

The Lamp



Term 2, 2025



Ode To Wall

Bridgette Knight Year 7

So majestic, standing tall,
You sprout from the roots of the floor.
You hold up the canopy of the roof,
The proud shelter, danger proof.
But you are the mighty trunk of the
tree,
The foundation of so much we see.
Without you, there would be no towns,
No cities, no homes, roofs falling
down.
Whatever mother nature throws our
way,
You protect, cover and save the day.
On cold days when we are shaking,
The warmth inside your hug is breath-
taking.
Like a blanket, keeping comfort in,
We are huddled together, deep within.
You come in all shapes and sizes, end-
less variety,
Your magnificent structure has shaped
society,
Without your protection our existence
would fall,
We've come so far in this world, we
owe it all to wall.

Speeches 2025

Ms. Janet Walker

This edition of The Lamp showcases a selection of outstanding speech transcripts from recent Year 9 and 10 English assessment tasks.

In Year 9, students explored a unit titled First Nations Voices, culminating in a four-minute persuasive speech responding to the statement:

‘Storytelling can be a powerful tool for truth-telling, healing, and building bridges between cultures—if we choose to listen.’

To develop their speeches, students engaged in detailed research and drew on at least one of their prescribed texts. These included Ruby Moonlight, a verse novel by Ali Cobby Eckermann; The Final Quarter, a documentary examining the final years of AFL player and Indigenous leader Adam Goodes’ career; as well as a range of supplementary texts, including essays by Stan Grant and The School That Tried to End Racism.

Meanwhile, Year 10 students completed a unit on Representations of Gender, investigating the question:

‘To what extent are we building into AI and other new technologies the gender biases of the past?’

Their assessment task required them to deliver a four-minute discursive speech in response to the statement:

‘Technology can actually tell the wrong stories—if we let it.’

In preparing their speeches, students reflected on ideas and arguments from their prescribed text, Man Made by Tracey Spicer, considering how storytelling, systems, and innovation intersect with social justice and representation.



Keira Anania

Year 9

Close your eyes and all you hear are words, open them and you see the speaker.

Truth is a double-edged sword, one side cuts open the speaker, and the other, the recipient. Views tumble out, suspended in the air between the two parties, lain on the floor for all to see, and the speaker is harmed, sliced open, bleeding raw and bare, while those on the receiving end must face this truth and how it is affecting the speaker.

For hundreds of years, Indigenous Australian peoples have been cut open by their truth of genocide, and displacement, and stolen children, whilst this country's government has painted over the past.

Truth telling can help acknowledge the past, but only if we choose to truly listen can we begin to mend the present and prevent a repeating future.

'The Final Quarter', is a 2019 documentary using only archival media footage about AFL player, Adam Goodes' retirement due to racism and the negative response to him standing up for himself and his culture. The documentary shows how Goodes resiliently faced adversity and defended himself.

Goodes said in a press interview after the event, "Racism has a face last night, and it was a 13-year-old girl. But it's not her fault. She's 13. She's still so innocent, I don't put any blame on her. Unfortunately, it's what she hears, the environment that she's grown-up in."

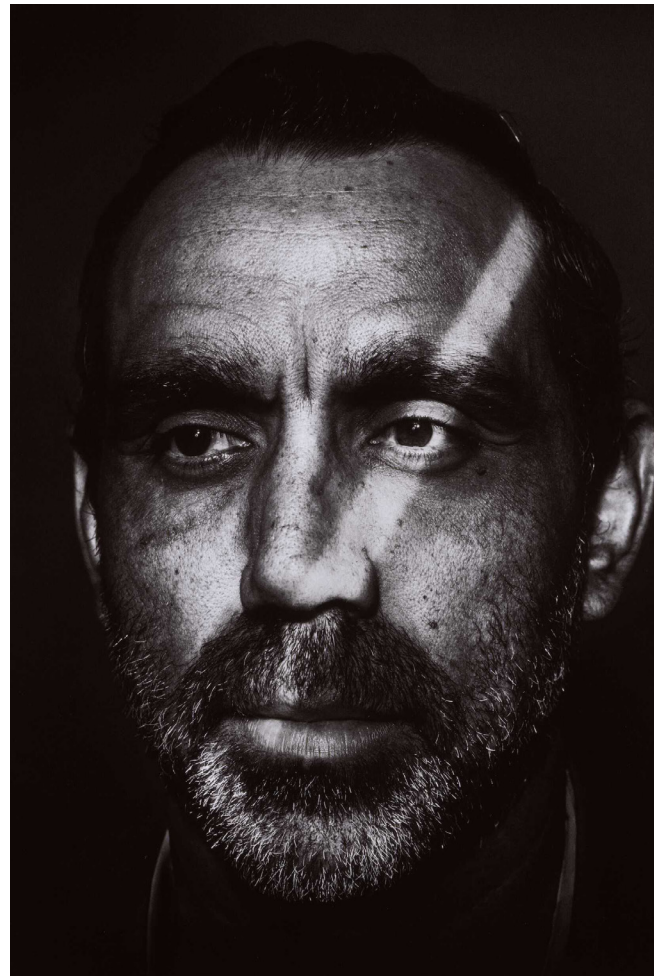
He stood up for the truth. The truth he believed in and that girl's truth. The documentary shows how Goodes was mocked for the pride which held for his heritage, and all he did was hold his flag higher and spread awareness of Indigenous issues and concerns.

In a 2014 Sydney Morning Herald interview, featured in the documentary, Adam Goodes said, "I'm not afraid of confrontation. It doesn't have to be an argument. We all have a voice. And they are all worth listening to."

He has been an instrumental influence in the call for action against casual racism and for the importance of communication, how seeing other's perspectives and opinions can help us to bridge the gaps between people, especially between those who are part of the Indigenous population of Australia and those who aren't.

The means to tell stories and truths are as plentiful as there are stars in the sky, a speech, an artwork, a conversation, an interview.

The Aboriginal peoples used oral storytelling to pass down legends, beliefs and information through generations, and in the status quo, it is used by elders to preserve those traditions and cultures.



Adam Goodes - Photograph: James Brickwood (2019)

Metta Brynildsen

Year 10

They say never judge a book by its cover. But when it comes to Artificial Intelligence, the tears in the pages are showing clearer than ever before. A few days ago, I got my Google Nest to play an ABBA song, and she gladly did as she was told to, replying in a soft-spoken and polite tone, “Okay!” I said thank you. She chirped back, “You’re welcome. Always happy to help.” I thought to myself, wow! She’s much more polite than most people ever I’ve met in my life!

And then it hits me. Why is she always the one doing things for me? Why not him or them? This leads me to the bigger question: why do we gender AI?

Let’s rewind a little. Historically, the world of technology has been credited to men - straight, white, cisgender men in particular. When we examine voice assistants such as Siri, Alexa and Cortana, there’s a trend in which they were all assigned female voices. They answer questions. They take orders. They do it all with a calm and polite tone, no matter what you say to them.

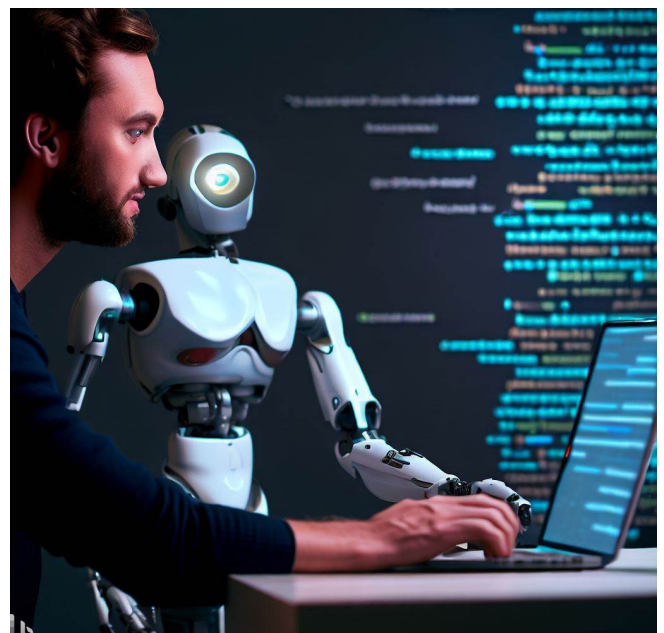
This clearly mirrors broader societal patterns, where women have long been expected to be helpful, agreeable and non-confrontational. It’s not a coincidence, it’s a choice. A choice based on research conducted over and over again that shows people are more likely to feel safer and more comfortable around a female voice. They’re seen as more approachable and trustworthy.

This isn’t just a quirk of modern design. It’s part of a much older story that many of us may not fully appreciate. In her book, *Man-Made*, journalist and author Tracey Spicer explores many longstanding gender biases in AI. Early on, she mentions that “the silencing of women has a rich history.” She uses the examples of Telemachus in Homer’s *Odyssey* who tells his mother to go back to her quarters and tend to the loom, leaving the orders to men. Spicer also references to the use of the scold’s bridle in the Middle Ages for “mouthy women”. So, while AI feels cutting-edge, the assumptions built into it are anything but new.

Now let’s fast forward to the present. We’ve got ChatGPT, Bard and many more “non-gendered” chat bots. Progress, right? Well... kind of. Even when we try to make AI genderless, people are still likely to assign a gender. Why? Because in the same way we write books based off our own lives, humanity has created AI in a way that reflects our biases. And those biases are persistent and sneaky, much like glitter.

So, we’re letting AI tell stories filled with human prejudices. In fact, technology can tell the wrong stories, if we let it, as Spicer warns. But what makes a story right or wrong? It’s a complicated question with a complicated answer. However, one clue may lie in who the story gives voice to and who it silences. A “right” story empowers everyone without bias, while a “wrong” one reinforces the already existing inequalities by pushing certain perspectives into the shadows.

So, yes, AI may be man-made (definitely no pun intended), but it also means humanity is the author. And if the narrative involves giving gender to something that’s technically just a robot, maybe it’s time for a rewrite. After all, books get second editions. So next time you thank your Google Nest, maybe ask yourself this: Are we programming the future, or just writing the past into a bunch of equations?



Mary Formston

Year 10

What comes to mind when I say the word 'story'?

Epic tales of high-fantasy adventure? Historical classics with marble-cut mansions and arranged marriages? A rom-com starring Julia Roberts?

Yeah, sorry to break it to you, but your inner machinations aren't too hard to predict. Stories - fictional tales of escapism and wonder... right? Nope! You're not just predictable, you're wrong. Stories are so much more than that. They're how humanity has conveyed information for eons - how the world works through myths and creation stories, how to act and live through fairy tales and parables. Things like news articles and documentaries are stories in their own right, and even the way we present ourselves to others is us trying to construct a story - of course, these stories are often wrong. Wait, is it bad to call your audience predictable, wrong, and fake in your introduction? No, I'm sure it's fine.

For example, Tracey Spicer's 'Man-Made' is a non-fiction book full of stories - all with the ultimate goal of educating the reader on the risks of AI.

One of these stories is of Tay, an AI bot made by Microsoft designed to post on, and learn from, Twitter. Yuck. It wasn't long before the bot began spouting the site's trademark racist, misogynistic vitriol. Congratulations! It's an incel. Oh, what was that? A Nazi incel! Microsoft snatched it from the internet, posting a hurried 'apology', stating that it didn't "represent who we are or what we stand for". This is a perfect example of an AI bot being tasked with telling a story - and failing due to its polarized dataset. Instead of making the company appear technologically ahead of the curve and engaged with the public, it made it seem like an unprepared, panicked mess - which was the wrong story, at least according to Microsoft.

Just like new parents struggle with stopping their child from calling every pregnant woman 'fat', developers struggle with censoring what comes out of AI's mouth. AI doesn't understand its datasets - it simply analyzes their patterns to create the 'most

likely' response for a given prompt. This means it often 'hallucinates', by stating incorrect information as fact because it seemingly makes sense - like those kids thinking that there was the literal kind of bun in the oven. Another issue is that most AI is trained off of the internet. The internet is full of AI 'slop' - and research shows that when AI is trained on data produced by itself, it begins to degrade until its outputs resemble a fifth-grader's first attempt at surrealist poetry. Pretentious, untalented, 5th-grader; yet another career threatened by AI's very existence.

The companies that make these AI models are aware of these issues, and don't plan on canning the technology any time soon. But what about people who use AI in their daily lives? A tool they've begun to rely on is now faulty, like a particularly cheap shovel falling apart just as you've dug enough of a hole for it to actually count. The amount of people using AI as a major part of their workflow has rapidly increased in the past few years, and so has our knowledge of its downsides. Studies have shown that the majority of the general public want better safeguarding against these glitches in the development of AI. Sure, they could just stop using it if it's crap - but why not fight for it to get better, since they've already integrated it so deeply into their lives?

But is this an example of a sunk cost fallacy? If the way AI works is inherently flawed, with every prompt uploaded online adding to the problem - is it worth it? Stories are how we share information and grow our understanding of the world around us - but AI can actually tell the wrong stories, if we let it.

Is the only way to combat AI's negative impacts to stop using it entirely? Or has our story already reached the point of no return?



Bismun Kaur

Year 9

“The secret magic of this country lay hidden, buried under buildings and blood: but it had never gone away, and it would never disappear. It lay waiting, lost in its own endless dream” author Kate Constable writes. For generations, First Nations people have been passing down stories through songs, yarnning circles and ceremonies and one such story is Ruby Moonlight.

Ali Cobby Eckerman’s verse novel is not only a story, it’s an act of resistance, an act of remembrance and an act of healing. In *Ambush*, Eckerman uses emotive language, and alliteration “hack hack hack hands heads hearts” to convey how Ruby watched her clan be slaughtered. Ruby’s story is of grief, of survival, of moving forward together. To be able to heal between the First nations people, we must start from the beginning, from telling the truth and acknowledging the mistakes we’ve made.

Storytelling aren’t just words. Stories are everywhere, in our eyes, in nature, in the way we talk, in the way we act. And it’s through stories that people’s hearts change. It’s through telling the truth, that wounds begin to close. It’s through sharing and listening that we can walk forward together. For Indigenous people storytelling is healing, it’s their connection to their ancestors, to their land, and to each other. We need to move forward together and the only way we can do this is by listening and truly understanding the depth and meaning behind each story.

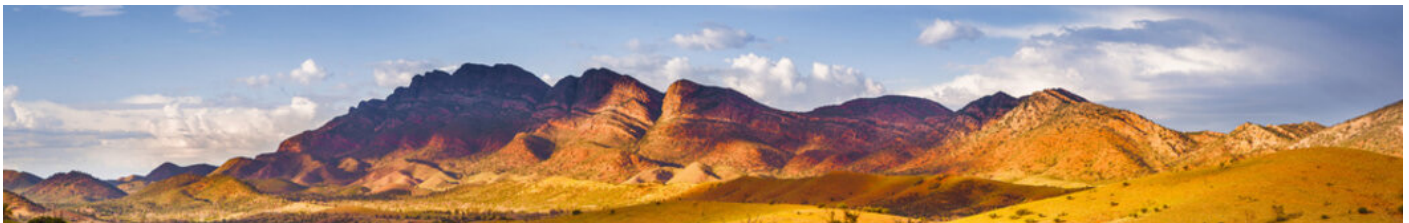
The ABS studies show that 42% of Aboriginal people have been reported with high or very high levels of psychological distress. There is a huge mental strain when people are constantly trying to figure out the truth from the lies, which leads to anxiety and depression. Eckerman shows this in the poem *Dark*: “nightmares from the bed, tossing and turning, untold tales.” William Raspberry, a Pulitzer prize-winning columnist said “So yes... words matter.

They reflect reality, but they have the power to change reality, the power to uplift and to abase” Ruby Moonlight teaches us that if we use our words right, people can heal. The poem *Shy* says, “from the curtain, she emerges, her smile shy in new linen, twirling around before him she giggles with glee.” When Ruby giggles, we see her healing. Ruby didn’t let society’s judgments cloud her thoughts. These judgments, these wrong words are full of misunderstanding and prevent us from connecting with each other. Ruby listened, she accepted, and she healed with Jack.

Throughout *Ruby Moonlight*, Ruby goes from “she slumps in shadowed sorrow” to “Ruby squeals with laughter.” *Ruby Moonlight* tells us we can heal and build bridges only if we accept the truth and listen.

In the poem *Warning*, “Their trust in Tribal ways is absolute.” First nations people are one big family they trust their tribe, their culture because of the stories they share. We know that stories like these are tools for us to heal, tools that break trauma, and connect us with cultures and when it says, “Small trust is growing.” We understand that trust takes time to build, but we need to put our effort into building that trust again. We need to pause, learn, listen and respect.

Eckermann writes, “In this country there is sadness.” Not just in Ruby’s world but in our world too, because society and the people around us don’t listen. *Ruby Moonlight* reminds us to listen, then to ask, to understand and then to change. Because when we listen, we begin to understand and when we understand we begin to change. These are not just stories from the past, but they are the spirit of our land. And to revive this spirit, let’s open our technology, social media posts, YouTube feeds and our hearts to uncover the secret magic of our world by pausing, learning, listening, and respecting.



Sage McConnell

Year 10

Imagine I was 27-year-old woman, just completed six years of study, now working at NASA. I play a major role in the next mission to space, but my name? never mentioned once. Why is that? Could I come to work in my pyjamas, launch the wrong spacecraft and leave work early with no consequences? Because in the public's eye, I don't even work here.

If I were actually that woman? Maybe I would do all those things. It wouldn't matter who I was but just what I contributed.

Would you believe that the world's first computer programmer... was a woman? Ada Lovelace. Ring any bells? Now to give some perspective, while researching her, the first thing that comes up is... her death. Not her achievements or inventions, just the day she died. She was the one who wrote the first algorithm, starting a revolutionary industry. Women like her have just been erased, buried beneath layers of male recognition and sugar-coated history.

This is exactly what Spicer warns us about when she states, "Technology can actually tell the wrong stories if we let it". For me and I'm sure Spicer could agree, is that the problem isn't just who gets left out, it's that technology limits our understanding of who matters.

Tracey Spicer refers to this in her book *Man Made*, as the 'gender data gap'. She highlights how modern technology, AI, phones, media is all designed by men, for men. So, I guess that means, when we ask Siri a question for example, we're not just hearing a monotone voice, we're hearing decades of unconscious bias, coded into our future.

Now, Ada Lovelace wasn't just a one off. The history of technology is essentially one long episode of "Women Did the Work, But Men Took the Credit." Look at the women of NASA in the 1960s. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson. They were pivotal in the numbers that sent men to the moon. Did they get to go? No. no women have ever set foot on the moon, and there are no plans to change that.

In *Man-Made*, Tracey Spicer states that "history has a habit of erasing women," particularly in the fields of science and technology. She makes it obvious that this is not a rare occurrence. To me it's evident that the erasing is still happening, but it's just concealed behind the thin walls of the electronics we use daily. Open your eyes! Women aren't just silenced after they contribute, but their ideas are shut out before they even get the chance.

This isn't ancient history. Take the infamous barbie movie for example. A film created to celebrate women, centred on an iconic female figure, directed by a woman... and who wins the People's Choice Award for Favourite Movie Actor? Ryan Gosling. For playing Ken. Even in a story built for women empowerment, men wrongfully walk away with the trophy. Classic. As Spicer says, "the system's not broken, it was built this way." It's not just science and tech, it's media, algorithms. society. All built on the framework that sidelines women.

This is the same system that shapes what stories our technology tells, who they prioritise and who they ignore

So, back to that 27-year-old woman at NASA. The one who changed everything but whose name no one remembers. The truth is, she exists, not just in the past, but in labs, studios, and headquarters all around the world continuing to do amazing things.

The future of tech shouldn't look like the past, where we let technology tell the wrong stories, because if we continue down that path, women will keep getting left out of the right ones. Otherwise, we'll keep sending rockets to the moon, and still somehow leave half the population behind.



Cordelia Mills

Year 9

10,000 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were killed in over 400 massacres.

1 in 3 Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families.

These are their truths. The truths of an ancient culture that has suffered from prejudice, racism, dispossession, and disassociation, yet has survived. It has survived despite irreclaimable amounts of arts, languages, and connections damaged. It has survived through its stories. Stories so rich in the culture's spirituality and connections, passed down from generation to generation of Indigenous peoples.

The story *Ruby Moonlight*, by Ali Cobby Eckermann, centres on a young Aboriginal woman faced with the massacre of her family. The novel demonstrates that the practice of storytelling is essential to understanding the experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Storytelling allows Aboriginals to share the true essence of their culture from one generation to the next and with other people too. Their practices are unique and spiritual, connecting them to nature and one another. The recurring motif of nature throughout the entirety of *Ruby Moonlight*, "trust nature", highlights the culture's immeasurable knowledge of the land. The truths of their language are also explored with Indigenous words such as "bunyip" embedded throughout the text. Truth-telling is vital to Aboriginal culture, as it allows individuals to share their true experiences, practices, and beliefs, while granting those who listen an understanding of these truths.

In Aboriginal culture, storytelling conveys the truths of their history and suffering as a result of European settlement. In *Ruby Moonlight*, a massacre is depicted, killing everyone in Ruby's tribe except her. The repetition in the phrase, "the clan slaughtered, dying, dying, dead", uses peak tension to demonstrate the brutality committed by the white settlers, destroying the tribe's culture along with their lives. The story told in the novel shares a dark but significant truth of Aboriginal history.

Storytelling can be a powerful tool to heal these traumas. A crucial aspect of this is the practice of 'dadirri', an Indigenous word for inner, deep listening. Stories being listened to in dadirri would assist in healing the past and present trauma of Aboriginals, providing a sense of closure. Ruby was never fully healed from the tragic massacre of her family and tribe, because she had no one to share her story and experiences with. Eckermann said, "this story is true and until it's healed it will keep repeating every generation", just like all Aboriginal traumas that have yet to be healed through storytelling.

Storytelling also builds bridges between cultures. Hatred of other cultures is often driven by fear, a concept explored in *Ruby Moonlight*. There is a strong psychological association between these emotions, as "fear can fuel the hardest hatred". This fear often derives from a lack of familiarity and knowledge, factors which could be reduced via storytelling. The sharing of Aboriginal stories promotes an understanding of the culture and the traumas it has endured, leading to better acceptance and support, and building bridges between Australia's cultures.

Storytelling can have a long-lasting impact on society. Aboriginal truths can be shared to provide others with understanding, traumas can be healed through listening, and bridges can be built between cultures based on a mutual respect and understanding.

In the past, as seen in *Ruby Moonlight*, Aboriginal culture was irreparably damaged by white settlers, and their people have faced discrimination and racism since colonisation. Now, in the present, and for the future, we must eliminate this prejudice by listening. Listen to the stories of Aboriginals.

In the wise words of Ali Cobby Eckermann, "Storytelling is a cultural gift and the essence of [our] identity."



Katherine Raine

Year 9

“Stories create community, enable us to see through the eyes of other people, and open us to the claims of others.” Author and photographer Peter Forbes’ words resonate with me.

Imagine your story being listened to but not heard and acted upon. Your tough experiences being buried into history and forgotten. How would it feel to be advocating for the truth of your story, just to be ignored?

Truth-telling is a way of healing old wounds and grief. Telling true stories builds bridges between cultures.

Ali Cobby Eckermann, an Indigenous Australian and author wrote her verse novel *Ruby Moonlight* to make sense of her pain and struggles as part of the stolen generation. Eckermann said “I think the form of *Ruby Moonlight* is my attempt to show a little about traditional Aboriginal storytelling. I’ve been removed from my family, and it took me a long time to find them.”

Throughout her verse novel, each poem portrays her pain and struggles. “Ambush” describes the brutal massacre of Ruby’s tribe in 1880:

“Hack. hack. hack. hands. heads. hearts. The clan slaughtered. dying. dying. dead.”

The graphic emotive language of “Ambush” doesn’t only powerfully tell the story of how Ruby’s tribe is massacred but also how Eckermann’s Aboriginal Heritage was massacred when she was taken away from her family. We as Australians cannot ignore the truth of Eckermann’s story.

How can it be accepted that Ruby’s tribe was brutally massacred by the white colonists and that Eckermann’s Aboriginal heritage was expected to no longer be part of her?

History was repeated when Eckermann’s son was taken from her at birth and became part of the Stolen Generation. Can you imagine being taken away from your birth mother? Or having your own child taken away from you?

Eckermann quotes “Please know that this story is true and until it’s healed it will keep repeating every generation.”

We will only heal as a connected nation if we hear the Indigenous voice even when uncomfortable and build respectful relationships.

Ruby Moonlight, left alone after the massacre of her tribe, meets white colonist, Jack. She muses “it is tall like emu, its face galah pink.”

Eckermann shows that despite having differences, the two build

a strong connection with each other and fall into a forbidden love story. Eckermann quoted “Ruby probably had the skills to murder Jack, but she comes from a completely heart place- she’s curious, she found some joy in difference, in others”

How do we become like *Ruby Moonlight* and learn to appreciate the differences we have?

Storytelling is not only important to build a sense of connection with others, but it’s important as it is how humans communicate and heal. Through Eckermann’s telling of Ruby’s story every ink mark brings healing and connection back to her own Aboriginal Heritage.

Ruby’s healing is finding her way back to culture as her new tribe shows her that she needs to distance herself from Jack’s culture and return to her own.

Healing doesn’t come from the head; it comes from putting your heart in other’s experiences and empathising with them. Stories like Eckermann’s are a path to the heart.

Ruby Moonlight needs to be listened to, to be acknowledged so that we can understand the meaning of healing and moving into the future with stronger relationships.

Our generation **MUST** enable the healing.

We can do that by insisting that more government funding becomes available to Indigenous Australians so that confronting stories like “*Ruby Moonlight*” can be told to a wider audience in the fields of Art and Education.

This is the way we can acknowledge and act on the story of “*Ruby Moonlight*.”



Inez Taylor

Year 10

When I asked Alexa a question of what it meant to be a leader, I was given examples of male CEOs. I tried again, asking about women and it paused, as if it needed extra time to think. It was subtle, but it felt like Alexa was just repeating the stories she'd been taught - stories that often-centre men.

It made me wonder - who decides what we see, and what we don't? The stories I see when I open my phone are generated by AI's algorithms to match my needs and interests. The more I interact with certain posts - liking reels or commenting on TikTok's - the more the algorithm feeds me similar content - just like everyone else. I once liked one video about how to fold a fitted sheet and now I'm apparently training to be a full-time housewife from 1954.

Tracy Spicer suggests that if we're not careful, technology has the potential to shape stories in ways that may not reflect the full truth. I don't think the issue lies entirely with the machines themselves. It's more likely the people behind them. As she says, "Technology doesn't erase bias - it amplifies it... it's a reflection of who gets to write the code and who gets left behind."

Spicer describes the creators of AI as 'The Founding Fathers' - an allusion to the group of men who set down the American Constitution - a document which lays out the values and rules of contemporary American society. Like a constitution, AI can carry values from the past - sometimes without questioning whether they still fit the present.

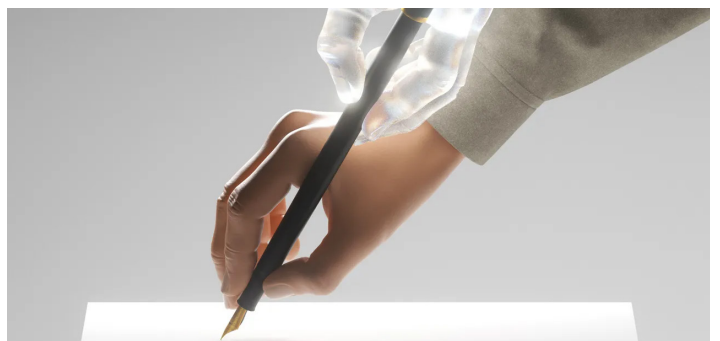
I remember a time when I was much younger, consider me a bit wide-eyed and clueless about the world, when members of my family told me to 'act like a lady'. At first, I didn't get it, but as I grew older it unravelled in front of me. I realised that it was the expectation that I should be polite, reserved and never step out of the line of what 'society' deemed appropriate. I had been 'coded' to act in a certain way. The same programming is mirrored in the development in AI, which then feeds back to us these same expectations and biases. It's a self-perpetuating cycle where old biases continue to shape new systems.

Spicer raises a question each and every one of us should be asking, Why are so many virtual assistants female - and why do they always sound so polite and agreeable? AI Siri and Alexa don't just answer your questions, they do it with a sweet tone. Their voices aren't random - they reflect how it is designed and programmed to serve and sound like women, similar to how a woman is meant to agree to what her husband says inside the home. We might ask ourselves whether a male-voiced assistant using the same overly accommodating tone would be taken seriously. If not, that could reflect the powerful, often invisible influence of gender norms.

The gender bias that we see today isn't something that appeared overnight - it reflects a long history where men's voices were prioritized over women. Back in the 1850's when a computer programming pioneer Ada Lovelace had her credit erased from history. It reminds us that gender bias in AI didn't start with machines like Alexa - it started long ago, when women like Ada were left out of the story.

Where are we left now? Is gender bias something we just accept, or is it something we should change? The answer lies somewhat neutral. At first, I was annoyed that Alexa didn't answer me, but later I realised - there was something else going on. A kind of gender bias I hadn't even noticed. As Spicer says, "Technology doesn't erase bias - it amplifies it."

Maybe the challenge for all of us isn't to fear AI, but how we interact with it. Do we accept its flaws, push for change or remain curious about the bias behind the code. It's not clear where the responsibility lies, but it doesn't hurt to ask questions. Because in the end, technology doesn't get to choose what stories matter. We do.



Chloe Thomas

Year 10

Tracy Spicers 'Man Made' quotes, "Technology can actually tell the wrong stories, if we let it." I used to think of technology as something cool, something shiny and useful, something that made life easier. But when I think about that quote now, it hits a lot deeper. Because the stories technology tells aren't just written in code, they're written by people. And sometimes, those people have no idea what it means to live in fear. Or worse, they don't care.

The light switch is never neutral.

It's wired into the architecture, who gets seen, who gets heard, who gets left in the dark. In boardrooms, in classrooms, in studios and stages, it's rarely women who control the switch. They walk into lit rooms already designed to spotlight someone else. They speak, and the light hums but doesn't shift. Their ideas flicker in and out, noticed only when repeated in a deeper voice.

Try to touch the switch, and you're told you're too ambitious. Too loud. Too emotional. Not the right kind of light.

And yet the system is full of frayed wires, bright with the unseen labour of women holding the structure together. They rewire broken circuits. They restore the power after the storm. But they're rarely handed the blueprint.

Inequality isn't just about who's in the room, it's about who gets to decide when the lights come on, and who's kept waiting in the dark.

See, for me, the idea of power, who has it and who doesn't, isn't just some abstract thing we talk about in class. It's something I've grown up understanding in a very real way.

My mum is a second dan in Hapkido martial arts. She's strong, she's fierce, and she's the founder and CEO of the KYUP! Project, an organisation she created to empower girls and women through self-worth and self-defence. But before all of that, she was a girl who grew up in a home where she was abused by her father. She's told me stories I'll never forget. because of her, I've known about domestic violence from a really young age, not in a scary way but in a real way. She taught me and my little sister, Emi, how to stand up for ourselves, how to protect each other and how to recognise control when it's disguised as love.

So, when I hear about technology, like smart home devices or AI being used to help people in abusive situations, I'm hopeful, but also skeptical. Because I know that unless those systems are designed by people who understand the complexity of domestic violence, they'll miss the point. Worse, they might be used to cause more harm.

Tracy Spicer writes, "Law enforcement agencies and domestic violence advocates say virtual assistants are increasingly being used by people to monitor, harass or control their partners." AI

systems meant to detect abuse often don't understand subtle patterns. They miss emotional abuse. They don't see fear unless it leaves bruises. And I have to wonder, who designed those systems? Did they ever listen to someone like my mum?

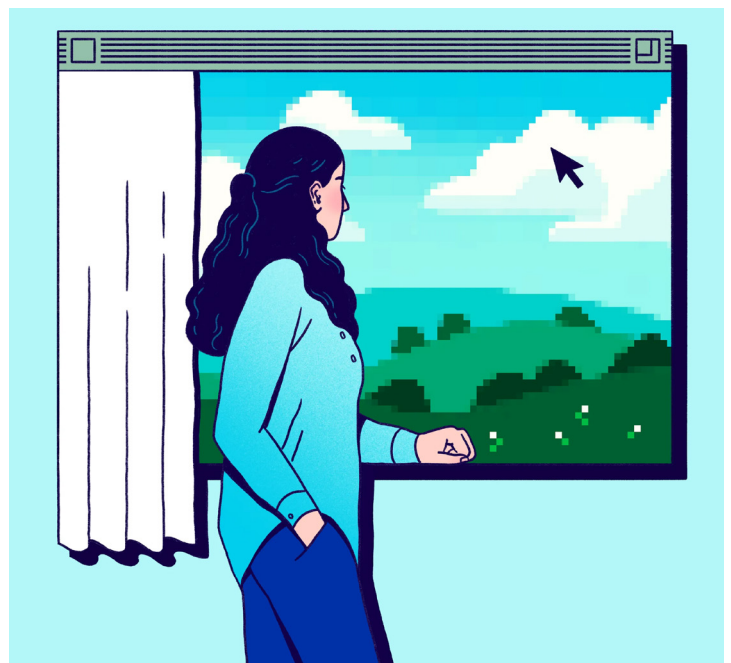
In the words of Tracy Spicer, "As the crime becomes endemic, the United Nations is redoubling its efforts to combat cyber violence against women. You could say it's a shadow pandemic. And it's already affecting the next generation." Tracy Spicer's warning is so important: if we don't take control of how technology is shaped, it will keep telling the wrong stories. It will keep centering power, instead of protection. Control, instead of care.

But I've also seen what happens when survivors do take the mic. When people like my mum step up and rewrite the narrative, not just for themselves, but for generations of girls, like Emi and me. That's what gives me hope.

We need more of that in tech. We need diverse voices in coding rooms. We need AI that's trained on data that doesn't erase women's pain. We need systems that recognise subtle warning signs, not just screaming emergencies. And most of all, we need to make sure the stories technology tells are ones that uplift and protect, not ones that silence or distort.

Until the wiring changes, the room will keep glowing for the same few faces, while others work by the dim light of their own making, unseen but essential.

So yes, technology can tell the wrong stories. But if we learn from those who've lived through the worst, and if we make space for them at the table, then maybe, just maybe, we can start telling the right ones.



Natalie Vanza

Year 9

Stop. Listen. Imagine. Let us acknowledge the Gari-gal land on which we gather, its people past, present, and emerging. Not just, as a token gesture, but for us to picture how it would have been like for them when the First Europeans stepped on this nation. Their voices have perhaps been muted for far too long. As a descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors, I am aware of how denial cause pain and erodes language, culture, traditions, and identity, not just loss of land.

According to the Cambridge dictionary, storytelling is defined as the activity of writing, telling, or reading stories. However, to me this implies an element of creativity and exaggeration to gain the attention of the listeners. So, is this really storytelling? Ali Eckerman provides a definition that is far more impactful. She states that storytelling is a form of resistance. That is to preserve and ensure the continuation of the First Nations People. We all have an obligation, whether we are the listener or speaker to take part and discover more together. This provides an opportunity for personal experiences to be heard and evoke human emotions in the hope that change will follow.

Truth telling, allows us to learn about the impact of the Europeans arrival. "The stench of death fills the air. Love will exist here no more." says Eckerman. "Arid eyes slit with sand. Tears will no longer flow." Imagine. The pain to even put these thoughts into words, so that we can hear and feel it. The experience of Stan Grants mother on the day the Queen was visiting, and the hardship and discrimination faced, over a pair of socks. Stop. Listen. Imagine. His mother's trauma, and loss of self worth. Truth telling provides a voice for the First Nations People for us to hear and put ourselves in their shoes to gain a deeper understanding, of their emotional pain, and horrific experiences.

Healing can only start through storytelling. The greater the platform for the Indigenous People to tell their truths, will help us to view their journey from their perspective. Stan Grant speaks of "History written by the victors and often written in blood. It is fashioned as a tale of progress, as a civilising mis-

sion." The hurt is so evident in this statement. Stop. Listen. Imagine. The frustration and pain of your history not being recorded. How would you feel? We can gain a greater understanding by hearing about Indigenous journeys, and accepting their experiences, this will allow us all to heal.

It has been said that when racism is properly understood it is easier to overcome. So, I ask, are we really ready to build bridges? Are we really ready to listen to the truth telling and allow healing? "Fear can fuel the hardest hatred", as stated in Ruby Moonlight. To build bridges, there must be willingness to be vulnerable and have open and difficult conversations. In order to build those bridges, First Nations voices must be encouraged. And they must be heard and acted upon. Stop. Listen. Imagine. Adam Goodes says of his experience, "I don't blame the girl herself, it's what she hears, in the environment she's grown up in, that has made her think that it is ok." Goodes understands, without blame, and with education through storytelling, bridges can be built. These bridges can acknowledge the pain and loss, in hope to preserve culture and reclaim identity for First Nations People.

Now is the time to stop, listen, and imagine. Only in the past few decades of our new nation's history, a voice for the Indigenous People is slowly filling our ears. With my own Armenian heritage, I empathise and understand how denial compounds trauma, silence hides truth, and looking away abandons hope. Without open hearts, Australia cannot truly become a nation "One and Free". Therefore, it is for this reason, "Storytelling can be a powerful tool for truth-telling, healing, and building bridges between cultures - if we choose to listen". Will you listen?



The Lamp, Term 2, 2025

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STORIES
HEALING
FUTURE
RESPECT
ADAM GOODES
PRESENT
DREAMING
TECHNOLOGY
BIAS
RIGHT
LISTEN
HISTORY
EQUALITY
HEART
GENDER
WALL
WRONG

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/8530596/>

(NEW for 2025) THE LAMP WORDLE: <https://mywordle.strivemath.com/?word=ohfuj>

Thank you so much for reading this term's edition of The Lamp.

Also a huge thank you to everyone who submits their work, the entries are all brilliant. The Lamp could not exist without the contributions of our writers and illustrators, so we are very grateful for your hard work and creativity. We are keen to continue publishing, so please keep sending in your work - artworks, writing, whatever floats your boat!

Special thanks to Mary Formston, Year 10, her beautiful artwork features on our cover.

This edition of The Lamp was edited by Veronica Scully.

Thanks to Ms Walker and the English Department for their ongoing support.