

Speech given by Judy Day,

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**On 9th November 2003 at the Psychology and Families exhibition which
launched Psychology Week for 2003.**

CHILDREN'S PEACE LITERATURE AWARD 2003

As I began to prepare this speech I asked myself the question: why have the Psychologists for the Promotion of World Peace chosen to make this award to a literary work?

The answer was provided by the 1991 award winner, Libby Gleeson. She was, I believe, absolutely right when she said:

'...the majority of conflicts in the cartoon world are resolved by quick fix violent means. Literature can be different.'

The difference is:

- A book is a shared experience, especially shared between parents and their reading children and between teachers and their students in the classroom
- Literature challenges and stimulates the thinker, the creative mind and the imaginative child.
- Literature provokes discussion about values, about beliefs where the other media generate memory recall, envy or cynicism

- Literature shapes the future, other media fill in twenty minute gaps and are forgotten

So literature is different. It stimulates, challenges and provokes the intellect. The awakening world view of the child on the edge of adolescence.

The pleasure of a book is a shared pleasure in the world of the school. Our teachers stimulate discussion, provoke curiosity and challenge bias. Books are powerful tools in this process. A quick look at quality children's literature here in South Australia will confirm the power of literature to stimulate and guide young people. Ask any 30 year old who Mr Perceval is/was. They'll remember then Colin Thiele, a school teacher, was writing about – conflicts being solved by the efforts of young people half a century ago.

A jump forward to Phillip Gwynne's 'Deadly Unna?' set on Yorke Peninsula, head on into thoughtless racism, 'coward/hero' stereotyping and the power of young people to settle differences without playing power games. Gwynne won this award in 1999 and his book is a part of mainstream school studies right now.

Then back to another powerful shaper of young people's thinking, 'Space Demons'. Any South Australian reading Gillian Rubinstein's savage deconstruction of the impact of computer games on young, impressionable children will identify locations easily, link with the characters and share the mood

swings of her novel. It won this award in 1987. It, too is core reading in many of this state's schools.

In promoting peace, in promoting the power of students to create a peaceful world, the book binds many lives together. The writer with a vision to share and stimulate, the librarian to coach and coax. The teacher to lead children into a new world, parents to share the wonder. And our children, the nations future, challenged to think, daring to imagine, taking control of their lives and believing that peace is both possible and desirable.

My colleagues in our schools tell me about the power of the text, a power which has never been swamped by what Marshall McLuhan accurately saw as 'the cold media'. Teachers see, every day, students hooked on reading, anxious to test the ideas they themselves derive by intellect, engaging with the 'hot medium' of literature.

One of the central pleasures of being a school teacher is just there, watching a young mind coming to life, stimulated by what is said, what is read. That's why a Literary Award makes so much sense to me.

I'd like to acknowledge the founders and sponsors of this literary award, the Psychologists for the Promotion of World Peace and to thank them for encouraging the concept of peace in this way. This Interest Group has, in my opinion, chosen exactly the right process as it focuses on young people. You have chosen to appeal to the imagination and moral strength of the future and I

congratulate your organisation for its wisdom. Current curricula across Australia are considering the inclusion of psychology studies and this engagement with the universe of the mind can, I believe, only enrich our community.

In promoting the cause of peace, your Association produces a positive response from every teacher and, through today's award, this response will find a voice in classrooms and homes across Australia.

It is my privilege, and my very real pleasure therefore to announce the winner of the Literary Award for 2003.

The winning author is Irimi Savvides, for her book Sky Legs. Congratulations.

Unfortunately the winning author cannot be present to receive her prize in person today. However she has faxed us her comments on hearing of this win, and I ask Liz Alpers, the South Australian coordinator of the sponsoring organization Psychologists for the Promotion of World Peace, to tell us a bit more about the book which has won the 2003 Children's Peace Literature Award and to read the author's comments to us. It is particularly appropriate for us to hear about the contributions of Psychologists to society, at a time when Psychology is about to be introduced as a Year 12 subject in some schools next year.