

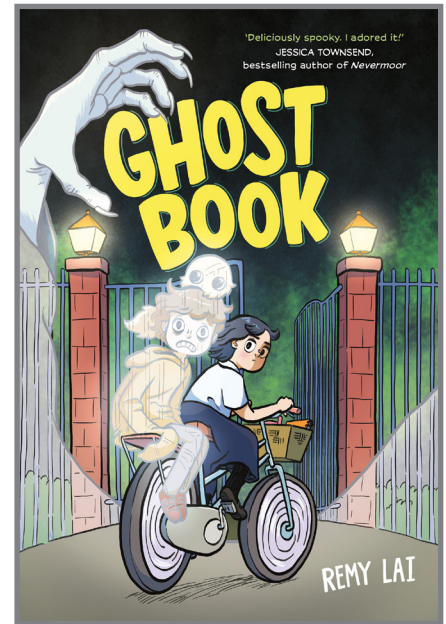
# Ghost Book

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR  
**REMY LAI**

SCIS: 5455779

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



## SYNOPSIS

July Chen sees ghosts. But her dad insists ghosts aren't real. So she pretends they don't exist. Which is incredibly difficult now as it's Hungry Ghost month, when the Gates of the Underworld open and dangerous ghosts run amok in the living world. When July saves a boy ghost from being devoured by a Hungry Ghost, he becomes her first ever friend. Except William is not a ghost. He's a wandering soul wavering between life and death. As the new friends embark on an adventure to return William to his body, they unearth a ghastly truth—for William to live, July must die.

Inspired by Chinese mythology, this resoundingly hopeful tale about friendship, sacrifice and the unseen world of ghosts is a dazzling heir to beloved Studio Ghibli classics.

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

Remy Lai writes and draws for kids. She was born in Indonesia, grew up in Singapore and currently lives in Brisbane, Australia. She lives with her two dogs, who sometimes scare her by barking at nothing in the corners of rooms. Remy is also the award-winning creator of *Pie in the Sky*, *Fly on the Wall*, *Pawcasso* and the *Surviving the Wild* series.

Find out more about Remy at [www.remylai.com](http://www.remylai.com).

## STUDY NOTES

- Pre-reading class discussion:
  - How are ghosts different to the living?
  - Where do they live?
  - Should we be scared of them?
  - Can you think of any famous ghosts in books, comics or films?
  - What is the Hungry Ghost festival? Who celebrates it? When is it?
  - What does the term 'yin-yang eyes' mean?
- Look at the cover of *Ghost Book* and consider its title and illustration and discuss the following questions:
  - Who do you think the story will be about?
  - What elements in the illustration point to the boy on the bike being a ghost?
  - What elements point to the girl being alive?
  - What mood does the presence of the hand [top-left corner] in the image create?
  - What mood does the font and colour of the title create?

- Is there anything on the cover that suggests this will be a graphic novel?
- Does the cover make you want to open the book and read on?
- Find out the definition of the word ‘prologue’. Would you say pp 1–7 fit that definition? Why/why not? After reading the prologue, discuss the following questions:
  - What did you learn from this section of the story?
  - What questions arose after reading the section?
  - What did you make of the last panel on p 6?
  - Did this panel change the mood of the rest of the section?
- Turn to p 13 in the story and explain how the image of the as-yet-unnamed girl eating lunch by herself contrasts with the previous scene? What did these six panels tell you about the young girl?
- The creator, Remy Lai, is a master at expressing emotions visually. Turn to p 21 to see how July’s eyes and mouth change when she is growing more and more desperate while trying to summon the Hungry Ghost. What do you think she is saying to herself in the last three panels on the page? What sort of visual cues are used to show a character feeling anger, surprise and embarrassment later in the story?
- Speech bubbles communicate lots of information in a graphic novel. Discuss how speech bubbles appear in *Ghost Book* in the following moments:
  - when a narrator is telling the story
  - when a character is speaking normally
  - when they are whispering
  - when they are thinking to themselves
  - when they are from the Underworld.

Find examples where the way a speech bubble is shown tells us that a character is experiencing intense emotions such as panic and fear.

- When William asks July why she is pretending she can’t see him on p 38, she remembers a time when her father insisted to her that ghosts do not exist. Other than showing a much younger July, how does Remy Lai show that this scene was in the distant past? Can you find other scenes from the past, shown later in the story? (See: pp 150–153 and 216–224].
  - How is the time shown moving forwards on p 48?
  - How does the largest panel on p 63 show a change in time?
- Sometimes sounds can be shown using words and visual techniques. An example of this is where William fails to catch the bag of flour and it lands on the ground with a ‘Ploomf’ on p 63. How does Remy Lai show us the sound is soft and that the flour is drifting in the air after impact? Can you find other visual ways sounds are presented in *Ghost Book*?
- Onomatopoeia is when words sound like their meanings—for example SLURP, CHOMP and NOM NOM NOM on pp 70–71. Graphic novels often portray onomatopoeic words in a different way to the other text on a page. How are these words presented on the page to emphasise how ravenous the Hungry Ghosts are?
- Remy Lai creates lots of visual clues so that readers don’t need words to tell them what is going on. Turn to pp 166–167 and describe what you can see happening here to the boy who has been possessed by a Hungry Ghost.
- Imagine you are Mr Chen and retell the story from his viewpoint. Remember to explain:
  - How you feel about your daughter.
  - Why you insist that ghosts don’t exist.
  - Why you want your daughter to eat ‘wonky’ dumplings every day.
  - Where you go every night, and why?
  - How your feelings have changed by the end of the story.
- Why do you think William decides that it is better that his mother remember him, even if she will grieve his death? What does he mean when he declares on pp 299–300 that ‘A broken heart . . . is a heart that has loved and been loved.’
- How does the single two-page image featuring July saying, ‘Remember me’ at the end of the story relate to the above quote?

- Why might the book have been given the title *Ghost Book*? If you had to come up with another name for the story, what might it be?

AUTHOR OF NOTES  
**CAROLYN WALSH**