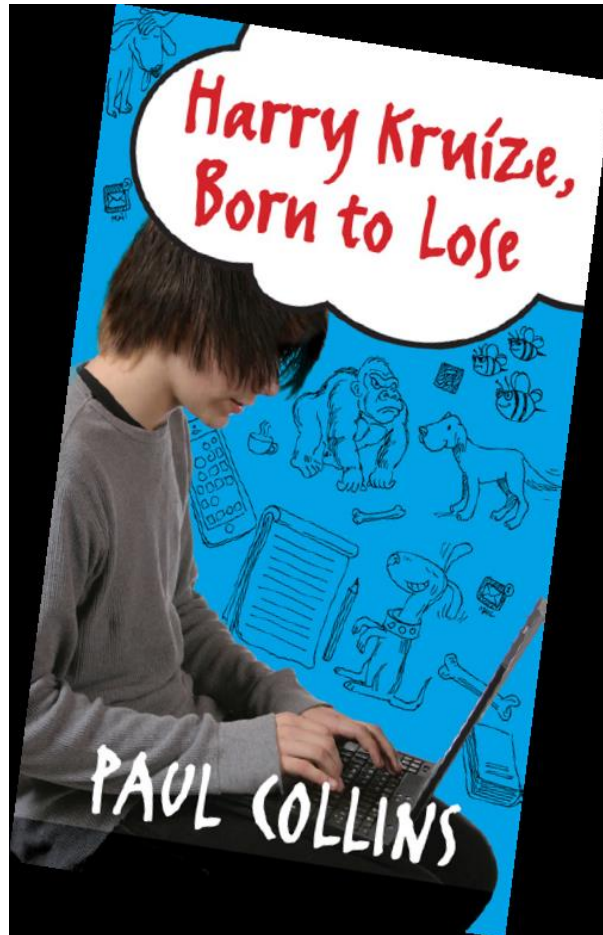


## *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* by Paul Collins



### **Synopsis**

Harry's mum runs a boarding house for transient old men who are down on their luck. To counter his frustration and anger, Harry longs for the companionship of a dog. The Annual Gala at school features a dog hurdle race and more than anything in the world, Harry would love to enter a dog into that race and win it. Such a win would give him a sense of worth and belonging.

A new lodger, Jack Ellis, befriends Harry and shares a wealth of outback adventure stories featuring dogs with him.

## About the author

Paul Collins is a writer of books for younger readers to young adults. He has been short-listed for several awards and has won the inaugural Peter McNamara, the A Bertram Chandler, Aurealis and William Atheling awards. Paul has tried his hand at various occupations. He served time in the army with 2 Commando Coy, trained with the Los Angeles Hell Drivers and worked in hotel security, various factories, and worked for Twentieth Century Fox and Metro Goldwyn Meyer. He currently runs Creative Net Speakers' Agency for authors and illustrators of children's books.

Paul has played cricket, soccer, rugby union and tennis for various clubs and has a black belt in both tae kwon do and jujitsu. His kickboxing career was short-lived although he won his first fight with a 28-second TKO. He now weight-trains four times a week in a gym.

### Also by Paul Collins

- *The Jelindel Chronicles*
- *The Quentaris Chronicles*
- *The World of Grymm trilogy*
- *The Maximus Black Files trilogy*
- *Rich and Rare (ed)*

## Presenting *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*

### What's in a name?

- Have a class discussion about the cover of *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*. What things stand out about it? How does it link to the title of the book? Why do you think this title was chosen? What expectations do you have for the book based on its cover?

### Genre

The Australian Curriculum: English describes genre as 'The categories into which texts are grouped. The term has a complex history within literary theory and is often used to distinguish texts on the basis of their subject matter (for example, detective fiction, romance, science fiction, fantasy fiction), form and structure (for example, poetry, novels, biography, short stories).'

A knowledge of a range of different genres and their conventions allows for an understanding of how and why each genre appeals to its readers. It also provides a foundation for students to create and experiment with their own writing.

- Before reading *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*: What are the some of the different genres? What are the conventions associated with these genres?
- What is meant by the terms realism and fantasy? Contemporary and historical? What other 'pairs' of genres or categories are there?

- After reading *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*: Which genre/s would you categorise it as? Why?

Animal stories be categorised into realism and fantasy. In animal fantasy stories the animals are often given human attributes: they have human-like emotions, and talk to each other or to the humans in the story in the same way that humans would talk to each other. (e.g. the rabbits in *Watership Down* or Aslan in *The Lion, the witch, and the wardrobe*). This is known as anthropomorphism.

- Why might an author choose to have animal characters in a story?
- Which category (animal realism or fantasy) does *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* fall into? Why do you think this?

### **In the beginning**

- Examine the various pages at the beginning of the book: imprint, title page, contents page. What information do we get from these pages? What is an ISBN? What does the copyright information mean? Who is the publisher? Why is this information important?
- Discuss first impressions and expectations. Does the opening grab you? What literary devices are used to achieve this?
- What do we learn about the world that the story takes place in from the first chapter? Who is introduced? How are they introduced?

### **Forms of texts**

- *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* is written in diary form. Discuss the conventions of diary writing. What is the author hoping to achieve by using this form? What are some other examples of this form?
- What other forms of writing are there (e.g. novel, short story, poem etc.) What are the conventions of each?

### **Language and structure**

To aid in the creation of visual imagery the author has used a variety of language techniques.

- Find examples of similes and metaphors. Re-write them to create the same effect using different imagery.
- Choose a passage from the book and identify different literary and grammatical devices used e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia. What is the effect created by each device?

The author also uses visual techniques to aid in telling the story.

- What different character/font styles are used? What is each one used for? What effect does using these have?

**Focus:** Language for interaction

Age, status, expertise, and familiarity influence the ways in which we interact with people, and these interactions influence the way people engage with ideas and respond to others. One way of showing this in a text is through dialogue.

- Identify verbal interactions or dialogue between Harry and his mother, Harry and Jack, Harry and The Brick, and Harry and one of his teachers. How is the language different in each of these conversations? Why do you think that is? What different ways do you speak to people in your life?

**Focus:** Narration

There are three types of narrative technique:

1. First person, where the point of view character (the voice telling the story) uses the word 'I.'
  2. Second person, where the point of view character addresses the audience directly and uses the word 'You.'
  3. Third person, where the author uses the words 'he,' 'she,' and 'it' to refer to the characters, including the point of view character. This type of narrator can be omniscient (all knowing like 'the eye of God') or can report events as they take place.
- Discuss the narration used in this book. What method of narration has been used? How can we identify this? Why do you think that the author chose this method?

**Focus:** Tense

Stories are usually written in past or present tense.

- What does this mean? How can the tense in a particular story be identified?
- What tense has the author used in *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*? Why do you think he chose this?

**Context/setting**

The Australian Curriculum: English defines context as 'The environment in which a text is responded to or created. Context can include the general social, historical, and cultural conditions in which a text is responded to and created (the context of culture) or the specific features of its immediate environment (context of situation). The term is also used to refer to the wording surrounding an unfamiliar word that a reader or listener uses to understand its meaning'.

- Discuss the social, historical, and cultural context created or presented in *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*

- What is the difference between context and setting?
- What sort of cultural knowledge is needed to understand *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*?
- Who has status or power in the story? How have they gained this? (Through wealth, skill, knowledge etc.)
- How many major characters are there? Are they male or female? Old or young? Is it balanced?
- What kind of communities does Harry participate in? (school, family, etc.) What influence do these communities have on his thoughts and actions?

### **Creativity/imagination**

- The lives and characters in books exist only on the page but authors often hint about what might have happened to them before. Choose one of the characters that you have met, take what you have learnt about them and use it as a basis to write about something that happened to them before the events of the story.
- Choose a character other than Harry that you had strong feelings about (either positive or negative), or that left you with unanswered questions. Create some diary entries for them that tell their version of the events in the story
- Harry's favourite book is *The Hobbit*. What is your favourite book? Why? Write an 'elevator pitch' to convince other people in your class to read it.
- Design a quiz based on the traits mentioned for some of the characters in the story, for people to work out 'Which character from *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* would you be?'
- Think about the artefacts or objects that are central to the story. If you were to design an exhibition about *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* what would you include? How would you curate it?
- Paul Collins is available for school visits. How would you convince him to visit your school? Pretend you are a talkshow host and Paul Collins is your guest. What questions would you ask him?

NB: For more information on an author visit, or to make a booking, visit Creative Net at:

<http://www.creativenetspeakers.com>

### **Comprehension**

- Present the events of *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* to the class in your own words.
- Write a review of it for an online book review site. Remember that an online review site can be accessed anywhere in the world, how can you make this story appeal to students outside of Australia?
- Create a 'book trailer' for *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*.

- 'It's like I stepped into time . . . and left timelessness behind me forever . . .'. Harry says he was told this by his dad, what do you think it means? What useful advice have you been given?
- Harry says that there are 'Two kinds of time that every kid knows'. Do you remember what they are? What things would you put into each category?

## Discussion

Use *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* as a starting point for a discussion on:

- bullying
- authority
- relationships
- family
- pets
- courage
- loyalty
- friendship
- imagination
- depression
- psychology
- smoking

## Further activities

- The story begins with Harry explaining about the writing assignment that his English teacher has set. 'We have to write down a heap of wishes and explain why we really want them to come true. Then we have to document the exact circumstances of when each wish is granted'. Have the class complete a similar 'I wish' assignment, or keep a diary like Harry does.

## Henry Lawson

- Paul Collins acknowledges that *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* utilises some stories and characters from the works of Henry Lawson. Who was Henry Lawson? Do some research and write a biography.
- Do you notice any similarities between his life or works and the characters from *Harry Kruize, Born to Lose*? (e.g. Jack Ellis was the name of a well-known character from some of Lawson's stories; Lawson's mother also ran a boarding house).
- Two of the stories that Jack tells Harry were not Lawson's: 'The Dog That Wasn't' and 'The King of Dogs'. Jacks even says at one point that he hasn't ever told these stories to anyone. Did you notice anything different about these stories than the others? Do you think the author achieved the same style as Lawson?

## Curriculum Links

The Australian Curriculum: English asserts in its Rationale that it 'helps students to engage imaginatively and critically with literature to expand the scope of their experience.' One of its Aims is to ensure that students 'develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature.' To facilitate this the Content Structure of English is built around the three interrelated strands being: Language — knowing about the English language; Literature — understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature; and Literacy — expanding the repertoire of English usage.

*Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* is useful in exploring all of these elements in the curriculum. It uses many features of language, and can be used to explore vocabulary, parts of speech, and sentence structure as outlined in the 'Language' strand. The above activities focus especially on the 'Language for interaction' and 'Expressing and developing ideas' sub-strands.

*Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* also encourages critical engagement with texts. It inspires discussion of literary experiences, sharing responses, and expressing a point of view. It raises questions about social status and interaction, bullying, family relationships, and friendship, as well as a variety of other topics and issues. In addition, it invites debate in a broader context about psychology and the importance of having someone to talk to. These issues create links to the cross-curriculum area of Civics and Citizenship. It asks students to draw parallels between a fictional world and their own world, placing emphasis on exploring values, rights, and responsibilities.

*Harry Kruize, Born to Lose* is aimed at readers aged 11+ so can be effectively used with Year 5 and above.