

# The Prime Minister Problem by Brenton Cullen

## TEACHERS' RESOURCES



### RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper Primary

### GENRE

Contemporary realistic fiction

### RECOMMENDED AGE

8–11 years  
(Upper Primary / Years 3–6)

### READING LEVEL NOTE

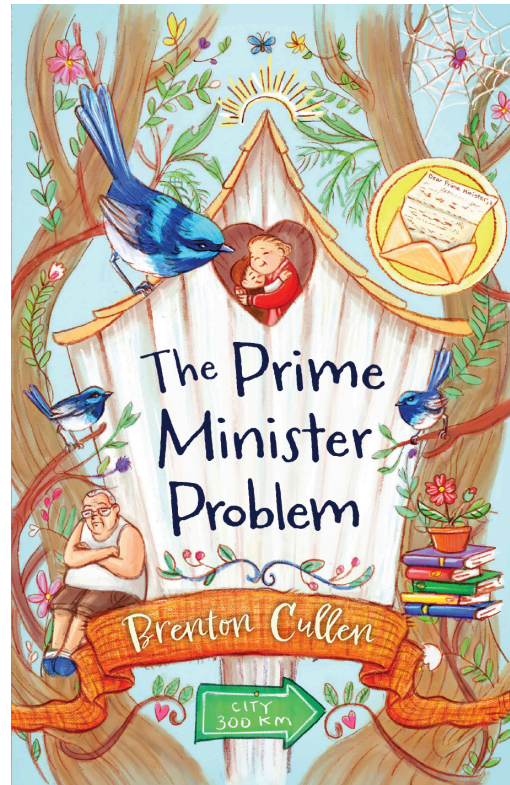
While the protagonist is 10 years old, the novel engages with more mature emotional themes. It is suitable for confident younger readers (around 8 years) as well as older readers (up to 11 years), making it ideal for mixed-ability classrooms.

### SETTING

A rural Queensland town; school and classroom environments

### KEY THEMES

- Loneliness and belonging
- Community connection in regional Australia
- Intergenerational friendships and relationships with grandparents
- The power of one quiet voice
- Shyness and confidence-building in children
- Positive teacher–student relationships
- Civic awareness and introduction to Australian civics and government
- School as a micro-community



In his rural Queensland town, quiet, anxious ten-year-old Wren feels invisible. His mum is stretched thin working two jobs, and at school Wren keeps to himself, spending lunchtimes reading alone. The one place he feels truly seen is with his grandma, sharing everyday moments like helping her deliver Meals on Wheels, birdwatching, gardening, and swapping books.

When Grandma has a stroke and may be forced to move to a nursing home three hours away, Wren's world begins to unravel. While learning about Australian government and civics at school, Wren writes to the Prime Minister, believing it is her job to look after everyone. When no reply comes and Grandma's situation worsens, Wren realises he must act.

With the support of a new classmate and his community, Wren begins a campaign to tackle loneliness and keep older residents connected to their town of Fairley. He ends up spearheading an Adopt a Grandparent program at his school to great success.

Along the way, he discovers friendship, confidence, and the power of one quiet voice to create meaningful change.

# CURRICULUM LINKS

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM – ENGLISH

**Reading and Viewing** - Analysing characters, settings and themes in a contemporary novel - Identifying how authors represent emotions such as loneliness and belonging - Exploring how setting influences story and character.

**Writing** - Creating imaginative and reflective texts inspired by the novel - Writing from different perspectives - Using descriptive language to convey mood and character

**Speaking and Listening** - Participating in group discussions and literature circles - Expressing opinions and responding to others respectfully - Developing confidence in oral expression

### CODES FOR YEAR 3:

AC9E3LE01 (Literature and Contexts)  
AC9E3LA01 (Language for Interacting with Others)  
AC9E3LE02 (Engaging and Responding to Literature)  
AC9E3LY02 (Interacting with Others)  
AC9E3LE03 (Examining Literature)  
AC9E3LE05 (Creating Literature)  
AC9E3LE04 (Discuss Effects of Literary Devices)

### CODES FOR YEAR 5:

AC9E5LA03 (Text Structure)  
AC9E5LA08 (Language for Expressing Ideas)  
AC9E5LE01 (Literature and Context)  
AC9E5LE02 (Engaging and Responding)  
AC9E5LE03 (Examining Literature)  
AC9E5LE05 (Creating Literature)  
AC9E5LY03 (Analysing, Interpreting, Evaluation Text)

### CODES FOR YEAR 4:

AC9E4LA09 (Understanding Present Tense)  
AC9E4LE01 (Literature and Contexts)  
AC9E4LE02 (Engaging and Responding)  
AC9E4LE03 (Examining Literature)  
AC9E4LE05 (Creating Literature)

### CODES FOR YEAR 6:

AC9E6LY06 / AC9E6LY07 (Creating Texts)  
AC9E6LY02 (Interacting with Others)  
AC9E6LE05 (Creating Literature)  
AC9E6LE03 (Examining Literature)  
AC9E6LE02 (Engaging and Responding to Literature)  
AC9E6LE01 (Literature and Contexts)

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM – CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| AC9HS3K07 (Year 3) | • Understanding how communities function                                     |
| AC9HS4K08 (Year 4) | • Exploring roles of individuals within communities                          |
| AC9HS5K06 (Year 5) | • Developing awareness of local government and civic participation           |
| AC9HS5K07 (Year 5) | • Recognising how voices, quiet or loud, can create change                   |
|                    | • Working as a group within a community of citizens with a common goal       |
|                    | • Early introduction to the key values and features of Australia's democracy |

# FOR TEACHERS

- Encourages reflection on how teachers notice and support quieter students
- Highlights the impact of small, consistent acts of care in classrooms
- Supports discussions about empathy and professional boundaries
- Can be used in staff reading groups or wellbeing-focused professional conversations

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## ABOUT THE STORY

1. Why do you think Wren feels invisible at the beginning of the book?
2. How does Grandma make Wren feel safe and understood?
3. What changes for Wren after Grandma becomes unwell?
4. Why do you think Wren decides to write to the Prime Minister?
5. How does the community of Fairley change throughout the story?

## CHARACTERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

6. How do the adults in Wren's life support him in different ways?
7. Why is the Adopt a Grandparent program important to Wren?
8. How does Wren's friendship with his adopted grandparent help both of them?
9. What role do teachers and classmates play in helping the program succeed?

## THEMES AND IDEAS

10. What does the book teach us about loneliness?
11. What does "community" mean in this story?
12. Why are quiet voices sometimes overlooked?
13. How does Wren show courage, even when he feels scared?
14. Why do you think Wren's idea gains attention beyond Fairley?

## THINKING DEEPER

15. Do you think change always has to come from people in charge? Why or why not?
16. How can kids help make their school or town a kinder place?

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## CHARACTER DIARY

Students write a diary entry from the perspective of Wren before and after the Adopt a Grandparent program begins, showing how his feelings change.

## COMMUNITY MAP

Create a visual map of the classroom or school community, identifying how different people help one another feel included.

## QUIET VOICES, BIG IMPACT

Students write a short piece or draw a picture about a time when a small or quiet action made a difference.

## CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP ACTIVITIES

- Identify ways students can have a voice in their community
- Role-play a simple classroom meeting or vote
- Explore the idea of fairness and responsibility

Students identify an issue in their community that concerns them (either individually or collectively as a class), and complete one or more of the following:

- Write a letter to the Prime Minister and/or their local Member of Parliament
- Create a poster explaining the issue
- Identify organisations/individuals who are working on the issue
- Identify one small step the student could take towards improving the situation/resolving the issue

## ADOPT A GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

As a class, discuss how an Adopt a Grandparent program could work in your school or local community.

Students can:

- Brainstorm safe and appropriate ways to connect with older people
- Create posters or letters explaining the idea
- Write a simple plan outlining how the program could reduce loneliness

## CREATIVE RESPONSES

- Write an alternative ending focusing on another character
- Draw a picture depicting a scene from the novel
- Design a poster encouraging kindness and inclusion at school

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Compare this novel with another contemporary Australian children's text
- Interview a grandparent or older community member and write a short reflection
- Explore how real-life teachers help students feel safe and supported
- Write a new final chapter to the book. How do you think it would end if Wren did not get to meet the Prime Minister?
- Explore how the experience of loneliness is depicted in the story through Wren and/or other characters. Respond to the following questions (referring to specific moments in the text):
  - When in the story does Wren (or another character) seem lonely? Describe what is happening at that point.
  - What clues in the story show that the character might be feeling lonely? (Think about their thoughts, actions, or what they say.)
  - Why might the character feel lonely in this situation? What events or circumstances might have led to this feeling?
  - How do you think the character feels at this moment? What might they be thinking?
  - What helps (or could help) this character feel less lonely?
  - What could another character do to help them feel more included?

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wrote *The Prime Minister Problem* because I was once a very quiet kid myself. I loved books, spent lots of time thinking, and didn't always know how to speak up. Writing stories became my way of making sense of the world.

The first idea for this book was very different. At first, I thought it might be a funny story about a boy who wanted to become the Prime Minister. But as I started writing, the story changed. It became more serious, more emotional, and more true to real life. I realised the book wasn't really about the Prime Minister at all — it was about caring for people, speaking up when something feels unfair, and how small voices can still make a big difference.

I wanted to write a story that shows how communities can look after one another, especially older people, and how kids don't have to be loud or popular to make change. Sometimes simply noticing a problem, and caring enough to act, is powerful.

I hope this book helps students think about their own communities, the people around them, and the ways they can help others, even in quiet ways.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brenton Cullen is a Queensland writer who loves books and stories for kids. He grew up loving reading and wrote his very first book when he was six years old, using leaves, bark, and wool to make the collaged pictures.

As a child, Brenton was shy and spent a lot of time in libraries and bookshops. Writing became his way of sharing ideas and feelings. Today, he writes stories from the heart about kindness, community, and everyday bravery, especially for children who might feel overlooked.

Brenton lives between the bush and the beach. When he isn't writing, he enjoys walking, watching movies, visiting bookshops, and reading picture books.

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