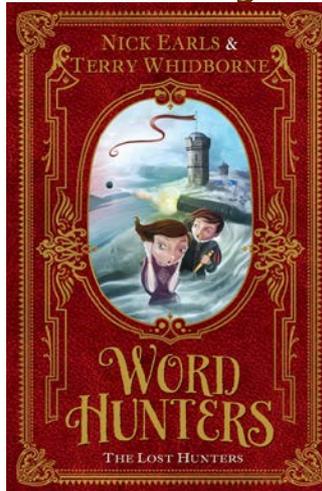


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WORD HUNTERS: THE LOST HUNTERS

Nick Earls & Terry Whidborne



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

Earls and Whidborne's second novel *Word Hunters: The Lost Hunters*, continues the time-travelling adventures of word hunters Al and Lexi. This time, the story sees the twins searching throughout history for their lost grandfather, Grandad Al. Along the way, they find lost word hunter, Will, from 1918 England. Together, Al, Lexi and Will continue to search for Grandad Al, uncovering secrets from the past, as well as the discovery that he is a word hunter too.

This mystery adventure leads the protagonists to many discoveries such as the origins of words 'okay', 'dollar' and 'gun', and the story takes the reader to critical moments in history including the battlefields of World War 1, the English Civil War, the assassination of President Lincoln and the time of the Vikings. It also takes in the rich history of cities such as Chicago and New York. However, adventures don't come without dangers and the word hunters find themselves as targets of the men in grey.

THEMES

Family:

- Al and Lexi are determined to rescue Grandad Al, even though they've never met him.

Etymology/Origin of Words:

- Many English words have been derived from non-English origins.
- Some slang words such as 'okay' have surprising foundations.

History:

- Al and Lexi become part of various historical events.
- Had certain historical events had different outcomes, the English language may not have survived at all.

Mystery and Adventure:

- Al and Lexi are thrust into many situations that require wit and intellect to guarantee their survival.

Time Travel:

- Will and Grandad Al both learn how different life in the twenty-first century is in comparison to their own times.

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- Once rescued, Grandad Al must be delivered to his own era so that the future can unfold properly.

WRITING STYLE

Word Hunters: The Lost Hunters is written in third person, past tense and is appropriate for middle-grade readers – 10+ years. It successfully combines history with the modern era, integrating language of various historical periods with today's vernacular. The narrative is fast-paced and cleverly written.

ILLUSTRATOR STYLE

Terry Whidborne has provided the following comments:

My illustration style varies slightly but always appears slightly mad. With Word Hunters I approached the style like the old Little Golden Books illustrations but with a twist. It needed to have a classic style due to the nature of the story, but I also added little extras. These little extras consisted of detailed borders and an overall steampunk vibe. I tend to apply texture wherever I can, either in the way I do the shading or how I apply patterns.

STUDY NOTES

- For students new to this series, visit <http://www.wordhunters.com.au/>
- Al and Lexi have never met their grandfather. They learn about him through photographs and stories. Choose a family member on which to complete a family history project. Include interviews with family members and a range of primary and secondary sources to tell this person's story. Present this information in a creative and informative mode.
- Write a newspaper report about the disappearance of Grandad Al. Include quotes from interviewees such as Grandma or the twins' father.
- The twins pack a survival kit before leaving for their first mission. Discuss the items they decide to take. In small groups, create your own list of survival items for the same mission, with justification for each item.
- 'Okay' is the first word that is being hunted. The twins are taken to Chicago in 1929. Research this period of America's history, particularly prohibition. With older students, debate the pros and cons of prohibition. Was this a successful policy or not? Discuss.
- Research the life of Al Capone. Create a 'wanted poster' for this gangster.

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- Look carefully at the illustration on p23. Make predictions about the story from this illustration.
- Al and Lexi arrive in New York during the time of slavery and Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Investigate the presidency of Lincoln in the context of slavery. Discuss the importance of Lincoln's amendment to the constitution.
- Compare photos of New York from the 1860s with those from the modern day. Highlight changes in society such as architecture, transport, fashion and technology.
- Research the history of New York and create a timeline to show its development over time.
- Certain inventions such as Otis' elevators allowed the development of architecture, including buildings such as skyscrapers, to be built. Investigate the link between inventions and architecture. Focus on the historical skill of cause and effect.
- Will is from 1918. When he arrives in modern-day Fig Tree Pocket, he has to learn about many modern conveniences, technologies and customs. Create a photo journal in the role of Will, highlighting twenty-first century parts of life such as go-cards, credit cards, the internet and iPhones.
- Colonisation has occurred across the world for centuries. Research the way in which America, particularly in the city of New York, came to be. What role did the British and Dutch play in its development? Find out why the city was named New York.
- Hygiene standards in the seventeenth century were very different from today. Create a diagram to show these differences.
- When hunting the origins of the word 'gun', the twins realise that they are learning the names of guns. Research more about the guns: the Kaiser Wilhelm, the Humpty Dumpty and the Gunnhildr, which they encounter on their adventure.
- Discuss the nursery rhyme of Humpty Dumpty in light of the English Civil War.

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- View YouTube clips about the English Civil War on the Horrible Histories' website. www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4b0G_auKCI
- Predict what you think will happen in Book 3 of the Word Hunters series. What role might the men in grey play? What significant part in history might they represent?
- Choose one of the historical settings in the novel on which to write an information report. Include a historical narrative of this period, along with a discussion of the importance of this event or issue to history.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

For years I've loved the stories behind the origins of words and phrases, but never thought it was something I'd write about. Three things in particular stuck with me – the almost-certain origin (and complicated life) of 'okay'; the possible origin of 'hello' that came up when I joined a few dots; and the almost-lost letter 'thorn', which persists only in the 'th' sound that we mispronounce as 'y' when we see 'ye olde'. I came up with the beginnings of an idea for series of stories that might weave this material in. Yet again I didn't expect to write it, and told no one about it.

I'd got to know Terry through an advertising campaign for Brisbane Marketing, and was frankly amazed at his talent as an artist. And he wanted to illustrate books for children. I was convinced Terry could be the next Shaun Tan, and still am. I wanted to work with Terry and wondered if my germ of a series idea could be the right project. We pitched an early version to a few people, and signed up with UQP. After one meeting with them, the whole thing immediately became way bigger and way better. We had a big, bold story to tell, I was truly excited about it and off we went looking for all its parts. I loved that search and still can't believe some of the huge and tiny things we've found that have made their way into the books.

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

I have always loved time-travel films. Being a visual person, I am in awe of Jules Verne and his many adventures into strange lands and time. From *The Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *Time Machine* the designs and imagination that generated those worlds were brilliant. His work also spawned the genre 'Steampunk' in later years. The gadgets and machines were amazing. I met Nick during an ad campaign I was working on and we have kept in touch ever since. I remember having dinner and saying, 'Where does "okay" come from?' and with that Nick launched into the history of the word 'okay'.

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A few years later he approached me about a project and what he mentioned got me excited. It included time-travel and gadgets. Between Nick's award-winning writing talents and his expansive brain for detailed facts, how could I not do it? Over a few weeks we talked about the story and I did some illustrations and pitched it to UQP. They instantly embraced the idea and moved it up a couple of notches to make the project amazing. I have learnt a lot from the research which had to be done for the illustrations and was also surprised at what Nick had found to spin his story around.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Earls is the author of 16 books, including five novels with teenage central characters. *48 Shades of Brown* was a CBCA Book of the Year, and his other four young adult novels were Notable Books. *After January* was also shortlisted for the National Children's Literature Award, won a 3M Talking Book of the Year Award and was shortlisted in the Fairlight Talking Book Awards. The International Youth Library, Munich, included it in its White Ravens selection of international notable new books. It was the first of five of Nick Earls's novels to become plays. Two have also been adapted into feature films.

www.nickearls.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Terry Whidborne has worked in the advertising industry for many years, and is now recognised as one of Brisbane's most award-winning senior Art Directors. But as Terry's family grew, so did his interest in illustration. He began developing his style for clients such as *Vogue*, Virgin Blue and many of London's top ad agencies, before deciding that what he really wanted to do was concentrate on books, film and animation. He lives in Brisbane with his wife and two kids.

www.the7thworld.com