

Flight of the Drakkonbarq

by Sarah Giddy

TEACHERS' RESOURCES



USE IN THE CLASSROOM

This text would be ideal for a close-study unit for Years 5-7 English (Stages 3 and 4 in the Australian Curriculum). It could also be read aloud to a younger audience.

THEMES

- Belonging
- Identity
- Courage
- Curiosity
- Friendship
- Loneliness
- Difference
- Prejudice
- Acceptance
- Found family
- New perspectives
- Empathy



Bat Brikson is less than two centimetres tall—but his dreams are bigger than the sky.

Tired of feeling like a misfit, Bat hitches a ride on his newly hatched moth and takes off on a daring quest. His mission? To fly beyond the grass, find the legendary enemy dragonfly-riders, and finally discover where he belongs. But the world above is nothing like he imagined. From riding beetles and exploring treetop villages to joining sky-high honey quests and befriending a fierce young warrior named Elfrida, Bat is swept into a world of wonder—and danger.

The dragonfly-riders, known as the Drakkonbarqs, aren't the villains he was raised to fear. In fact, some of them feel more like home than the classmates he left behind. As Bat navigates battles, secrets, and shifting loyalties, he begins to realise that being different doesn't mean you don't belong. And that sometimes, the greatest quest isn't to change yourself—but to see others more clearly.

A soaring adventure full of bravery, friendship, and the magic of finding your place in the world.

CURRICULUM LINKS

This text would be ideal for a close-study unit for Years 5-7 English (Stages 3 and 4 in the Australian Curriculum). It could also be read aloud to a younger audience. The following content descriptors were taken from Year 7 English curriculum (ACARA, 2023).

AC9E7LE01

Identify and explore ideas, points of view, characters, events and/or issues in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and/or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

AC9E7LE02

Form an opinion about characters, settings and events in texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others' opinions and justifying a response.

AC9E7LE03

Explain the ways that literary devices and language features such as dialogue, and images are used to create character; and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts.

AC9E7LE05

Identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives.

AC9E7LE07

Create and edit literary texts that experiment with language features and literary devices encountered in texts.

AC9E7LY02

Use interaction skills when discussing and presenting ideas and information including evaluations of the features of spoken texts.

AC9E7LY03

Analyse the ways in which language features shape meaning and vary according to audience and purpose.

AC9E7LY05

Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to analyse and summarise information and ideas.

AC9E7LY06

Plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts, selecting subject matter, and using text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features as appropriate to convey information, ideas and opinions in ways that may be imaginative, reflective, informative, persuasive and/or analytical.

The teaching and learning activities outlined in the following pages also connect to the following General Capabilities from the Australian Curriculum: Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding, Inter-cultural Understanding, Literacy, Numeracy, and Personal and Social Capability.

INTRODUCTION

Discuss the conventions of the fantasy genre and create a visual mind-map of tropes and features (search for identity, found family, the reluctant hero, the mentor, the orphan, coming of age, good vs evil, search for identity, rags to riches, magical artifacts, training sequences, the quest, dragons, magic, medieval settings, supernatural elements, battles, military leaders, adventure, mythical creatures, fictional names and places etc).

Read the synopsis of the book and discuss whether *Flight of the Drakkonbarq* fits within the fantasy genre (providing evidence and justification).

Use the following icebreaker questions to provoke a discussion about the premise of the story before you begin reading.

If you were 1.5cm tall...

- what would your dream house be made out of?
- what insect would you like as a pet?
- What would you be most scared of?
- Would you rather live in a tree or on the ground?
- What would your favourite food be?
- What would you do for a living?
- Where would you like to explore?
- What would you study at school?
- Who would your enemies be?
- What sports would you play? What would you do for fun?
- What would your clothes be made out of?
- What would you use a spiderweb for?
- What would you use a dandelion for?
- What would you use a bee stinger for?
- What would you use tree sap for?
- What would you use a snail shell for?

CHAPTER STUDY QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1: BAT BRIKSON

Comprehension

- What were Bat and Tevs arguing about in the first scene? Why was Tevs worried? What was Bat curious about?
- Who are the members of the Brikson family? Where do they live?
- Why do people gossip about Bat and his family?
- What is the new school called? What will Bat and Tevs learn there?
- Who rides on war-beetles?

Reflection

- Describe your impression of Bat's personality based on the first chapter, giving evidence from the text to support your ideas.

CHAPTER 2: Y'LIONDAND

Comprehension

- Describe Y'Liondand.
- Is Bat a Bittenklore or a Cattenveldt?
- What have we learned about the Bittenklores and the Cattenveldts so far?

Creative Activity

- Imagine a city or building for people the size of the Bittenklores and Cattenveldts, using natural elements. Create a map or draw a picture of the place you have designed, and write an accompanying description.

CHAPTER 3: AN EGG IS FOUND

Comprehension

- Recount what happened in the children's Biocurosophy class.
- Who was Bat named after? Why was this a strange choice of name?
- Reflection Questions
- Describe your impression of Jorkri Scaraba's personality, giving evidence from the text. Do you think he will be a good friend for Bat?

Creative Activity

- Write a diary entry from Bat's perspective, recounting what happened on his first day of school and how he felt throughout the day.

CHAPTER 4: COLOURED YARN & SLATER BUGS

Comprehension

- How do the Cattenveldts and Bittenklores feel about the Drakkonbarqs?
- What happened in the Secession of Government? What questions does Bat have about this?

Reflection

- Explain the quote "He felt like a slater bug, rolling itself into a ball."
- Write about a time when you felt judged, isolated, or withdrawn.

Creative Activity

- Draw a design for a military uniform for the Bittenklore army, based on the designs of beetle shells.

CHAPTER 5: OUT OF THE EGG

Comprehension

- Why did Bat feel like a “live museum exhibit”? Explain.
- Describe Bat’s relationship with his parents and his Uncle Levi.

Creative Activity

- Write a diary entry from Bat’s perspective, recounting the day that your egg hatched. Describe your reaction to your new caterpillar.
- Research an interesting caterpillar and draw a detailed picture of it.

CHAPTER 6: THE ODDITY

Comprehension

- What did the children do on their Biocurosophy excursion?
- How did the different children react to seeing the dragon?

Reflection

- Why do you think Jorkri bragged about his bravery after seeing the dragon? Why didn’t Bat tell anyone about his own experience?
- Why does Bat decide to name his caterpillar ‘Oddity,’ even though Jorkri intended the name to be an insult?

Creative Activity

- Write a free-verse poem about the moment when Bat sees a dragon for the first time.
- Imagine that you were walking home from school and saw an enemy dragonfly flying overhead! What would you do? Write a story about the scene.

CHAPTER 7: CATERPILLARS & MOUNTAIN ROOTS

Comprehension

- Recount what Joab, Tevs and Bat did on their expedition to the mountain roots.
- Why were Joab and Adeline worried about Bat and Oddity?

Creative Activity

- Consider Bat’s experience of climbing the mountain roots and sailing across the puddle on an acorn cap boat. Write a short story about a similar adventure of tiny people in an exciting environment. Illustrate your story with photos, drawing or collage.

CHAPTER 8: MADE FOR A DIFFERENT WORLD

Comprehension

- Recount what happened in Bat’s Explorography exam.
- Why is Bat upset after the exam?

Reflection

- How would you explain the meaning of the following quote? *“You’re like that caterpillar of yours, Bat. One-of-a-kind. You were made for a different world.”* (p61).

Creative Activity

- Imagine that you are a Cattenveldt completing an obstacle course for a school exam. Write a description of what you do and draw a map to go with it.
- Imagine that your pet butterfly or moth has entered its cocoon or chrysalis. Describe your thoughts, feelings, fears and hopes.

CHAPTER 9: AN EXPLOSION AND A PROMISE

Comprehension

- Recount what happened in the class with the tadpole tank. What do Bat and Jorkri argue about? Why did the tank explode?
- Why did Bat decide to wear the hat that Jorkri gave him? Why did Kalynda Carapace tell him to take it off?
- What promise does Kalynda Carapace ask of Bat?

Reflection

- How would you summarise the advice that Kalynda Carapace gives to Bat? Do you think it is good advice? Explain why or why not.
- Discuss Bat's changing feelings about his namesake. Why does he call Batoldrian a hero?

Creative Activity

- Write an alternative conversation between Bat and Kalynda Carapace.

CHAPTER 10: FREEDOM!

Reflection

- Why does Bat say *"I want to climb up the tallest vine and never see another person ever again"* in page 86?
- Describe Bat's reaction to the suit of armour in Jorkri's cabinet.
- Explain the effect of the imagery in the following quotes:
 - *"His rage hurt even more, like his lungs were trapped in a tight cage, and a beetle was tearing at his throat with its claws."* (p94)
 - *"The shadow he had worn all his life peeled off him like a cloak."* (p96)
- Why was Oddity's metamorphosis important in this chapter?
- Why does Bat use the word "Cattenveldt" as an insult?

Creative Activity

- Imagine that you go to birthday party and see a suit of armour that has been stolen from a battlefield. Describe what you do next.
- Draw a picture of what you think the Drakkonbarq armour might have looked like.

CHAPTER 11: WHAT BAT DISCOVERED

Comprehension

- How does Bat's perspective of the world change in this chapter?
- How does Uncle Levi support Bat after his first flight?

Reflection

Why does Bat compare himself to Oddity coming out of the chrysalis on p103? What do you think he means?

Creative Activity

- Write a diary entry from Bat's perspective, describing your experience of flying and seeing the sky, trees and sunset for the first time.

CHAPTER 12: THE STORY LEVI TOLD

Comprehension

- Describe the personalities of Joab, Adeline and Levi, both as children and as adults.
- How did Bat come to be part of Joab and Adeline's family?
- Why was Bat named Batoldrian?

Creative Activity

- Write an additional scene for the story, showing the moment where Uncle Levi finds the baby on the battlefield.

CHAPTER 13: A DECISION

Comprehension

- How does Uncle Levi persuade Bat to find the Drakkonbarqs instead of returning home?
- Describe Uncle Levi's childhood as a half-Drakkonbarq.

Reflection

- What thoughts do you think would have been running through Bat's head during his first conversation with Elfrida?

Creative Activity

- What would you do if you flew away to join the enemy but didn't know how to find them? Write about your ideas for how to locate the Drakkonbarqs.
- Bat's world is divided into two places, the Groundlands and the Above-World. Raindrops are called waterbolts, trees are called mountain roots, the sky is called the Open and the sun is called the Giant Lamp. Create your own glossary of alternate names for things from our world.

CHAPTER 14: THE ARRIVAL

Comprehension

- What are the Drakkonbarqs celebrating in this chapter? Describe the celebration.

Reflection

- Compare and contrast the Drakkonbarq world with the Cattenveldt world.
- How are the Drakkonbarqs similar or different to what Bat was expecting?
- Find quotes from this chapter and the previous one that give us an insight into Elfrida's personality.

CHAPTER 15: INSIDE THE BREAKING BROOM

Comprehension

- Who is Silvana? How does she welcome Bat?
- What do we find out about Galen in this chapter?
- What do we find out about Silvana and Galen's parents in this chapter?
- Why is Elfrida important in the tree?
- Why can't Silvana fly?

Creative Activity

- Silvana's family have a pet bee, Buzzybuck. Choose an interesting insect that you would like to have as a pet if you were a Bittenklore, Cattenveldt or Drakkonbarq. Give a short presentation to the class, explaining why you think your insect would make the perfect pet.
- Draw a design for Drakkonbarq clothing, made out of flower petals, spider web, or some other natural material.

CHAPTER 16: ELFRIDA

Comprehension

- Where does Elfrida live?
- What do Bat and Elfrida do together?

Reflection

- Why does Bat want to call himself Batoldrian? Why does Elfrida argue that he should be called Bat? What do you think – which name fits him better? Explain why.
- Why do you think Elfrida seems more interested in talking to Bat than in talking to Silvana? What does this show us about her personality and values?
- Why does Bat feel queasy when Elfrida starts talking about wearing armour? How is his perception of the Drakkonbarqs being challenged?

Creative Activity

- Draw your own design for something that would be useful in the Drakkonbarq world (like the dandelion parachute design on p151).

CHAPTER 17: THE PROBLEM WITH FLYING

Comprehension

- Describe the life cycle of a dragonfly.

Reflection

- Discuss the different perspectives that Cattenveldts and Drakkonbarqs have on farming. How would the Cattenveldts view the Drakkonbarq approach, and vice versa?
- Describe Bat's emotions during Silvana's flying class. Why does he identify with Silvana? What does he do to help her?
- Why do you think this chapter is entitled "The Problem With Flying"?

Creative Activity

- Draw your own design for a Drakkonbarq building (like the cicada shell sentry outpost on p168).

CHAPTER 18: DIFFERENCES

Comprehension

- Who is invited on the honeyquest?
- What does Bat discover about Galen and Silvana's family?

Reflection

- Do you agree with Elfrida's statement that '*Anyone can fly if they actually want to. They just need to try hard enough*' (p176)? Explain why or why not.
- Silvana and Elfrida are both able to connect with Bat in unique ways. Who do you think would make the better friend for him? Justify your answer with quotes from the text.

Creative Activity

- What would you do if your best friend lived in a tree but was scared of heights and couldn't fly? Write down a plan for how you would help him or her.

CHAPTER 19: THE HONEYQUEST

Comprehension

- Why are the other riders jealous of Bat?
- How do the riders succeed in entering the honey mine without getting attacked by the bees?
- Describe Bat's thoughts and feelings while he is trapped inside the honey mine.
- Who rescues Bat? How does she rescue him?

Reflection

- Why do you think Bat decided to explore the honeycomb? Do his actions fit with his personality?

Creative Activity

- Write a short story about your own adventure inside a honey mine (beehive).

CHAPTER 20: BATOLDRIAN THE LOST

Comprehension

- What does Bat give to Galen and Elfrida?
- Why does Elfrida get in trouble?

Reflection

- Bat tells Silvana that she is "just the person" to cheer Elfrida up. Why do you think Silvana would be a good friend for Elfrida?
- Explain the meaning of the following quote: "Maybe, thought Bat, they'd been wrong about trees and lakes not needing friends." (p208)
- Explain Bat's reaction to seeing the portrait of Batoldrian. Why was he disappointed?

Creative Activity

- Write a short poetic description of the personality of either Bat, Elfrida or Silvana, using interesting metaphors or similes.

CHAPTER 21: FRIENDS AND BATTLES

Comprehension

- What did Bat think happened in the Battle of Kiryagáden?
- What really happened in the Battle of Kiryagáden?

Reflection

- In this chapter, Bat discovers that history stories might change depending on who's in charge of telling them. Why is it important that we listen to stories from opposing perspectives?
- How did the Bittenklores use fear to control the Cattenveldts? Can you think of other examples of people having their judgement warped by fear?

CHAPTER 22: A HISTORY LESSON

Comprehension

- Retell the origin story of the Drakkonbarqs and the Cattenveldts, explaining why some of them stayed in the trees and some moved to the Groundlands.
- Why was Bat angry at the Bittenklores?

Reflection

- Explain Bat's reaction to being told that he isn't "like the rest" of the Cattenveldts, discussing the following quote: *"He felt as if something precious had been glimmering in front of him for a long time, just out of reach, and Elfrida had reached down, plucked it out of the air and hung it on a ribbon around his neck."* (p231)

Creative Activity

- Hold a class debate on the following topic: do you think Silvana will ever learn to fly? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 23: A GAME, A FEAST AND AN ARGUMENT

Comprehension

- Describe the Swordberry game. Who wins? How do they win?
- Who approaches Bat at the feast? What do they talk about?
- Why does Bat get into an argument with Galen and Elfrida?

Reflection

- Explain Bat's statement: 'You lot are no better than a bunch of Cattenveldts' (p245). Do you think Bat expected the Drakkonbarqs to behave differently from the Cattenveldts? How are they similar?
- Consider Bat's statement: 'Sometimes I reckon the world got us muddled up' (p247). Do you think Bat and Silvana would have had happier lives if they'd been born in different tribes? Explain why or why not.

Creative Activity

- Invent your own game involving insects flying in a natural environment. What would the rules be? How would you win?

CHAPTER 24: A SECOND QUEST

Comprehension

- Why does Bat decide to catch a dragon for Silvana? How does he think it will help her?
- Does Elfrida think Bat's plan is a good idea?
- How does Elfrida demonstrate her friendship towards Bat?

Reflection

- Consider the line: "This dragonfly, too, was entering its new life." How is the dragonfly's metamorphosis symbolic?
- Consider Silvana's reaction to Bat catching the dragonfly for her. Explain the perspectives of both Bat and Silvana in this moment. Whose experience do you personally connect with more?

Creative Activity

- Compose a song, create an interpretive dance, or draw an artwork to represent the moments when Bat watches the dragonfly hatch, catches it, and flies away on it.

CHAPTER 25: ANOTHER DECISION

Comprehension

- What does Bat do with the dragonfly, Nebula?
- What news does Elfrida bring to Bat and Silvana?
- Who does Bat find in the tree? How did he get there?

Reflection

- Explain the metaphor of Bat trying to "uproot a little plant growing in a rock bed" (p267). How were Silvana's

“roots” too strong?

- Silvana calls Bat “brave” (p267). Do you agree? Explain why or why not.
- Bat says that he doesn’t know who he is anymore. How would you encourage him about his identity (if you were in Silvana’s position)?
- Why does Bat decide to go home? How has his opinion of the Drakkonbarqs changed?
- What do you think Bat means when he says, “*There are some things you can’t fly to*” (p273)?
- How does Bat try to comfort Jorkri? Explain how Bat’s experiences in the tree have helped him to develop this wisdom.

CHAPTER 26: THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY

Comprehension

- What does Bat discover about his heritage?
- What happened to Tevs in this chapter?
- Why is it difficult for the children to find Tevs?

Reflection

- Did you know that Bat was a Drakkonbarq? If so, how did you work it out?
- Consider Bat’s reaction to discovering his heritage. How might he have responded differently if it had been revealed to him earlier in the book?

CHAPTER 27: IN WHICH THINGS BECOME MORE CONFUSING

Comprehension

- Who finds Tevs?
- Why does Bat take Tevs to Kalynda Carapace’s office?
- What does Kalynda say about Bat’s namesake, Batoldrian?
- What does Bat discover about Kalynda? Why is he surprised?

Reflection

- Compare and contrast Bat Brikson and Batoldrian the Lost. Do you think Batoldrian is a fitting hero for Bat?

CHAPTER 28: INSIDE THE SNAIL SHELL

Comprehension

- How do Joab and Adeline react to the discovery that Bat is a Drakkonbarq?
- Does Bat plan to live as a Cattenveldt or a Drakkonbarq?

Reflection

- Why is Bat proud of his parents (p312-313)?
- How did Uncle Levi demonstrate bravery in this scene?
- How has Bat grown as a person over the course of the novel? Looking at pages 313-316, find quotes that demonstrate Bat’s newfound maturity, and explain how they show his development as a character.
- What do you think Bat means when he says that “None of us belong here, not really” (p319)? What do you think he is talking about in the final sentences of the book? Do you think the ending of the book is sad or hopeful?

Creative Activity

- Write an alternative final page for the book that you think sums up the themes of Bat’s discoveries

CHARACTER ACTIVITIES

Draw your own artworks of Bat, Elfrida and Silvana, and next to each picture write your answers to the following:

- What's their name?
- Where do they live? What tribe are they from?
- Who are their closest friends/family?
- How would you describe their personality?
- How do they change throughout the novel?
- What do they most want?
- What are they most scared of?
- What do they enjoy doing when they are alone?
- Where are they most comfortable?
- What makes them upset?
- What are they most passionate about?

EXTENDED WRITING PROMPTS

- Would you rather be a Cattenveldt, a Bittenklore or a Drakkonbarq? Write a persuasive argument justifying your answer.
- Bat's first words in the book are "I wonder:" (p3). He is always curious and asking questions, even when it gets him into trouble. He doesn't mind taking risks or being different. Find as many examples of Bat's curiosity as you can.
- Elfrida and Bat both love adventure, exploration and curiosity, but Elfrida is admired by everyone around her, while Bat begins as a social outcast. Who do you think Bat has more in common with: Elfrida or Silvana? (Suggested passages to consider: p158 and p172).
- How does Bat's opinion of the Drakkonbarqs, Bittenklores and Cattenveldts change throughout the novel? Does he align himself with a particular tribe at different points in the story? What events shape his changing perception of the three tribes? Find quotes to support your ideas.
- How would you define bravery? Who is the bravest character in the book, in your opinion? Justify your answer with quotes and examples from the plot.
- Silvana says that the best thing in life is to belong somewhere (p248). Do you agree? What do you think it means to truly belong? Explain, giving examples from the lives of the different characters in the novel.
- *Friendship means standing up for your friend, being honest with them, and listening to their perspective.* Choose an example of a friendship from the story and discuss it in relation to the statement above.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mathematics

- The average Cattenveldt man is 1.7 centimetres tall. The average Australian man is 1.7 meters tall. Discuss the difference in scale and engage your students in maths activities including:
- converting sizes and measurements from meters to centimetres
- calculating comparisons between distances for real humans and tiny humans

Science

- All the information about tiny creatures in Flight of the Drakkonbarq is true (except for the tiny people of course!) Have your students fact-check any scientific details from the story, encouraging active investigation into plants and animals.
- Students can research the life cycle, habitat and food sources of their favourite insect and draw a detailed diagram, accurately labelling the insect's body parts.
- Hold a competition for who can find the most interesting insect facts.
- Have your students research the difference between moths and butterflies. (Note: most moths spin silk cocoons but the Brahmin moth (owl moth) creates a hard brown chrysalis similar to what butterflies make).
- Buy a caterpillar from your local pet supply shop and raise it as a class pet, watching its process of metamorphosis.
- Have students research their favourite tree or other plant and create a poster, showcasing its leaves, bark, seeds, fruits, and flowers etc.

History/Geography

- Discuss forms of government and social hierarchies. Have your students identify the differences in government, education system, military system, hierarchies and social values between the Bittenklores, Cattenveldts and Drakkonbarqs.
- Discuss the idea of citizenship and what it means for someone to be a "second-class citizen". Who did the Drakkonbarq society value and who did they neglect? You may want to link this to human rights, and flaws in modern societies today.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between the economic systems of the Drakkonbarqs and the Cattenveldts (one being a farming society and the other being a hunting and gathering society). You may choose to connect this to the idea of Indigenous land care practices and Western understanding of land ownership.
- Discuss the concept of military alliances. You may choose to connect this to the students' knowledge about relationships between countries in the real world.
- Investigate different types of maps (political topographical, etc). Have your students map a small area of the playground or a local park and identify items which would serve as major geographical features for tiny people (for example: trees, puddles, grassy patches, bushes, garden beds, etc).

Music/Drama/Dance

- Have your students compose a song or create an interpretive dance representing the moments when Bat watches the dragonfly hatch, catches it, and flies away on it.
- Choose a scene from the book for your students to act out (suggestions: Chapter 23 – Bat argues with Elfrida and Galen at the feast, Chapter 24 – Bat rides Nebula back to the tree and chases Silvana).
- Have your students create atmospheric music and design costumes and dance moves to match the “persona” of each of the three tribes. Suggestions could include: waving coloured scarves and jumping to lively music for the Drakkonbarqs, drumming or using vocal percussion and wearing black and orange for the Bittenklores, moving quietly and rhythmically for the Cattenveldts.

Visual Art

- Have your students take a photo of a natural environment and edit the photo (either digitally or using collage techniques) to create a scene of a Bittenklore, Drakkonbarq or Cattenveldt habitat.
- Have your students draw a life-size picture of Bat (approximately 1.6cm tall) or print out an illustration from the book to the correct scale. Compare it to other objects (plants, insects, etc. to understand a sense of scale
- Choose a moment from the book that doesn't have an illustration, and have your students illustrate it.
- Choose an illustration to analyse as a class, discussing artistic techniques and elements.
- Hold a cover design competition, where students must create an alternative cover design for the book. Encourage them to think creatively about what colours, fonts, images, and blurb their book cover will feature.
- Have your students create a zine using an A4 sheet of paper, and create a mini book focusing on a few scenes from the story (for example Bat's quest to catch a dragonfly).
- Have your students create a simple storyboard of the entire narrative, trying to convey the essence of the story in just 6-10 scenes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in rural NSW in 2001, Sarah Giddy is an emerging author and illustrator of picture books and junior/middle fiction. Obsessed with all things book-related, she has been imagining stories and drawing characters ever since she was a pre-schooler. After moving to Sydney to study Visual Arts and Design, Sarah graduated in 2021 with the Dean's Award for the most outstanding major work—a complete mock-up of an illustrated novel, which has become her debut book, published as *Flight of the Drakkonbarq* (Riveted Press, 2025). Sarah's stories often focus on the beauty of imagination and belonging. She enjoys exploring a range of creative practices, from traditional to digital illustration. In her spare time, she likes lying under trees, roaming through bookstores, splashing in the ocean, and meowing at random cats. She is also a high school art and English teacher.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

Sometime in the spring of 2019, I was outside admiring the way that the afternoon light glows golden through the grass. I started thinking - imagine being small enough to stand underneath that and look up! What would you see? And more importantly, how would you see the world? From these imaginings I formed the idea of the Groundlands and its inhabitants – specifically, Bat Brikson – a boy with never-ending curiosity. As I considered how the people would interact with different species of animals (beetles would be war-horses, ants would be messengers, crickets would be cattle and caterpillars would be pack-horses) one thought kept on coming back to me. *Dragonflies are dragons*.

From there, the race of the Drakkonbarqs emerged, and I knew that Bat would never be content to watch the mysterious dragonfly-riders from afar. He would want to understand them. He would want to be one of them.

I think, looking back now, I've always had a fascination with miniature worlds. There was a lovely tree in the garden where I grew up, with a knothole that resembled a door, and when I was a child I liked imagining that it was a castle. I found lichen and moss fascinating, and when the violets were blooming, I pictured people taking shelter under their leaves. In that I was inspired by the illustrations of Jill Barklem and Cicely Mary Barker. Instead of making mud pies, I made miniature mud towns. I constructed tiny dwellings for imaginary families out of the logs in the wood heap. I also enjoyed planning out fictional cultures and communities, my siblings and I designing numerous countries (complete with flags, maps and histories). So while I never saw myself as a fantasy author, world-building came easily to me. I'd been doing it since I was in preschool.

Ultimately, *Flight of the Drakkonbarq* is about the human search for belonging, and about a child growing up and shifting their view of the world. It's about found friends, compassion, bravery, and what all people have in common. In many ways, it was inspired by my own experiences of growing up. It was also deeply influenced by my younger brother, who was the same age as Bat when I first began to write the novel, and was invaluable as a close adviser when I was first drafting the novel back in 2020-2021.