

# The Gargoyle

AUTHOR

**ZANA FRAILLON**

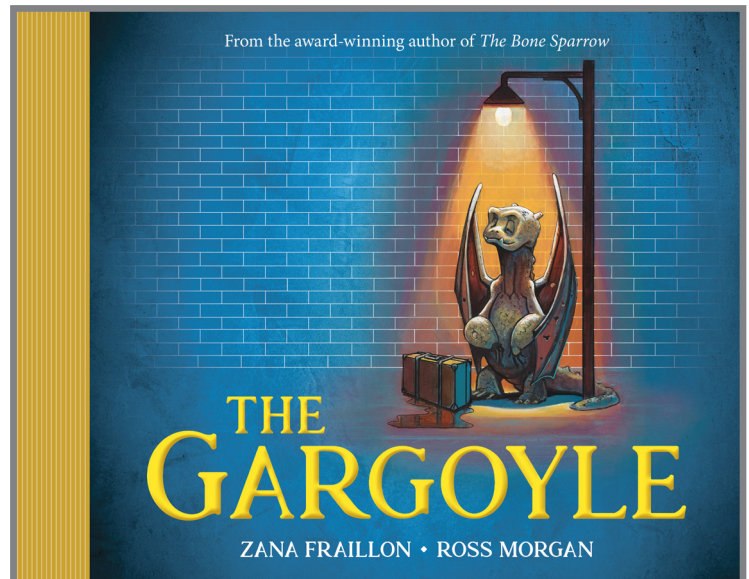
ILLUSTRATOR

**ROSS MORGAN**

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower to Mid Primary



## SYNOPSIS

*He's old, this gargoyle. Very old. Older than me. Older than anyone. He looks tired. If I had a seat, I would give it to him.*

*He shuffles past me and stands near the door and watches the city smushing past.*

*I think I hear him sigh. An echoey, achy, hollow sort of sigh, like the wind when it gusts down lanes and through tunnels and in and out of the big drains that stretch under the city.*

This is the moving story of an old gargoyle, forced off his rooftop to make way for a new development in a barren cityscape, and the child who encounters him on an overcrowded train. When the gargoyle is ordered off the train, he leaves his suitcase behind. The child opens the case and unleashes the gargoyle's many memories of the city and its inhabitants. When the case crumbles, leaving nothing but a small seed, the child decides to find a place to bring the gargoyle, and the soul of the city, back.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zana Fraillon was born in Naarm (Melbourne), but spent her early childhood in San Francisco. Her 2016 novel, *The Bone Sparrow*, won the ABIA Book of the Year for Older Children, the Readings Young Adult Book Prize and the Amnesty CILIP Honour. It was also shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, the Queensland Literary Awards, the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, the Gold Inky and the CILIP Carnegie Medal.

Her book *The Lost Soul Atlas* won the 2020 Aurealis Award for Best Children's Fiction and was shortlisted for the 2021 Children's Book Council Award for Book of the Year: Older Readers. *Wisp*, illustrated by Grahame Baker-Smith was published in 2018. Her most recent picture book, *The Curiosities*, illustrated by Phil Lesnie, was a 2021 Aurealis Award winner. She published a verse novel *The Way of Dog* in 2022. *The Raven's Song* co-written with Bren MacDibble was also published in 2022.

Find out more about Zana at <https://www.zanafrailon.com/>.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ross Morgan is a fine artist and illustrator from Adelaide, South Australia. From an early age, Ross enjoyed exploring the rural environment filled with creatures, abandoned structures and objects of yesteryear. He also practised drawing, painting, and arts and crafts projects at the kitchen table, encouraged by his mother. These early experiences were key in

establishing his life-long interest in drawing and painting.

He completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of South Australia in 2000. Since then, he has been exhibiting in solo and group exhibitions and running an independent studio practice.

Some of Ross's major awards include being selected as a semi-finalist in Doug Moran National Portrait Prize (2014), a three-time finalist in the Kennedy Art Prize (2017, 2018 and 2021) and winner of the John Shaw Neilson Acquisitive Art Prize in 2015.

In 2019, Ross won Raising Literacy Australia's Emerging Author and Illustrator Mentoring Project. This led to his first illustrated book, *Molly Moores has a House Like Yours*, written by Kaliah Tsakalidis and published in 2020. In 2021, he was shortlisted for the SCBWI Australian Picture Book Illustrator Award as an Emerging Illustrator.

Find out more about Ross at <https://www.rossmorgan.com.au/>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

## STUDY NOTES

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

- The word 'Gargoyle' is derived from the old French 'gargouille', meaning throat, and was used to describe carved lions and spouts on classical buildings. The variety of their design multiplied as time passed. Examine images of them and discuss with students the various animals and mythological creatures they relate to.
  - They were also said to have the power to ward off evil spirits. Research the design of gargoyles and their relationship to Gothic architecture.
- Did you know that the spouts which often stick out from a gargoyle's mouth had a practical purpose? They were like downpipes on contemporary gutters, designed to direct water away from the walls of the building to the ground below. Research both the symbolic and the practical purpose of gargoyles. Read about Gothic architecture and examine some images of gargoyles.
- The gargoyle is symbolic of age and how old things are often not valued or even ignored in our society. The scene in the train reminds us all of the respect we should pay to older people. Sadly, they are often not given such due respect. How should we respect elderly people? What activities might we engage in to honour elderly people?
- How should we value the things we have, rather than seeking to replace them with something newer?
- This book juxtaposes the conservation of architecture with that of preserving nature. The planting of a tree is symbolic of such preservation for the future. Discuss these interconnected ideas.
- The gargoyle is a repository of memories. He represents all the ages that have passed and the people who have inhabited those eons. His suitcase, which the boy opens, contains 'bubbles' of memories.
  - Discuss the importance of memories to an individual and to society. Discuss the significance of ancestors and the stories they might have to tell of those who come after them.
- The final three spreads show the boy planting the seedling, then a little older watering the tree, and then as an old man in a lush garden with the tree fully grown and the man walking behind his grandchildren—the next generation. How is the theme of re-growth symbolically related to the cherishing of memories?
- The gargoyle has been forced from his home on a rooftop and is attempting to travel with only a small case containing his memories. The man on the train grumbles about the puddle the gargoyle makes in the carriage, and the ticket collector forces him to leave the carriage and issues him with a fine. Often homeless people are dismissed by people who fail to recognise the underlying social issues which have caused them to become homeless. They are

often ignored or disparaged. How are homeless people treated in society? How should they be treated?

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

- ‘He shuffles past me and stands near the door and watches the city smushing past. I think I hear him sigh. An echoey, achy, hollow sort of sigh, like the wind when it gusts down lanes and through tunnels and in and out of the big drains that stretch under the city.’ (pp 8–9) Discuss the effect of the language used in this quote.
- Repetition is also used to powerful effect, for example in the following quote: ‘I wonder where he is going. I wonder where he has been. I wonder what he has seen, perched high on a roof for all those years. I wonder what is in his case that makes it so very, very heavy. He looks at me. I think he is wondering about me too.’ (p 12) What effect does the repetition in this sentence have on the reader?
- Write your own story about a gargoyle.
- Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the word GARGOYLE.

### VISUAL LITERACY

- Before reading the book, examine the cover and discuss the feelings it conveys and the information it suggests about the text. Once you have examined the cover, read the text and then consider the cover again.
  - After reading the story, do you think the cover matches the story? Why? Why not? Design your own cover for book.
- The endpapers are solid colour. If they were decorative, what pattern would you design for them? Use a grid and replicate an image (or several images) relevant to this text.
- The format of the book is square. How does the layout of the storyboard and the format and design of the book influence your reading of it?
- On his website the illustrator, Ross Morgan, states that he is ‘fascinated with the visual narrative, and loves developing characters, stories, and environments’. Examine the interaction between the boy and the gargoyle and how emotion is conveyed in these drawings via facial expression and body language.
- The final artwork for *The Gargoyle* was hand painted using acrylic paint and paint markers on MDF board. The colours used in this book are moody, atmospheric and sombre in hue. This palette carries a poignant, emotional weight. Ross Morgan also enjoys including found objects in his work and imbues them with feeling and character. He has spoken of a childhood prowling amongst junkyards, and of the fact that he likes to include such old abandoned objects in his work. Discuss the techniques used in Ross Morgan’s artwork.
- In picture book art, the reader’s perspective in observing strong left to right movement across a double page spread is also important, encouraging the reader to follow the action sequentially in a filmic way. Read the book closely and observe this mode of visual storytelling.
- Invite students to draw a gargoyle. Consult online drawing tutorials such as: ‘How to Draw a Gargoyle’, Sketchok, <https://sketchok.com/other/monstersand-fantasy-creatures/how-to-draw-a-gargoyle/>.
- Paint or collage a scene featuring a gargoyle to accompany the story you wrote above. Create a classroom mural using all the images.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

**DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT AM**