

READER'S NOTES

TITLE:	Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean
AUTHOR:	Kirsty Murray, Payal Dhar and Anita Roy
PUBLISHER:	Allen & Unwin
ISBN:	9781743319789
PUBLICATION DATE:	February 2015
AUDIENCE:	15-17
READER:	Carolyn Walsh, Allen & Unwin

SYNOPSIS

A collaborative work from first-rate Australian and Indian authors and illustrators, *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* is a collection of six graphic stories, one play-script and ten short stories that focuses on the challenges of being a girl or woman, and speculates how the world might be otherwise. It features dystopian worlds and space fantasies; alternative histories and imagined time travel; fairy tales with a twist - and even a Shakespeare spin-off where this time around Ophelia gets a much greater voice.

Among the authors and illustrators featured are Justine Larbalestier, Margo Lanagan, Kate Constable, Mandy Ord, Manjula Padmanabhan, Priya Kuriyan and Vandana Singh.

AUTHOR STYLE

As with all collections of stories by different authors, there can be no one 'author' style. And therein lies the great strength of *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean*: its styles are as disparate as the two countries the authors and illustrators hail from: Australia and India.

From dystopian speculative fiction to biting satires about the quest for beauty, from graphic stories taking in woodblock, modern, manga and traditional techniques to a backstage 'interview' with Shakespeare's Ophelia, *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* is a marriage of contrasting styles working together to create a powerful and engrossing reading experience.

IN THE EDITORS' OWN WORDS

'In late 2012, Australia and India were rocked by violent crimes against young women. In Delhi, thousands protested against rape. In Melbourne, thousands stood vigil in memory of a young woman raped and murdered while walking home. The fate of young women, what they should fear and what they can hope for were hot topics in the media around the world. Out of that storm rose the idea for this anthology.

'We decided on the title *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean*, inspired by a 1930s labour song in which bosses and priests tell workers that "You won't get to eat pie until you're in the sky" (i.e. until you're dead). "Pie in the sky" has come to mean any kind of wishful thinking—something you can't have in this lifetime. The central idea was to reimagine the world, to mess with the boundaries of the possible and the probable.

'This collection of stories embraces the idea not just of eating pie but of taking big, hungry mouthfuls of life, slaking your thirst by swallowing the seven seas, embracing the world. It's about the desire to have and do impossible things, especially things that girls aren't meant to do.'

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Kirsty Murray has written eleven novels for children and young adults - most recently *The Four Seasons of Lucy McKenzie* and *The Year It All Ended* - plus many short stories, articles, and several non-fiction books. Her novels have won numerous awards, including an Aurealis award and the NSW Premier's History Award. Kirsty has been a writer-in-residence at two Indian universities and a participant in the Bookwallah Roving Writers Festival, presenting at literary events across India.

Anita Roy lives in Delhi and cycles to work at Zubaan, a small independent feminist publishing house. Her stories and non-fiction essays have appeared in a number of anthologies, and she has completed a first novel for children.

Payal Dhar has written seven books for children and young adults, and numerous short stories. She's also a freelance editor and writer, and writes on computers, technology, books, reading, games and anything else that catches her interest.

EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

Themes: *the future, role of women and girls, beauty, relationships, rules and stereotypes*

Suggestions for discussion and classroom activities:

- The editors write in their introduction that *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* is about ‘the desire to have and do impossible things, especially things that girls aren’t meant to do.’ Choose one story in the collection and discuss how it relates to this quote.
- Visual literacy activity: look at the double-page spread featuring images of the dead city and sacred treasures in the story entitled, ‘Swallow the Moon’. What story do these images tell us that the words do not? How is the story made richer by the way the words and images work together?
- To what extent does Justine Larbalestier draw from the well-known fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood for her story ‘Little Red Suit’? List as many links between the two stories as you can. What effect is created by contrasting the events of a children’s fairy tale with the dark and terrifying events of this story?
- Read the graphic story ‘Anarkali’ and discuss how the events here differ from the original legend. (To find out about the original legend see here: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/anjalis-boutique/the-legend-of-anarkali/309010489120333>). Why do you think the author chose this legend and then chose to change it?
- Who is the more tragic victim, the narrator or Ananya, in Alyssa Brugman’s ‘Weft’?
- How is friendship a force for both positive and negative ends in Margo Lanagan’s ‘Cat Calls’?
- Manjula Padmanabhan explains in the notes about her collaboration with Kirsty Murray that they used a technique known as ‘Exquisite Corpse’. Read further about this technique here, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exquisite_corpse, and create your own story in collaboration with a writing partner.
- To finish off the unit of study bring in some popular fashion magazines. Look at the images and topics discussed within in these magazines and discuss what messages about males and females are being communicated. Now find a story within *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* that echoes or renounces one or more of these messages.