



RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary
Ages 10–14; years 5–7)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding; Intercultural understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A funny and heartwarming universal story of friendship and discovery that emphasises positive messages about tolerance, intercultural understanding and kindness.

THEMES

- Adventure
- Life in prehistoric times
- Tolerance and kindness towards others
- Resilience
- Finding your true self
- Curiosity, learning and sharing knowledge
- Friendship

PREPARED BY

Random House Australia

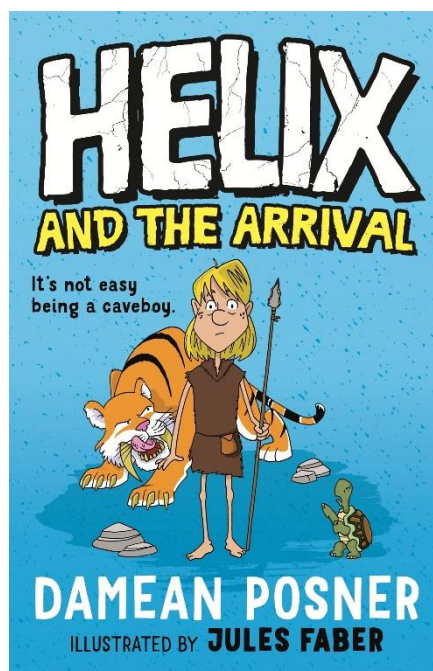
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Helix and the Arrival

By Damean Posner

Illustrated by Jules Faber

BOOK BLURB

Hi, I'm Helix. I'm twelve years old and the worst caveman-to-be that Rockfall has ever seen. I'm even less cavemanly than my lazy bonehead brother, whose hobby is grooming his nose hair.

It's almost time for my Arrival. I'll be expected to disappear into the woods and return with something big, dangerous or rare – preferably all three. My best friend Ug is preparing for his Arrival too. He has the strength of a hungry rhinovore so he will no doubt bring back something impressive. And our friend Saleeka would pass with flying colours, except girls aren't allowed to take the test – a rule that makes her angrier than a sabre-tooth.

But me? I can't even lift a club above my shoulder. Banishment to the Dark Side, here I come . . .

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Helix is turning thirteen, and all boys must face 'the Arrival' at that age – a test that will determine whether they will join society as a caveman or be banished to the Dark Side. There are two parts to the test: the first is a test of knowledge, which is easy for Helix because he can read word signs and remembers all the

stories that Speel, the community's Storykeeper, has told them. However, Helix isn't sure he believes Speel's stories, and he is curious to find out the truth.

The second part of the test is the hunt, where caveboys must go into the woods and bring back something big, dangerous or rare. Helix knows this is the part of the test he will fail. He has always been afraid to go into the woods, and he is no hunter – he is still using the small spear he was given when he was five years old. Helix's dad doesn't go into the woods either, but instead hunts small lizards and animals on the rocks above their cave; and Helix's brother Sherwin is lazy, preferring to spend his days sleeping in their cave.

At the beginning of the book, Helix and his father and brother are out hunting – but the trip is ill-fated when Helix foils Sherwin's attempt to spear a defenceless mountain lion cub.

Helix's best friends, Ug and Saleeka, offer to teach Helix to hunt. Ug is a natural hunter – big and strong – who will pass his Arrival with ease. Saleeka is an excellent hunter too, but she's frustrated because girls aren't allowed to take the Arrival test. Instead, they have to work to snare a husband – or submit to a marriage being arranged for them.



When Helix, Ug and Saleeka go deep into the low woods to find game, the three friends come across a woodland fawn grazing. Helix is expected to spear it, but instead something inside him snaps and he chases the fawn, screaming at the top of his lungs, until he can run no further. When he stops, he realises he is in the grassland at the edge of the river. Helix has always been told that the river people are the enemies of the mountain people, that they grow out of the dirt and that their homes are made of mud and inferior to the mountain people's caves. But what Helix sees up close across the river makes him question everything he has learnt. Are the river people really as bad as Speel has drilled into the boys in their Learnings?

Other things make Helix question his world, too. When Speel sends him to the nearby community of Newstone, Helix meets assistant Storykeeper Veldo, and also the travelling salesman Steckman. Steckman seems to know more about the river people – he even trades with them – but Steckman refuses to tell Helix more, knowing that he would get into trouble if people in Rockfall knew about his travels.

When Ug's father, the mighty hunter Ugthorn, is badly injured fighting off a sabre-tooth tiger, Helix is sent to find Krike, the medicine man. Krike's remedy of putting a different-coloured rock either side of Ugthorn's head seems no help at all. After a hint from Crag, a fed-up servant of Speel, Helix remembers that Steckman gets medicine for his injured toe from the river people. Could the river people also help Ugthorn survive his terrible wound?

Helix sets off for the much maligned Dark Side – scared at venturing into the unknown but determined to find Steckman, who had last been seen heading there.

He finds that the people there are strange but not scary, and when a storm sets in he is forced to stay the night. In his cave he finds an old stone tablet and the writing on it shocks him – for it is the

story of Helix's own great-grandfather, Herb, and his friends Vedgar and Crev (who is now Korg the Magnificent, the leader of Helix's people). The tablet tells of the three friends' adventures meeting the river people and venturing further into uncharted



lands, and the revelations they discovered about their world. Helix is even more confused. Why does Korg allow lies to be told about the river people if he has seen for himself that they are not to be feared?

When Steckman refuses to help Helix, he doesn't know what to do. How can he help Ugthorn now? And his situation becomes worse when he and Ug are sent off early into the woods for their Arrival test.

Helix must find his true self, and ask for the help of his two best friends Ug and Saleeka, if he is to succeed in his quest to find medicine for Ug's father and to learn the truth about the river people. But there are more surprises in store for him across the river – and back at home.

Will Helix pass his Arrival? Will Saleeka have to marry someone she doesn't want to? Will Ug forgive Helix for questioning their Learnings? All will be revealed in this very funny adventure story about a caveboy whose curiosity gets him into trouble but helps him to understand his world – and maybe even change it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Damean Posner lives in Melbourne with his wife, daughter, amphibious spaniel and a small brood of chickens. He has had work published in *The School Magazine*, a play performed at the Sydney Short+Sweet theatre festival and short stories published in various journals. He is a keen gardener and outdoorsy type. His special interest is archaeology, which is evidenced by the holes in his backyard. *Helix and the Arrival* is his first book.

THEMES

Helix and the Arrival is a funny and action-packed adventure story that also contains great messages about:

- **Tolerance and kindness.** Unlike Rockfall's Storykeeper, Speel, who urges his students to hate and fear the river people, Helix chooses to be kind to others. He enjoys meeting new people, as he does when he visits Newstone and the Dark Side, and he is surprised to learn that the feared river people have much in common with his own people.
- **Resilience.** Helix knows he is not a good hunter, and he is afraid of failing his Arrival test and being sent to the Dark Side. But although he is

afraid of hunting in the woods, he displays courage and bravery and determination in other ways, such as when he decides to visit the river people to find medicine to help Ug's father. Ultimately, he is prepared to be accountable for his actions, even if they might get him in trouble.

- **Finding your true self.** Although the Arrival seems to be about hunting and knowledge of the Storykeeper's 'facts', Korg the Magnificent tells Helix as he sets off that he should aim to find his true self. It seems that being a good hunter is not the only way to be a caveman, and this is one of the lessons Helix learns as he meets people from all walks of life on the mountain and its surrounds.
- **Curiosity, learning and sharing knowledge.** Helix suspects that the Storykeeper, Speel, is not telling everyone the truth about what 'sacred knowledge' is kept on the tablets. He is determined to learn what the world is like for himself, and to share what he learns with others.
- **Friendship.** Helix is very different to his best friends Ug and Saleeka, but when they are not seeing eye to eye and he has to carry on without them, he realises how important they are to him. Helix tries to help them as well as asking for their help when he needs it, and eventually the three friends work together to find medicine for Ug's father. Helix's open and kind attitude also sees him making friends with people from all around the mountain, such as Steckman, Veldo, Rex and Del.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

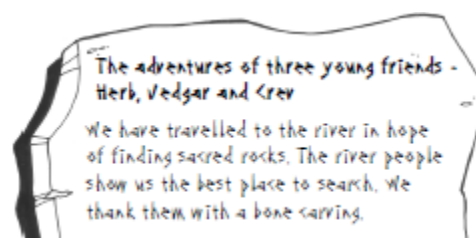
- What does Helix know about his world when the book begins? Where has he gained his knowledge?
- What does he learn over the course of the story? How does he learn this new information?

- Helix's story about coming of age and discovering the world is a universal one. What similarities to Helix's community can you see in your own community? What is different today and what is the same?
- What can Helix's story show us about how we can act towards others?
- The people of Rockfall like to collect sacred rocks, but the ones that mean the most have a memory attached to them – such as Veldo's rock that reminds Korg of his younger days, or the flint stone that belonged to Helix's great-grandfather Herb. What items in your life do you like to keep because of the memories they contain?



- Research the history of humankind. How did Stone Age people really live? When did some key developments or advancements in knowledge or technology happen, such as beasts being domesticated, crops being grown and tended to, the wheel being invented and writing beginning? What was happening to humans on different continents, including Australia?
- After you have researched early humans, write your own story about living in a historical era of the past. Make sure to incorporate the sights, sounds, tastes and smells of the era you choose.
- Author Damean Posner has written a tongue-in-cheek story that incorporates some modern ideas into a story about early humans. What terms or ideas can you identify that shouldn't exist in this time? (Hint: Dad's 'torism', Steckman's 'craggit' and Helix deciding to be a 'caveteen' are a few good places to start!)
- What do you think are the modern-day equivalents to the 'Arrival' test? When do teenagers today become adults? What defines an adult?

- Read 'The adventures of three young friends' on pages 151–153. Now write a short story from the perspective of one of the three friends, about their adventures meeting the river people and discovering that there is no Land's End.
- Pretend you are the Storykeeper for Rockfall and write a tablet about the adventures of Helix and his Arrival. You can't fit everything on the stone tablet. What are the most important points?

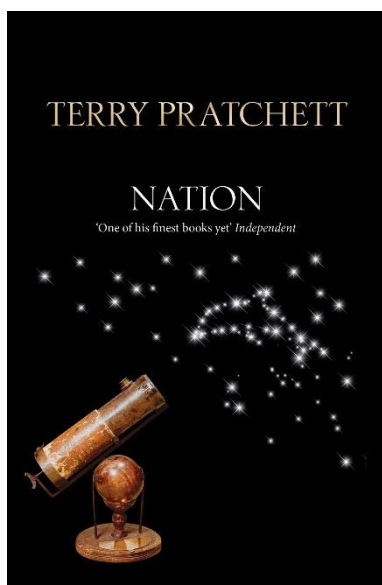


- In the story, Helix learns about his great-grandfather, Herb, and his adventures as a young man. Interview someone in your family about their adventures when they were young. What new facts about your family will you discover?



- Look up the 'hero's journey', which describes the pattern that can be found in all types of narratives. What aspects of the hero's journey can you identify in Helix's story? For instance: the call to adventure, a meeting with a mentor, allies and enemies, an ordeal or test, a reward. What other stories have you read that fit this pattern?
- Although the story is mostly about Helix's journey, we also find out a bit about the journeys of Helix's best friends, Ug and Saleeka. What does Ug learn? Why does Korg give Ug different advice to what he tells Helix? What does Saleeka learn?
- Saleeka refuses to be held back because of ideas that the mountain folk have about what boys can do and what girls can do. What does Saleeka do to refuse to conform to this mould? Can you spot any differences between how the girls and women are treated in Rockfall, as opposed to how they are treated in Fenswell?

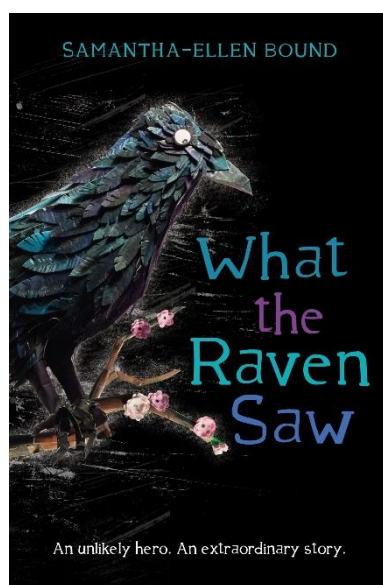
FURTHER READING FROM RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Nation
by Terry Pratchett

Why this story? Another universal story about how young people can change their world for the better.

When a giant wave destroys his entire Nation – his family and everyone he has ever known – Mau finds himself totally alone. Until he meets Daphne, daughter of a colonial Governor and the sole survivor from a shipwreck. They have no common language, no common culture – but together they discover some remarkable things – like how to milk a pig and why spitting in beer is a good idea – and must try and forge a new kind of Nation. Then other survivors arrive to take refuge on the island, and not all of them are friendly . . .

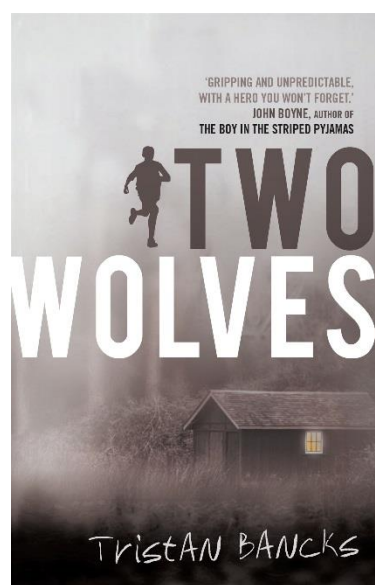


What the Raven Saw
by Samantha-Ellen Bound

Why this story? A fable for everyone about an unlikely hero.

The raven doesn't want you to read his story. What if you find out the location of his treasure? Or worse, what if you learn his secret – that ravens can talk?

But you should read it, even though the raven wants to be left alone. A pesky pigeon, a beady-eyed weatherhen, a ghost boy and a lovestruck scarecrow will make sure this story isn't just about one grumpy raven. With their help, the raven will uncover a thief, sing his own song, and discover there's more to life than being magnificent.



Two Wolves
by Tristan Bancks

Why this story? Like *Helix*, Ben must find his true self – but his dilemma is much more modern!

One afternoon, police officers show up at Ben Silver's front door. Minutes after they leave, his parents arrive home. Ben and his little sister Olive are bundled into the car and told they're going on a holiday. But are they?

It doesn't take long for Ben to realise that his parents are in trouble. Ben's always dreamt of becoming a detective – his dad even calls him 'Cop'. Now Ben gathers evidence and tries to uncover what his parents have done.

The problem is, if he figures it out, what does he do? Tell someone? Or keep the secret and live life on the run?



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Helix and the Arrival	Damean Posner	9780857986535	5-7	\$15.99		
Nation	Terry Pratchett	9780552162371	6+	\$19.99		
What the Raven Saw	Samantha- Ellen Bound	9781742757353	6-8	\$16.99		
Two Wolves	Tristan Bancks	9780857982032	6-9	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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