

**TEACHER'S NOTES FOR *ALI THE BOLD HEART*.**  
**Published by Limelight Press, 2006.**

**JANE JOLLY** has been a primary school teacher for twenty-five years. She has always taught in country schools. Presently she lives and works about an hour away from Adelaide. She loves organic farming and spending time with her family.

Jane loves picture books and is drawn to the picture book section in bookshops. Inspiration for her stories often comes from real life. The inspiration for *Ali the Bold Heart* came from the story of a refugee she heard from a lawyer who works with refugees in detention centres in Australia.

**ELISE HURST** is a painter who has illustrated 40 educational books and picture books, including her own. She started her career working on greeting cards and calendars and any other work she could get, while continuing to develop her painting skills. She lives in Melbourne and loves to travel.

**SYNOPSIS**

Ali is a magician who flees from his homeland because life has become dangerous there. After a long, difficult journey to a new land, Ali is locked up. Although he is downhearted, Ali performs his magic for the children and the adults he is locked up with and he never gives up asking for his freedom. One night there is a sandstorm, the gate clangs, and in the morning Ali is gone.

**WRITING *ALI THE BOLD HEART***

Jane Jolly based her story a true story about an Iranian refugee who was locked up in the Woomera Detention Centre. After trying for five years to get a visa to allow him to stay in Australia, he was deported, never to be heard of again. When she heard of how he never gave up she was inspired to write a story about him.

When Jane heard that the man from Iran was a magician, it sparked her imagination, setting her wondering what he might have brought with him in that one bag – what might a magician consider his personal treasures to be? She also wondered what it might feel like to be so afraid that you leave your homeland, and what it might be like to be locked up for years behind barbed wire with nothing to do, hoping and waiting.

With subtle, gentle, straightforward language Jayne wanted to show Ali's emotions and what he and the other inmates are going through. Surrounded by 'wire as sharp as tiger's teeth' he sits gazing at the 'barren world' beyond the fence. Yet even though Ali is despondent, he still has magic in his bag that he shares with the other people he is locked up with. The magic reminds the other adults who 'hadn't smiled or laughed in a very long time' of their homes and happier times. His despondency also does not stopping him from quietly asking 'someone in charge' each day about his freedom. But Ali's despair grows until it bursts out of him when the hot wind blows.

Jane included children and other adults in the story to show their lives and feelings as well as Ali's. The children's urge to play and laugh, despite their circumstances, is a powerful contrast to the adults' feelings.

The ending of *Ali the Bold Heart* is deliberately left open and unresolved. Jane wanted her readers to think about what might have happened to Ali – did he finally get his visa, did he escape or was he sent home?

### **ILLUSTRATING ALI THE BOLD HEART**

Elise Hurst felt inspired to illustrate *Ali the Bold Heart* not only because of the issues in the story, but because she felt Jayne's story had a timeless quality, rather like an epic about a magician's journey to a distant land. She also loved the fact that the language was sparse and not over-written, and that the ending was open because for her the story was about Ali's hope.

Before she began to illustrate the story, Elise had to undertake a lot of visual research about Iran, the Woomera area, and the kinds of people who have been kept in detention centres. She had to know details such as architecture of the two places, colours in the landscapes, the clothes that people wear and what form the threats in Ali's homeland would actually look like.

Elise showed the emotions of the people at the detention centre that Jayne wrote about – their despair and sadness – a through their poses and faces. However, she also wished to show that children are still children, that they still play and smile and kick soccer balls. Even adults can be cheered up by magic tricks. She also made the landscape of the detention centre monotonous to show us how the people locked up might feel about it. The landscape becomes turbulent and strong in colour when Ali wails into the storm.

The style of the watercolour painting is realistic because Elise wanted to make it clear that these were real people in the detention centre and she wanted the emotions on their faces to be readable and real. To help her keep this reality, she had a model for Ali and he acted out various parts of the story while she took photographs for reference. She based the other characters in the illustrations on photos she collected from various sources.

Throughout the story used stars as a symbol of hope. Early in the book when Ali walks towards the boat, the stars are in the distance and represent the hope he is travelling towards. When he swirls his blue scarf as he performs his magic, stars are released, and after he is gone, they shine brightly in the sky over the camp.

### **CLASS DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES**

1. What do students think is happening on the first two pages? Why might Ali want to leave his country?
2. What does it make students think of when they hear the wire described as 'tiger's teeth'? And when Ali 'paced backwards and forwards'?
3. Look at the stars in the book. Where are they and what might they stand for? What do the stars show us that Ali carries in his bag along with the things he performs his magic with? Does the illustrator use stars in a way that is similar to the way that the author uses the words 'tiger's teeth'?

4. Ali takes his bag of magic with him when he leaves his home. Pretend you have to leave your home for good and can only take one bag with you. What would you take? Would you take practical things, or some personal treasures, or a mixture of both? Students could draw the outline of a bag and draw the things they would take inside it.
5. What do students imagine might have happened to Ali? They could write a short story about where he went and what he did. Perhaps they could write a letter from him back to the people still in the detention camp. Have students think carefully about what images they might use to show us how Ali feels.
6. How do we know how the people in the detention centre feel? What do the pictures show us? And the words of the story tell us?
7. Have students look at the cover of *Ali the Bold Heart* after it has been read to them. What do they think Ali is thinking about and how he feels? Why do they think the author calls Ali 'the Bold Heart'?
8. Divide the students into groups of four to six, and allocate part of the story to each of them to act out. They can work out what they are going to do and say, and what props they will need. After having some time to rehearse, they can perform their scenes in order in front of the rest of the class.
9. Students could paint a large wash painting of the sky and the sand, in colours similar to the ones Elise Hurst uses. The wide expanse will give a sense of freedom. They can then talk about how they would make their painting feel less free and show a feeling of being trapped, then paint those elements in. This could either be a group or an individual painting activity.
10. June 20 is the United Nations World Refugee Day. Students might like to find out more about refugees by going to the UN website [www.un.org/depts/dhl/refugee/index.html](http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/refugee/index.html) and about children in detention at <http://www.chilout.org/>
11. Australians come from all over the world. At many different times people have come to Australia to escape from some trouble in their homelands. Students could ask their parents where the first people in their families came from, and think about why they might have come. What hardships might they have faced when they arrived? Do refugees face similar hardships today?