

The Letterbox Tree

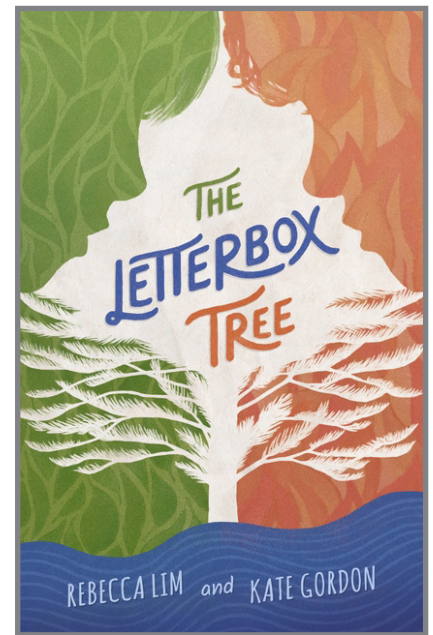
AUTHORS

REBECCA LIM AND KATE GORDON

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Nyx lives in the Tasmania of 2091—deforested, over-mined and affected by bushfires and drought. With sea-levels rising, Tasmania is marooned and abandoned to its fate. Nyx's widowed father wants them to leave while they can, but for Nyx, West Hobart is all she has ever known, and where her mother is buried. She finds solace in the single living tree on the dusty reserve near her home, an 80-foot pine that has defied odds and survived the climate crisis.

Bea lives in present, beautiful, Tasmania and is facing a move to the mainland. She will miss the giant tree that she climbs to seek solace from bullies. One day she leaves a despairing note, the words pouring out her troubles, stuffed in a hole in its trunk. Nyx finds the note, and writes back. The girls begin a correspondence across two different time periods and they form a friendship that defies the logic of time. When Nyx faces life threatening fire and then floods, she must turn to her friend Bea to change the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rebecca Lim is an award-winning writer, illustrator and editor and the author of over twenty books, including *Tiger Daughter* (a Victorian Premier's Literary Award-winner), *The Astrologer's Daughter* (A Kirkus Best Book and CBCA Notable Book) and the bestselling *Mercy*. Her work has been shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Queensland Literary Awards, CBCA Book of the Year Awards and Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Awards, shortlisted multiple times for the Aurealis Awards and Davitt Awards, and longlisted for the Gold Inky Award, the Margaret and Colin Roderick Literary Award and the David Gemmell Legend Award. She is a co-founder of Voices from the Intersection and co-editor of *Meet Me at the Intersection*, a groundbreaking anthology of YA #OwnVoice memoir, poetry and fiction.

Kate Gordon grew up in a very bookish house, in a small town by the sea in Tasmania. After studying performing arts and realising she was a terrible actor, Kate decided to become a librarian. She never stopped writing and, in 2009, she applied for and won a Varuna fellowship, which led to all sorts of lovely writer things happening. Kate's first book, *Three Things About Daisy Blue*, was published in 2010. Her most recent publications are the middle-grade novels in the Direleaf Hall series, and *Aster's Good, Right Things*, which won the CBCA Book of the Year for Younger Readers.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the novel, view the cover and title of the book and identify the following:
 - The title of the book

- The author
- The publisher
- The blurb.
- Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the story to see if your predictions were correct.
- Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.
- The orientation sets the scene, mood and introduces the characters. Which character/s are we introduced to in the opening scene of the novel? What mood is the author setting?
 - Write what you think could happen in the story based on how the writer has set the story up.
- It is the author's job to make it difficult for the characters to achieve their goals. What trouble (complications) does the author create to make it difficult for the main character to achieve their goal/s?
- Can you identify the climax of the story, the moment of highest tension?
- Characterisation is how the characters in a novel are described physically, their point of view, their personalities, their private thoughts and their actions. Create a mindmap of a character in the story with all the words you can think of to describe their character. Then, write a paragraph describing how you imagine the character would be. Compare your ideas of that character with other people in your class. Did you imagine the same person?
- Consider the world the author has created in this novel. Can you describe it? How is it different to the world you live in? Which elements of the world seem realistic, and which seems fantastical?
- How does the story conclude (resolution)?
- Compare the ending of the story with how you imagined it ending at the end of the first chapter. Were you surprised by where the story went?
- Design your own cover for the book with new imagery and a new tagline that will persuade and interest people in reading the book.
- Choose a scene in the novel and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. Focus particularly on the character's attitudes and feelings, rather than simply recounting events. How might another character see and experience events differently to the character in the novel?
- Choose your favourite character from the novel. Draw a picture of how you think they look or find one in a magazine/online.
 - Write a letter from this character to another character in the book. Make sure you use some of the language or expressions that they use in the novel.