty roar that filled the whole forest with its echo.

Far away the mouse heard the roar and ran quickly to discover its source. At last, in a small clearing, he found the captive lion, which he had recognised as the same one who had spared his life and set him free. Without more ado, and showing no fear at all, the mouse ran out and began to nibble at the cords that tightly bound the lion. In a short while the mouse's sharp teeth severed the net and the noble beast was released from his captivity.

EXTRACT #18

In this passage an Aboriginal teenage boy just released from jail turns to stealing as a means of survival. His life of crime eventually leads to a confrontation with his past and his future. The action of the entire story took place in Perth and the surrounding country side about 30 years ago.

The youth moves quietly, hood pulled up over his head, raindrops on eyelashes turning the street lights into rainbow shining gems. Running water splashes over his boot tops, soaks his socks and clamps his jeans damply to long native shanks.

Swell night, real dark and everything fresh like new from the rain. Real beautiful in a way, all aheave with the storm. Real crazy-mad night for a night cat, too numb to feel the cold. He feels belonging in this dark, not like in the day, outcast and naked. Nigger-nigger-go-away-day.

Avenue ends at the shopping centre and not a soul about. Faint light through a plate glass window. He peers inside, making out counter and packed shelves. Grouse night. Everything's grouse, except how the hell to reach the back of this place.

He remembers a narrow alley and makes around to it, keeping close to the darker side. Loitering with intent! Hands feel out a six foot corrugated iron gate and clutch the top. Edge hurts but is too blunt to cut. One foot on block and padlock. He heaves up and straddles. Gate creaks. He drops, sinks into soft mud and crouches, listening with panting breath. Nothing but the rain and the wind. Desert boots ruined, but otherwise everything going fine. Hard for him to make out the selected shop from the side. He peers through a small window towards a faint light- no one there, store-room stacked with cardboard cartons, faintly lit through panelled glass door of the front shop.

He feels round the small window and finds that the putty is rotting and flaking off. If the pane was out he might be able to reach the half turned key in the back door. Screw-driver swipes off putty and jerks out tacks. He slips the jemmy edge under the pane and eases the glass until it is almost free. Good. Just one last little jab. Crash! Shatter of glass on metal. Hell! He freezes and crouches with nerves strung tight. Faint sound on sensitive eardrums. Someone turning in bed. Probably some lousy jew who counts his money every night!

Hand reaches through the window, fumbles towards the key and pulls it out. Hard to turn. Ah! That's got it. He slips through and shuts the door, pauses inside, dripping water from drenched clothes, face hot and feet icy cold. He peers about, mind and body alert. Door into the shop unlocked. Enters warily, remembering the old night cop.

He finds the cash drawer on the counter and forces the cheap lock. Stuffs notes and silver into deep pockets and

darts swiftly to collect sharp clothes. Finds an empty carton and shoves them inside.

Grouse, Fifty quid at least and all these new threads. Rent taken care of and money over for sharp shoes.

Swingiest cat in town!

Off now before luck runs out. Locks the back door and leaves the key in for kicks.

EXTRACT #19

In this passage a white Australian teenage boy ponders life without his best friend Sammy Dull. Whilst he is terribly lonely and misses his friend greatly he realises that the friendship has given him the strength to face the future. The events of the entire story take place in present day Perth.

The night Sammy Dull died I was walking alone through the streets of Belmont. I was starving hungry, I'd hardly eaten all day, but I was having no luck. Henny Penny, McDonalds. Cap't Bream, Kentucky Fried - they were all closed. Belmont's a goddamned awful place after 11 o'clock. Everyone goes inside, shuts their doors and turns out their lights. I hate being out on the streets with everyone else all tucked away in their cosy little homes.

I didn't mind so much when I had Sammy. I had things to do, I wasn't bored. Sometimes I wish he hadn't died, but not often. I know that might sound weird but it's what Sammy wanted. Life was a kind of contract he had to abide by, but only for as long as he was needed. The only thing I regret is that I wasn't there when he left. I guess he wouldn't have wanted me hanging round, watching and asking stupid questions. But I reckon I'd feel better now if I'd seen him go, seen that he was okay.

That was the big problem with Sam. Whatever happened, he was always okay. Take the time I met him. I was walking down the main street, down past Woolworths, when I first saw him. There he was, sitting all rugged-up in the cruddy blue bus shelter. It was a real cold night. In fact, that night was colder than any other night I could remember. But there he was, just sitting there with this dog. Big grey dog, all shaggy and moth-eaten. I'm sure everyone knows someone with a dog just like it.

I couldn't just walk past without saying hello, so I asked him what his dog's name was. Maybe I should have asked him what his own name was first, but I wasn't that good with people back then. He told me the dog had no name and that it wasn't really his. He said it was a stray that had latched onto him down the coast someplace and he didn't have the heart to abandon it. I thought that was real nice because it isn't any fun having no one to look after you. When I told him that, he wrinkled up his brow, just like this, and asked me how I knew. I told him about Mum and Norman and the Thomases. He shook his head and let me sit down beside him.

My head hardly came to his shoulder, he was so tall. I'd never seen anyone so tall before. I thought to myself how much it must take to keep such a big body warm, but I thought it best not to ask him. Sometimes people get pretty touchy about what they look like. I patted No Name and asked Sam what his own name was. Then I asked him if I could call him Sammy. I like nicknames better than proper names. Sammy never minded me calling him that.

EXTRACT #20

In this passage an Aboriginal teenage boy is struggling to maintain his relationship with his pregnant girlfriend. Eventually, on the advice of a drunk, homeless derelict he vows to return to her. The events of the entire story take place in and around present day Kings Cross, Sydney.

'Well, seems youse the one in the wrong in this particular case, mate, and if ya care for her like youse say, then youse better start learnin' to swallow some of that pride and apologise to the girl. 'Sides, she's probably been worried sick about you, on top of everything else she's going through. And especially if she does have to go and get operated on, the girl's going to need all the support she can get.' Byron takes another swig. 'Hey, I know watcha can do, Jeff. When you go back and see her, if that's what ya decide to do, take her a single rose - a red one if youse can. Don't know if youse done that sort a thing before, and I suppose lots a people think that's old hat nowadays - but stuff 'em! Somethin' like that makes a person feel real special. Mind, you'll still have to do the rest yourself.'

Although he knows Byron is right, Jeff grows nervous at the thought of facing Liz.

'Sounds like a good idea Byron but...'

'That's right, youse a bit of a pauper at the moment. Never mind, up ya get and take this. That should get youse the prettiest rose in the Cross and... oh, youse got to get yourself back to Bondi too, don't ya?' Pausing, a smile slowly overcomes the concern on Byron's face. 'Tell ya watcha do, mate. First, get yourself a ticket. Then, with the bit youse got left over, go and see the lady selling flowers just outside the station. Tell her that Byron sent ya and you'll be right.'

Taking the money, Jeff feels guilty for having received - for the second time - the charity of a homeless derelict. He thinks for a moment and then, reaching into his pocket, produces the stick. 'Here, Byron, take this. Yeah, I know you're a tobacco and grog man but, well, maybe if you see John or Eddy at the Mat Tal sometime... well anyways, please take it.'

'Thank you kindly, mate. I'm sure they'd appreciate it. Well, youse take care of yourself - and Liz too. I guess... well I guess I might see ya sometime if you happen to be by Rushoutter's. I'm here most days...'

Jeff can see that of all the miseries Byron has suffered, loneliness is far the greatest. 'You can count on it, mate. You're not going to get rid of me that easily.' And with a firm handshake, he departs and heads back towards Kings Cross.

'Byron? Byron who?' Jeff shuffles with embarrassment as the haggish-looking lady questions him. 'Oh, youse don't mean Lord Byron, do you? Well, that's different, then.' She selects a single rose from her bucket, wraps it and then

promptly presents it to Jeff, When money is offered, she shakes her head. 'Keep it, mate. It's worth it just to hear that the ol' bastard is still kicking.'

Jeff wonders...

EXTRACT #21

In this passage an Aboriginal teenage boy's life takes a turn for the worst when he meets up with some very reckless friends. Doug and his friends stumble from one criminal mishap to another. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Perth.

Doug's eyes, still bright from his dreams, focused on the gang of leering skinheads who had nonchalantly formed a semi-circle around the two.

They had come from Fremantle that morning, stomping and romping like wild horses, out to find a fight they could win or a woman for the night. Now it seemed they had found both at the same time.

Skinny Doug hunched into his clothes and stared bleakly at the grinning, shaved-headed, big-booted white boys. A few passers-by stopped to watch curiously, but most of them scurried away from the danger zone. The music from the show leaped and shimmered like imps, slid like snakes and sprang like gremlins around the silent tableau.

'Oh, look, Joey, she dropped her Teddy bear,' one of the boys says, mock reproachful. 'You shouldn't ought to of done that,' and he bent and picked up the sodden prize that had been won with such joy and laughter. With a grin like a starving wolf, he handed it to Jenny, who took it silently, with large, fearful eyes and backed towards Doug.

'Don't yer fink Benny deserves a kiss fer savin' yer bear from drownin', Mary?' another retorted, amidst chuckles.

'Her true love might not like that,' said a third. 'You her boyfriend, you skinny little gin-jockey runt?' sneered Joey as the gang moved closer.

Doug's hand fell lovingly over his grandfather's cut-throat razor snuggling in his pocket. All the members of Floyd's gang carried a weapon. It made them feel really big to be risking a sentence if the cops caught them armed with a dangerous weapons in public. Pretty Boy Floyd had a pocket knife honed as sharp as his cunning and Silver had a flick-knife he had bought from Taiwan Hui. But Doug had his grandfather's old fashioned razor, a lethal weapon indeed.

'Rack off,' he muttered. The skinheads laughed. They intended to beat up this weedy half-caste youth.

Joey closed in. In a blur of white his face was slashed open while Jenny screamed and Doug struck again. This time Benny went down, yelling, with a cut across his stomach. Then the other eight boys came in like dogs around a kangaroo.

Jenny went screaming off, crying for Floyd and Silver. Doug went under.

It was a brutal fight. Doug's razor found one more victim before beefy hands tore it from his grasp and a blow from a piece of iron stupefied him. He was helpless for a few vital seconds while blows and kicks rained upon his puny body.

Then big boy Floyd leapt like the devil into the pack,

crashing two heads together and sending their owners reeling. Stocky Silver took on one more and two of the Greyboys took on the rest.

Into Doug's blurred, frightened vision swam an ugly, angry red face. Joining his knobbly fists together, he connected with the face and the skinhead went crashing back into the silent fighters dashed on the canvas tent.

EXTRACT #22

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this story, which is an European fable a devoted hound shows his master that although our bodies age and tire our feelings, such as loyalty remain the same. This story took place a long time ago.

A huntsman long ago had a fine pack of hounds. He had trained them well and they were all skilled in the chase and obedient to his call. One hound, however, stood out among the pack for his exceptional ability and fearless bravery. The master had noted this, and his favour was rewarded by the hound's devotion.

This hound could outrun the stag and the hare; he could outfight the wolf and the fox; he would stand against an enraged bear and bring it down - such was his bravery. Once when his master had fallen from his horse and lay injured, the hound had remained with him all through the dark night until rescue had come - such was his loyalty.

The years passed and, alas, the hound grew old with them. Although he remained faithful as ever, his speed and skill diminished, his limbs became stiff and his eyes grew tired.

One day, while hunting a wild boar, his master directed him into a wood. With his old legs tired and aching from the chase, the hound plunged through the thicket into the trees. There in a small clearing was the boar, snorting and angrily stamping the ground.

A ferocious battle began; the boar lunged and stabbed with his curling tusks and, although the hound fought back bravely and seized the creature by the ear, he was weakened and tired and could not retain his hold. At last, as his strength ebbed away, he released his grip and allowed the beast to escape.

At that moment his master rode into the thicket and, seeing what had happened, he severely scolded the old hound. He paid no heed to the dog's wounds and would have beaten him there and then had not the hound sadly cried, "Please master, spare your old servant. Although my heart is willing and true, my old body is old and feeble. Remember me for what I was rather than for what I am now."

EXTRACT #23

In this passage two Aboriginal teenagers are being chased by a murderous foe clutching a knife. Their situation is worse still because they must overcome a wall of birds intent on blocking their path. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Australia.

Halfway up the stairs, Liz and Alan were stopped. The two children ran into a yielding, suspended wall of birds and simply could make no progress against it. The air fluttered and hummed with sparrows. Liz shrieked in terror and fury.

The birds did not turn on them, did not attack them; they just thwarted them. All the sparrows in the world, it seemed, has been drawn here, to the second storey of the Beaumont house in Belmont.

"Down!" Alan shouted at her. "Maybe we can crawl under them!"

They dropped to their knees. Progress was possible at first, although not pleasant; they found themselves crawling over a crunching, bleeding carpet of sparrows at least eighteen inches deep. Then they ran into that wall again. Looking under the hem of the afghan, Alan could see a crowded, confused mass that beggared description. The sparrows on the stair-risers were being crushed. Layers and layers of the living-but soon to be dead-stood on the top of them. Farther up-perhaps three feet off the stairs-sparrows flew in a kind of suicide traffic zone, colliding and falling, some rising and flying again, others squirming in the masses of their fallen mates with broken legs or wings. Sparrows, Alan remembered, could not hover.

From somewhere above them, on the other side of this grotesque living barrier, a man screamed.

Liz seized him, pulled him close. "What can we do?" she screamed. "What can we do, Alan?"

He didn't answer her. Because the answer was nothing. There was nothing they could do.

Stark came toward Alan with the razor in his right hand. Thad backed toward the slowly moving study door with his eyes on the blade. He snatched up another pencil from the desk.

"That ain't gonna do you no good." Stark said. Not now." Then his eyes shifted to the door. It had opened wide enough, and the sparrows flowed in, a river of them... and they flowed at George Stark. In an instant his expression became one of horror... and understanding.

"No!" he screamed, and began to slash at them with Alexis Machine's straight-razor. "No, I won't go back! You can't make me!"

EXTRACT #24

In this passage an Aboriginal boy is made to confront his worst fears when his female baby sitter places him into a bed of insects. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Australia.

One evening she took him to his bedroom at the usual time - his parents were out - and helped him to undress. He feared her touch, that one of her scarlet nails might draw his blood.

"Where are my shorts ? he asked, fearful in the noiseless house.

"In bed," she said. And when he walked over to the bed in his nakedness to find them, she pulled back the blanket in one swift movement, and pushed him naked into bed, with a squashing, crushing, splintering, pulping sound, down amongst a collection, so laboriously assembled, of bardees, cicadas, woodbugs, ants, caterpillars, worms, snails, slugs, beetles, tarantulas, blow flies, moths, witchetty-grubs.

He screamed, his scream an uncontrolled single ceaseless howl of horror, a scream of helpless terror as, his eyes pressed against her excited cleavage, his back, his legs, his buttocks, crawled and itched and slimed with all the maimed and trapped, and self devouring, resisting, awoken insects. And she pushed him into the slippery scaly pulp till, with a dreadful force, he thrust her away, thrust her off balance and onto the floor, and ran, screaming, howling, naked through the house, the garden, the street, screaming one single high note as he ran, smeared over with slime and crushed paste and dying living insects, being eaten and stung and torn as he ran, his eyes blinded and his mouth and nostrils filled to suffocation, his flesh being eaten from his bones and pumped and drilled full of eggs and parasites and borers, burrowing through his entrails, his heart, his throat, his mind.

"Come back," she called to him, "Billy, come back. Now you will be cured. Come back Billy, now there will be no need to scream, you are a part of the bush."

But he ran, impelled on his single ceaseless note of terror, and he would never come back.

EXTRACT #25

In this passage three white Australian teenage boys hold up a service station and kidnap the owner's daughter. However, contact with the owner's daughter leads to a greater understanding of themselves. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Western Australia.

"Orright, ole man. Give us ya money, quick!", the leader shouts nervously. He is scared and uncertain of the plan his younger cousin has suggested only minutes before. "Next place we'll'old up, Elvis," Perry grinned from the back seat. Driving along on the grey ribbon of road, leading them to tomorrow's life-if they got there.

There is a fear as well as anger in the old man's pale eyes so the boy feels powerful. This is his big chance to become someone. All his life he has been kicked into the dust of his dirty existence and made to eat leftovers. But now he is in control.

Going to be rich and famous.

"'Urry up, Elvis. Stop clownin' around. Ya want the police to come, or what?" hisses the second youngster by the door. He is small and pasty, with a deadpan face and blank green eyes. There is a hardness about him as his lips draw back in a vicious snarl. He caresses his shotgun in knobbly hands as his eyes flicker warily around the room. His heavy mane curls back from his forehead and cascades down over his shoulders.

He huddles into his flapping old greatcoat and sneers at the old man. A silver-painted skull grins from the ragged black T-shirt stretching across his wide chest. Flat feet are planted on the dusty floor. No boots for him.

Both youths wear blue denim caps. But Perry's is faded and patched, like his denim trousers.

The only new thing about the boy is the shotgun.

"Now, don't try nothin' smart, ole man, else Wolf'ere will blow ya guts, understand?" Elvis says, confident again.

He knows where he stands now. Just a scared old mechanic here. Useless rusted nuts and bolts. A half-car, looking ugly in the garage.

Elvis strides over to the till and wrenches it open. Perry glides softly over to the cool drink vendor and puts two cans in his coat pockets. Grins slowly at his older cousin who is lifting out handfuls of money. It flashes and tinkles in the naked glare of the yellow, swinging light. He is lucky, for the man hasn't been to the bank all week so all the takings nestle there. A smile lights up gangling Elvis' face. A happy gleam shines in his worried eyes, for a brief second.

"Come on, Elvis. What, ya growin' the bloody stuff, or somphin'?"

Elvis swings around grinning to join his anxious companion, and it is then that he sees the girl squeezed into a cobwebby space between the two shelves holding odd

parts of engines. She is slim and small with long brown hair. Her round blue eyes are full of fear.

Elvis jabs a blunt finger at her. "She's comin' with us, just so's ya don't tell the police too soon," and he drags her roughly from her hiding place.

The old man awakens from his stupor.

"Leave her alone, you little larrikin!"

He grabs a spanner. But the smaller youth is beside him in a second. Smash the shotgun butt across the white-grey face. Slam him down on the floor. Mad eyes alight with a viciousness that shakes his small body.

EXTRACT #26

In this passage three white Australian teenage boys become involved in a high speed police chase. However, one of the boys realises that he is returning to a way of life he thought he had left behind. The action of the entire story takes place in present day Perth.

Eddie is remote from the others. Just him and his car and the road.

They are almost at Guilford when they zoom past a speed trap.

Colin hears the eerie wailing and jerks around.

"Hey couz, bloody police 'ave got us!"

Fear settles like a mist over the runaways.

"Old tight. When I tell ya to run, ya bloody run-understand?" Eddie says, through clenched teeth.

More cars join in the chase: two blue vans and a CIB car. They bay and howl like hounds after the fox.

"I'll stop 'em !" screams Colin, and loads the magazine of his .303.

Six bullets.

He leans out the back window of the swaying cab so the wind whips his hair back and shrieks through the curls.

He fires the rifle and the bullet whines away. Fires again and again.

On his last shot, the bullet smashes through the windscreen of the foremost van, so it slews to an abrupt halt. The RTA car also stops, but the others come relentlessly onwards.

The CIB car comes up alongside them. They think they are Starsky and Hutch, in their olive-green Kingswood. Eddie sees the fat face of Detective-Sergeant Fathers peering in at them.

Slides over to the other side of the road in an attempt to block off the CIB car.

It only comes up on the other side of the road, so Eddie rams the taxi into it.

Twice he smashes the taxi against the car, desperately trying to escape.

The second time he rams the CIB car, Colin Jackell's arm breaks with a snap like the click of his stolen rifle bolt.

He gives a cry of pain.

Just over the Swan River bridge, Eddie slams on the brakes. The taxi careers up onto the footpath.

"Run! Run!" he yells, and is out sprinting even before the car has stopped. Down over the bank and towards the river.

EXTRACT # 27

In this passage four white Australian teenagers (two boys and two girls) decide to spend a fun afternoon rafting on the local lake. However, the afternoon takes an horrific turn when an oil slick assumes a life of its own. The action of the entire story takes place in a present day Australian town.

Then Rachel's hand touched the water-her forefinger only, sending out one delicate ripple in a ring-and the black patch surged over it. Michael heard her gasp in the air, and suddenly the blankness left her eyes. What replaced it was agony.

The black, viscous substance ran up her arm like mud... and under it, Michael saw her skin dissolving. She opened her mouth and screamed. At the same moment she began to tilt outward. She waved her other hand blindly at Michael and he grabbed for it. Their fingers brushed. Her eyes met his, and she still looked hellishly like Sandy Duncan. Then she fell outward and splashed into the water.

The black thing flowed over the spot where she had landed.

"What happened?" Amanda was screaming behind them. "What happened? Did she fall in? What happened to her?" Michael made as if to dive in after her and Deke pushed him backwards with casual force. "No," he said in a frightened voice that was utterly unlike John.

All three of them saw her flail to the surface. Her arms came up waving-no, not arms. One arm. The other was covered with a black membrane that hung in flaps and folds of something that looked a little like a rolled roast of beef.

"Help!" Rachel screamed. Her eyes glared at them, away from them, away-her eyes were like lanterns being waved aimlessly in the dark. She beats the water into a froth. "Help it hurts please help it hurts IT HURTS IT HURRRRRR-"

Michael had fallen when John pushed him. Now he got up from the boards of the raft and stumbled forward again, unable to ignore that voice. He tried to jump in and John grabbed him, wrapping his big arms around Michael's thin chest.

"No, she's dead," he whispered harshly. "Can't you see that? She's dead, Mate."

Thick blackness suddenly poured across Rachel's face like a drape, and her screams were first muffled and then cut off entirely. Now the black stuff seemed to bind her in crisscrossing ropes. Michael could see it sinking into her like acid, and when her jugular vein gave way in a dark pumping jet, he saw the thing send out a pseudopod after the escaping blood. He could not believe what he was seeing, could not understand it... but there was no doubt, no sensation of losing his mind, no belief that he was dreaming.

EXTRACT # 28

In this passage a White Australian man writes about his childhood years. As a boy he was taken from his sick mother and sent to a orphanage in Perth. At the time he could not understand why he was taken from his mother and placed in the hands of strangers. The events of the entire story took place in Western Australia 60 years ago.

When we left the station for the orphanage, we had to travel through Marble Bar and then to Port Hedland. We caught the ship, the Ballara, me, my brother Albert, Pixie and Dudley Drake-Brockman. Albert and I travelled steerage. Sometimes, I'd sneak out and head towards the front of the boat to see what was going on. Dudley Drake-Brockman would always catch me and shout, 'Get back to where you belong!'

It was a fine day when we arrived in Fremantle. We were taken straight to the orphanage, near the banks of the Swan River in Guildford.

For a long time, I was very worried about my mother. She had always been good to me. She loved me. Albert didn't seem to mind so much, I think he was too frightened to mind anything. You see, we didn't understand the extent of her illness and we didn't know why we had been sent to the orphanage. We only knew that we weren't their family. The orphanage wasn't anyone's family. They called us inmates, all us kids, we were all inmates, just like prison.

We soon found out there were bullies at the orphanage. I suppose you get them everywhere. There was one that wanted to try us out. I was worried about Albert, I knew he couldn't fight his way out of a wet paper bag. I had to take his part. I'd tackle whoever was beating up Albert and finish them off. They never tackled me again and they learnt not to touch Albert, because he was my brother. There was one bully there, he had everyone bluffed except me. He'd throw stones at me, call me names, but he'd never tackle me. When it came to knuckles, I got my fist in first.

EXTRACT #29

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. It is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this Aboriginal Dreamtime story an explanation is given to explain the change of seasons. This story took place a long time ago.

Wild, shrieking winds blow through the trees, stripping the leaves, and bending the tops until they are curved like boomerangs. Birds take shelter from the icy blast. Insects burrow into the ground. Animals huddle into any shelter they can find. In some places snow lies white on the ground. Even man must live on the food he has stored up and, while wind and rain turn the world into a place of desolation, he crouches on his tiny shelter made of bark or branches of trees.

It is winter. The winds stop blowing one day, and all the living things hear a single, rolling peal of thunder. It is a sign that Mayra, the Spirit of Spring, has left her home and is coming closer, melting the snow and ice, touching the trees and plants with warm fingers.

Mayra is golden. Wattle trees burst into flower, and everywhere there are living clouds of green and yellow, and the many hues of the rainbow as trees and plants rejoice in the presence of the gentle spirit.

The air is full of the music of waking birds; the very earth becomes a carpet of glowing colour; insects peer cautiously from their hiding places. When they see the goddess they rush into the sunshine and spread their wings, or uncoil their bodies from the long sleep. Animals are full of this new-found joy, and in men and animals the blood races in the veins, and happiness returns to the earth.

"If only it would be spring for ever," someone sighs, but Mayra knows that she is welcome only because she has chased away the spirits of gloom. She knows that eternal spring would become wearying. After the first rush of joy, she watches the sun as it grows in strength. When the heat of summer becomes almost unbearable, she knows it is time to be on her way.

But next year the Spirit of Spring will be back, and men and animals await her return with unwearied hope and joy.

EXTRACT #30

In this passage a white Australian boy sleeping alone late on a cold winter's night is awakened by a strange scratching sound. When he investigates the sound he is confronted by an animal he has never seen before. The action of the entire story takes place in present day rural Australia.

The scratching comes again. Someone's dog, he thinks, lost and wanting to be let in. That's all it is... but still, he pauses. It would be inhuman to leave it out there in the cold, he thinks (not that it is much warmer in here; in spite of the battery-powered heater, he can see the cold cloud of his breath)-but still he hesitates. A cold finger of fear is probing just below his heart. This has been a bad season in Tasker's Mills; there have been omens of evil on the land. Arnie has his father's Welsh blood strong in his veins; and he doesn't like the feel of things.

Before he can decide what to do about his visitor, the low-pitched whining rises to a snarl. There is a thud as some thing incredibly heavy hits the door... draws back... hits again. The door trembles in its frame, and a puff of snow billows in from the top.

Arnie Westrum stares around, looking for something to shore it up with, but before he can do more than reach for the flimsy chair he has been sitting in, the snarling thing strikes the door again with incredible force, splintering it from top to bottom.

It holds for a moment longer, bowed in on a vertical line, and lodged in it, kicking and lunging, its snout wrinkled back in a snarl, its yellow eyes blazing, it is the biggest wolf Arnie has ever seen...

And its snarls sound terribly like words.

The door splinters, groans, gives. In a moment the thing will be inside.

In the corner, amongst a welter of tools, a pick leans against the wall. Arnie lunges for it and seizes it as the wolf thrusts its way inside and crouches, its yellow eyes gleaming at the cornered man. Its ears are flattened back, furry triangles. Its tongue lolls. Behind it, snow gusts through a door that has been shattered down the centre.

It springs with a snarl, and Arnie Westrum swings the pick.

Once.

EXTRACT # 31

In this passage an Aboriginal boy writes about leaving home for the first time. He travels to Perth with his brother on route to an Aboriginal Native Settlement at Mogumber. He begins to realise that Aboriginal people aren't always treated the same as everyone else. The events of the entire story took place in Western Australia 60 years ago.

It was 1932 and I was fourteen years of age. Mother and father reasoned it was better if I left school. Harold had left school the previous year. Tommy, who was now twenty years old, was employed by a Mr Cross, a travelling dentist. Mr Cross used to travel all over the state and Tommy would be away from home for about four months at a time. He was lucky inasmuch as he had regular employment, as it was almost impossible to get part-time work, let alone a permanent job. Mr A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, wrote to father and offered to teach Harold and I farming skills if we went to Moore River Native Settlement. It seemed that the Aborigines Department had a policy jobs for, or appearing to teach farming skills to, educated Aboriginal youth. I always had an adventurous spirit and the prospect of going to Moore River sounded and exciting and I was eager to go. My brother Harold was just as excited as I was. Father was reluctant to let us go, but because employment was practically nil in Yarloop, he decided to let us.

Mother scrimped and saved to buy suitable clothing. One of the things she bought us was a new pair of shoes each. There we were, two Aboriginal boys wearing shoes for the first time in our lives and leaving home for the first time also. After tearful goodbyes on Mother's part and almost on mine, and a gruff goodbye and a quick handshake from father, we excitedly, and with some trepidation, boarded the Bunbury to Perth passenger train on the way to Mogumber and the Moore River Settlement. Immediately the train started on its journey I took off my shoes and socks. Harold did likewise.

We arrived in Perth on a Saturday at three o'clock in the afternoon. A man was waiting for us and, tersely bundling us into the car, he drove us to Bennett House, a hostel for travelling Aborigines in Bennett Street, East Perth. And it was there we met Aboriginal people for the first time outside our own family. We were shown our room on the verandah by three giggling Aboriginal girls. At the evening meal we sat with the Aboriginal staff in the kitchen while the matron, who ran the hostel along with her husband, ate in the dining room. That was the first stirrings I had of discrimination.

To my brother and I Perth was a huge place and as there was no train to Mogumber until Monday we had all day Sunday to ourselves. One of the girls suggested we go to the pictures.

So the five of us walked into Perth to see the movies and as it was a Sunday evening admission to the pictures was a silver coin. That is, you could see the the film, which was usually an hour long, for threepence. We arrived back at Bennett House tired from the walk into town and we thankfully went to bed.

EXTRACT #32

This passage is a complete story, it is not a passage taken from a longer story. This story is taken from a book that contains many of these types of stories. In this Aboriginal Dreamtime story an explanation is given for the creation of a mountain. This story took place a long time ago.

Rainbow bent over the pool and looked at the woman who was stopping to gather the roots of the water lilies. She was as graceful as a bird with the water glistening on her skin and her long arms weaving through the clear water.

Rainbow had never seen such a beautiful sight in all his life and he was on fire with love.

He slid silently into the water and changed himself into a fish. He swam towards her, his heart beating quickly at the sight of her legs and body and the arms that stretched down to the bed of the lagoon, and disappeared as the woman rose to put the roots in her dilly bag. He tried to rub his body against her legs, but she had finished her work and was climbing on to the bank. Rainbow-Fish looked up at her. She was conscious of the eyes that peered so intently at her from the water. Her teeth showed in a smile as she lifted her yam stick and tried to use it as a spear. She could not touch the fish. She struck at it as though the digging stick were a waddy, but she only splashed the water until it sparkled like a fountain in the sunlight.

The smile faded from her face. The fish was growing bigger. Its sides swelled like the moon, and it grew bigger and longer.

"A bunyip!" the woman gasped and turned to run, but she slipped on the wet grass. She heard the fish scrambling out of the water and felt it slide under her body until she was sitting astride its back. The fish soared into the air and carried the helpless woman far across the plain. It flew over her own camp site and she caught a glimpse of her husband staring up with his mouth open wide in amazement.

For many miles she travelled on the back of the flying fish, but at length it grew tired; it sank down and turned into a mountain rock.

Presently a man came loping across the plain. It was her husband, who had noted the direction taken by the fish. When he saw his wife, her waist was still encircled by an arm of stone. He attacked the rock fiercely with his nulla-nulla. The fish that had once been a rainbow had now taken the shape of a man. With a single blow the husband half severed the man-mountain's neck. The stone arm relaxed and the woman flew towards her husband, but she was destined not to reach him.

A flash of light which contained all the colours of the rainbow enveloped the rock. It grew as quickly as it had done when it was a fish, but now the growth continued unchecked. The rock swelled and split and towered up towards the sky in the form of an mountain. All the power

of the rainbow was concentrated in that gleaming light. A streamer of many-coloured flame reached out and touched the man and the woman, turning them into stone pillars. Rainbow-Mountain lost his strength in that manifestation of power. He never stirred again, his feet buried deep in the desert sand, while close by him the pillars of stone turn to each other as if in fear of the mountain that broods throughout eternity on the memory of unfulfilled love.

Appendix B Subject Responses to the interview Questions.**Interview Question # 1**

Where were you born, and how long have you lived in Perth?

Subject # 1 *I was born in Perth. I've lived there all my life.*

Subject # 2 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 3 *I was born in Moora. I came to Perth when I was about ten years of age.*

Subject # 4 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 5 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here most of the time, but when I was a kid I lived with my Nan for a while in the country.*

Subject # 6 *I was born in Geraldton. I came to Perth at the start of high school.*

Subject # 7 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 8 *I was born in Perth. I've lived mostly in Perth, except when I lived in Esperance for a while.*

Subject # 9 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 10 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 11 *I was born in Perth. I lived in the country for a while with my Mum, but I've spent most of my time in Perth.*

Subject # 12 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 13 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 14 *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*

Subject # 15 *I was born in Sydney. When I was about three my parents moved to Canberra. I've lived in Perth since the start of Primary school.*

- Subject # 16** *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*
- Subject # 17** *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*
- Subject # 18** *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*
- Subject # 19** *I was born in Perth. I've lived here all my life.*
- Subject # 20** *I was born in Perth. I've lived all over the place, but I suppose mainly in Perth.*

Interview Question # 2

In the extracts that you enjoyed reading, what was it about those extracts that you enjoyed ?

Subject # 1 *I enjoyed the action, some of those car chase stories were really exciting. My cousin had a car chase like that once.*

Subject # 2 *I really liked the ones with those Aborigines in the car chases. Those other ones with the hold-ups and fights were good too. They had heaps of action.*

Subject # 3 *I liked the action and adventure, some of those action stories were real cool. I also liked the Dreamtime stories a little, I sometimes write Dreamtime stories myself.*

Subject # 4 *I enjoyed the horror stories because I like being scared. I've watched all the Nightmare on Elm Street movies.*

Subject # 5 *I liked the car chase stories except that they should have not got caught. Those car chase stories had lots of action.*

Subject # 6 *I liked the story when those Aborigines beat up those white guys. That was an exciting story. The Dreamtime stories were alright I suppose. My dad tells me stories like those sometimes.*

Subject # 7 *I really liked the car chase stories because they had lots of action.*

Subject # 8 *I liked the stories that had the Aborigines in them.*

Subject # 9 *I only liked the car chase stories, the rest were boring. The car chase stories were the only ones with action.*

Subject # 10 *I liked the extracts with the action and the scary bits. The werewolf story was good because it reminded me of American Werewolf in London - that's one of my favourite movies.*

Subject # 11 *I enjoyed the stories with the adventure. The car chases were fast and easy to read.*

Subject # 12 *I loved the car chase stories because some of my friends have told me about them. The rest were boring.*

Subject # 13 *I only liked that story that had the Aborigines fighting with those white men. That was excellent because I like fighting.*

Subject # 14 *Most of the stories were okay. I only really liked the ones with the action, like the car chase ones.*

Subject # 15 *The one about the Aboriginal boy going to live in the Home was alright. My Dad lived in one of those I think.*

Subject # 16 *I liked the car chase stories. Those stories had lots of action, the stories about fighting were okay.*

Subject # 17 *I liked the stories with the horror parts. My favourite movies and books are horror stories.*

Subject # 18 *I liked most of the extracts. Most of the people who were in them were interesting.*

Subject # 19 *I enjoyed the police chase extracts because they were exciting. The rest were boring.*

Subject # 20 *I liked those stories with the Aborigines in the chases and fights. They were the only action stories.*

Interview Question # 3

What types of films and television shows do you enjoy ?

Subject # 1 I enjoy action films like Rambo and Terminator. On television I like Cops and Neighbours.

Subject # 2 I like action films like Lethal Weapon and I also like the Nightmare on Elm Street films. I don't watch much television except for Home and Away.

Subject # 3 I really like action films with plenty of violence. Terminator 11 is my favourite film. My favourite television shows are those real cop shows and Beverly Hills 90210.

Subject # 4 I like Stephen King movies but I don't read the books. Pet Sematary was excellent. I also like Freddy Kruegger movies. My favourite shows are E Street and Beverly Hills 90210.

Subject # 5 My favourite films are the Arnold Schwarzenegger ones, especially Predator. I like the cop shows on television and I watch Miami Vice when it is on.

Subject # 6 I enjoy action films like Rambo, that was great. My favourite television show is Jake and The Fat Man.

Subject # 7 I like funny films like Wayne's World. On television I watch Home and Away and Neighbours.

Subject # 8 The best films are the action ones like Dirty Harry or Kickboxer. I don't watch television at home because we don't have one.

Subject # 9 I like horror movies, especially the Nightmare on Elm Street movies. My favourite television shows are Jake and The Fat Man and Home and Away.

Subject # 10 The Arnold Schwarzenegger films are the best. My favourite T.V. show is Neighbours.

Subject # 11 I enjoy adventure films like Indiana Jones or Robin Hood, but I usually watch more television. I like the cartoons best on T.V.

Subject # 12 Action movies are my favourites, especially Rambo and Terminator films. My favourite television shows are soaps.

Subject # 13 I like funny films, the Police Academy ones are best. We don't have a television so I can only watch television or videos at my friend's house. I like the

soapies, but they're never on when I'm around there.

Subject # 14 I watch action and horror films, the Nightmare on Elm Street films are probably my favourites. I also like the real life cop shows on television.

Subject # 15 I like horror films. My favourite shows are the soapies.

Subject # 16 I like action movies, but I don't like horror films because they scare me. I watch all the cop shows on television.

Subject # 17 I like all the Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger films. My best T.V. show is Full House.

Subject # 18 I like those Die Hard films. When I watch television I like Jake and the Fat Man, but I like most action T.V. shows.

Subject # 19 I enjoy action and horror films, and I also like funny films. The soapies are my favourite television shows.

Subject # 20 I like action films with plenty of car chases and fights, but sometimes I like other sorts of movies like Wayne's World. I also watch soapies on television.

Interview Question # 4

If you were to write your own story would it (a) have characters similar to you (b) take place in the past or in the present (c) take place in the bush or in the city and suburbs. Tell me why ?

Subject # 1 *My story would have teenagers like me because I like reading stories about my people. The story would take place now because I don't know much about the past. It would definitely take place in the city because that's where all the exciting things happen.*

Subject # 2 *My story would have all sorts of different characters because it would be a mixture. It would probably take place about now in the city. There's not much to do out in the bush, the bush is boring.*

Subject # 3 *I would have teenagers and Aborigines in my story, but I don't know why. My story would take place in the bush because I like being in the bush. Sometimes my Dad takes me motorbike riding and kangaroo shooting in the bush. My story would take place in the past when things were better.*

Subject # 4 *I would have stacks of rough teenagers, like those in gangs. My story would take place in the city because that's where lots of things happen. It would take place now, or in the future.*

Subject # 5 *I might use different people in my story. It would probably take place now I suppose, I don't know much about the past. It would be in the city because you have more fights and things.*

Subject # 6 *I would have Aborigines I think as the main characters because then I could have characters like my cousins. It might take place in the past, or maybe not. It would take place in the city and the bush because I like both.*

Subject # 7 *I would have teenage characters because they would be like me. My story would take place now and in the city. I don't know why, I just think it would be better.*

Subject # 8 *I would have young kids because then you could have them doing more action and adventures. My story would take place now and in the city because that's where the action is.*

Subject # 9 *I would have lots of different characters because that would make my story more interesting. My story would probably take place now. It would probably take place in the city and the country, that would make the*

story better.

Subject # 10 My story would have lots of Aboriginal teenagers, maybe like those one in the car chases. It would take place now and in the city because that's where car chases happen.

Subject # 11 I would have different sorts of people, but I would have some young people like me. My story would take place now I think because then I would know what I was writing about. It would take place in the city.

Subject # 12 I would have people that are different from me or else it would be boring. It would take place in the past because too many stories take place in the future. It would take place in the bush because I enjoy being in the bush.

Subject # 13 My story would have lots of teenagers like me. I would have these teenagers mixed up in lots of adventures. My story would take place now and in the city. It would be in the city because that is where lots of things happen.

Subject # 14 My story would have teenagers like those teenagers in the car chase stories. The story would take place now and in the city because you can have more action there.

Subject # 15 I would have plenty of Aborigines both old and young ones because my family is both young and old. My story would be set in the past because I would like to write a Dreamtime story. It would also be set in the bush because that is where Dreamtime stories are set.

Subject # 16 My story would have teenagers, like me, involved in lots of action. It would take place about now, and it would take place in the city because that's where lots of things happen.

Subject # 17 I would have stacks of tough boys in my story who get up to mischief. It would take place about now, and in the city because life is more exciting in the city.

Subject # 18 I think my story would have different kinds of people otherwise it would be boring. My story would be set around now because that's what I know. It would take place in the city and in the bush because I like both places.

Subject # 19 My story would have mainly teenagers and young kids because they're like me. It would probably take place about now because old fashioned stories are dumb. My story would be set in both the bush and the city because

both are good places.

Subject # 20 *My story would have dudes like me. It would take place now, and in the city because I live in the city.*

Interview Question # 5

Do you enjoy reading other types of stories?

Subject # 1 *I enjoy reading funny stories like Roald Dahl.*

Subject # 2 *Sometimes I read mystery stories.*

Subject # 3 *No, not really.*

Subject # 4 *I like funny stories, my favourite writer is Paul Jennings*

Subject # 5 *Those 'Choose your own Adventure' ones are alright.*

Subject # 6 *I like humourous stories.*

Subject # 7 *I enjoy Paul Jennings stories, my favourite one is Quirky Tales.*

Subject # 8 *No, I only really like action stories.*

Subject # 9 *Sometimes I read funny stories.*

Subject # 10 *I read those 'Choose your own Adventure' stories sometimes, and I also like mystery stories.*

Subject # 11 *I like stories about sport.*

Subject # 12 *I like stories that make you laugh.*

Subject # 13 *I enjoy stories by Roald Dahl and Paul Jennings.*

Subject # 14 *I like reading 'Science Fiction' stories because Star Wars is still my favourite film.*

Subject # 15 *I enjoy reading funny stories.*

Subject # 16 *No, action stories are the only ones I like.*

Subject # 17 *I like 'Choose your own Adventure' and 'Science Fiction' stories.*

Subject # 18 *I really like Roald Dahl stories, especially Twits and Witches.*

Subject # 19 *I read some stories about ancient Greece the other day, and I really liked them.*

Subject # 20 *I enjoy reading humourous stories sometimes.*