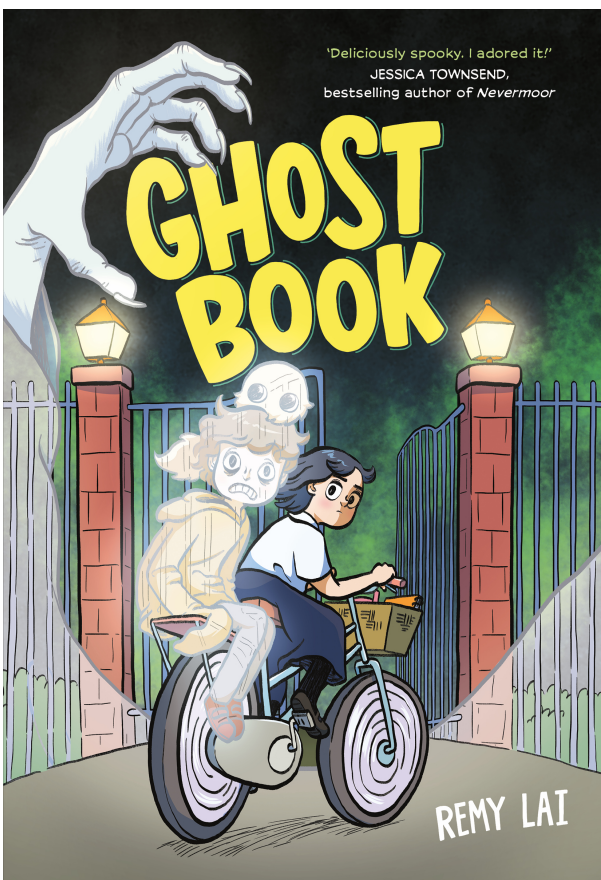


# ***Ghost Book***

By Remy Lai



A thrilling contemporary fantasy graphic novel about a girl who befriends a boy ghost stuck between the worlds of the living and the dead, from the bestselling creator of *Pawcasso*. 'I adored it!' Jessica Townsend, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Nevermoor*.

## **RECOMMENDED FOR**

8 – 12 (Upper Primary and Lower Secondary)

## **THEMES**

Belonging, community, friendship, mystery, ghosts, grief, adventure

## **ISBN (AUS)**

9781761065477

## SYNOPSIS

July Chen sees ghosts. But her dad insists ghosts *aren't* real. So she pretends they don't exist. Which is incredibly difficult now as it's Hungry Ghost month, when the Gates of the Underworld open and dangerous ghosts run amok in the living world. When July saves a boy ghost from being devoured by a Hungry Ghost, he becomes her first ever friend. Except William is *not* a ghost. He's a wandering soul wavering between life and death. As the new friends embark on an adventure to return William to his body, they unearth a ghastly truth – for William to live, July must die.

Inspired by Chinese mythology, this resoundingly hopeful tale about friendship, sacrifice and the unseen world of ghosts is a dazzling heir to beloved Studio Ghibli classics.



## AUTHOR MOTIVATION

'The initial idea came to me years ago when the two main characters popped into my head. Don't ask me how, but I knew then that the girl could see ghosts, and that the boy would sacrifice his life for her. I tried fitting them into many stories, but nothing fit until I figured out that Hungry Ghosts are involved.'

'Without giving away anything, the ending in earlier drafts was bittersweet, but also a lot more tragic. My editor felt that I was being too cruel to my young readers. I wanted to make readers cry (I love reading and writing books that make me laugh and cry!), so my editor and I went back and forth a lot on this. Eventually I found an ending that is the perfect one for this story.'

Remy Lai

## IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Pre-reading class discussion questions:
  - How are ghosts different to the living?
  - Where do they live?
  - Should we be scared of them?
  - Can you think of any famous ghosts in books, comics or films?
  - What is the Hungry Ghost festival? Who celebrates it? When is it?
  - What does the term 'yin-yang eyes' mean?
- Look at *Ghost Book's* cover and consider its title and illustration.
  - Who do you think the story will be about?
  - What elements in the illustration point to the boy on the bike being a ghost?
  - What elements point to the girl being alive?
  - What mood does the presence of the hand [top-left corner] in the image create?
  - What mood does the font and colour of the title create?
  - Is there anything on the cover that suggests this will be a graphic novel?
  - Does the cover make you want to open the book and read on?
- Find out the definition of the word *prologue*.
  - Would you say pages 1-7 fit that definition? Why/why not?
  - What did you learn from this section of the story?
  - What questions arose after reading the section?
  - What did you make of the last panel on page 6?
  - Did this panel change the mood of the rest of the section?
- The **colours** used in a graphic novel play an important role in setting the mood and tone in a story. Turn to page 7 and think about how the predominance of black and blue heighten the drama of the scene? How do the colours on the next page

suddenly change the mood again? Choose one setting from *Ghost Book* and write a paragraph on how the colours on the page reflect and heighten what is happening in the scene.

- Turn to page 13 in the story and explain how the image of the as-yet-unnamed girl eating lunch by herself contrasts with the previous scene? What did these six panels tell you about the young girl?
- Remy Lai is a master at expressing emotions visually. Turn to page 21 to see how July's eyes and mouth change when she is growing more and more desperate while trying to summon the Hungry Ghost. What do you think she is saying to herself in the last three panels on the page? What sort of visual cues are used to show a character feeling anger, surprise and embarrassment later in the story?
- Speech bubbles communicate lots of information in a graphic novel. How do the speech bubbles in *Ghost Book* appear:
  - When a narrator is telling the story?
  - When a character is speaking normally?
  - When they are whispering?
  - When they are thinking to themselves?
  - When they are a being from the Underworld?

Find examples where the way a speech bubble is shown tells us that a character is experiencing intense emotions such as panic and fear.

- When William asks July why she is pretending she can't see him on page 38, she remembers a time when her father insisted to her that ghosts do not exist.
  - Other than showing a much younger July, how does Remy Lai show this scene was in the distant past?

- Can you find other scenes from the past, shown later in the story? [Hint: pages 150-153, 216-224]
  - How is the time shown moving forwards on page 48?
  - How does the largest panel on page 63 show a change in time?
- Sometimes sounds can be shown using words and visual techniques. An example of this is where William fails to catch the bag of flour and it lands on the ground with a 'Ploomf' on page 63.
  - How does Remy Lai show us the sound is soft and that the flour is drifting in the air after impact?
  - Can you find other visual ways sounds presented in *Ghost Book*?
- Onomatopoeia is when words sound like their meanings – for example 'SLURP', 'CHOMP' and 'NOM NOM NOM' on pages 70-71. Graphic novels often portray onomatopoeic words in a different way to the other text on a page. How are these words presented on the page to emphasise how ravenous the Hungry Ghosts are?
- Remy Lai is great at creating lots of visual clues so that we readers don't even need words to tell us what is going on. Turn to pages 166-167 and describe what you can see happening here to the boy who has been possessed by a Hungry Ghost.
- Imagine you are Mr Chen and retell the story from his viewpoint. Remember to explain:
  - How you feel about your daughter.
  - Why you insist that ghosts don't exist.
  - Why you want your daughter to eat 'wonky' dumplings every day.
  - Where you go every night, and why?
  - How your feelings have changed by the end of the story.

- Why do you think William decides that it is better that his mother remember him, even if she will grieve his death? What does he mean when he declares on pages 299-300 that, 'A broken heart ... is a heart that has loved and been loved.'?
- How does the single two-page image featuring July saying, 'Remember me' at the end of the story relate to the above quote?
- Why might the book have been given the title *Ghost Book*? If you had to come up with another name for the story, what might it be?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Remy Lai writes and draws for kids. She was born in Indonesia, grew up in Singapore and currently lives in Brisbane, Australia. She lives with her two dogs, who sometimes scare her by barking at nothing in the corners of rooms. Remy is also the award-winning creator of *Pie in the Sky*, *Fly on the Wall*, *Pawcasso* and the *Surviving the Wild* series.

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