

primary
EUREKA 1

Diana Tham

Primary Eureka 1 is a collection of outstanding primary school compositions written, selected, compiled and edited by English Language and Literature specialist, Diana Tham. The works are her own as well as standout pieces by her students, providing model structures and valuable tips to help primary school pupils crystallise their ideas and maximise their creative potential for writing stellar compositions in everyday school work, examinations and beyond.

Also in the *Primary Eureka* series:



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primary EUREKA 1

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primary
EUREKA 1

A Decade Of Creative Writing For
Today's Primary School Pupils

1

Written, compiled and edited by
Diana Tham

What students say about the Eureka Pedagogy

“Mrs Tham has developed my language skills and writing techniques since I was in Primary 3 and she has inspired me in many ways. Now, at 18, I have a thorough appreciation for different text forms and I wouldn’t be where I am if it weren’t for her commitment, drive and passion in nurturing her students to fulfil their potential. It is definite that Mrs Tham never rests on her laurels and is constantly striving to be the best that she can be – and this is clearly represented in her Eureka pedagogy and her writing.”

Will Angkawidjaja, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Junior student)

“I owe it to Mrs Tham for developing not only my writing style, but a love for the English Language as well. It is hard to find a teacher as passionate about the subjects that she teaches as Mrs Tham. It has been a privilege to have been under the tutelage of such a seasoned teacher.”

Shauna Cheong, Methodist Girls’ School (Secondary)
(former Singapore Chinese Girls’ School – Primary student)

“The Eureka series are not just books containing essays that have been put together, but they have really given me inspiration for my writing. The various techniques and skills in the Eureka pedagogy so evident in each essay has helped me mature in the way I think, plan and pen my thoughts down over the years, since I started attending Mrs Tham’s classes when I was 10.”

Andre Shum, Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road) – Head Prefect, 2016
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Junior student)

“Mrs Tham’s passion for teaching English and English Literature is extremely obvious as she always enthusiastically conveys her techniques and Eureka pedagogy in varying manners and styles, such that the lessons are entertaining. Students will never be bored. Not a single second of a lesson is wasted as she gives as much information as possible, all the while stopping and slowing down whenever a student says that he or she is lagging behind...”

Luke Theng, Anglo-Chinese Junior College
(former Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road) and Anglo-Chinese School – Junior student)

“Mrs Tham has taught me for more than four years and she has helped me excel in the English Language and English Literature. She has shown me how colourful and

diverse the world of language can be. I have learnt to find joy in learning English and hope to continue learning under this wonderful teacher for years to come!”

Ethan Tan, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Primary student)

“I’ve been Mrs Tham’s student since Primary 4. She has helped me tremendously with my vocabulary through learning good phrases that could be used in compositions. She refined my skills in answering comprehension questions by showing me how to glean important content in each passage and to use that to answer questions. Cloze passages were made simple in her classes with her thorough explanations and effective tips.

In secondary school, Mrs Tham taught me Language Arts (Literature). She taught me effective ways of structuring written commentary essays and how to convey my points in a concise and persuasive manner. These skills also came in handy for expository essays. Her Eureka pedagogy has been extremely impactful for me.”

Ian Shum, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Junior student)

“English lessons had always been a struggle for me since primary school. However, attending teacher Diana’s classes since I was 11 has ignited my appreciation and passion for the language, allowing me to improve by leaps and bounds from primary school all the way to my distinctions in the O-Levels for English Language and English Literature.”

Jeremy Kow, Anglo-Chinese Junior College
(former Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) and
Anglo-Chinese School – Primary student)

“Mrs Tham is a very interesting and captivating teacher. Her lessons are very animated and fun. She is caring and passionate, patient and knowledgeable. She is a wonderful teacher and I have learnt a lot from her teaching pedagogies.”

Tricia Koh, Methodist Girls’ School
(former Singapore Chinese Girls’ School – Primary student)

“Mrs Tham has been writing good books ever since she started on her *Short Stories Eureka*. Her Eureka pedagogy, tips and essays have really inspired me and helped me a lot with my school work since primary school.”

Daniel Lee, Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road)
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Primary student)

“Mrs Tham has taught me since primary school when I was 12, and while her lessons were intense, they were intellectually rewarding and stimulating. Composition skills taught by her Eureka pedagogy have remained relevant even in higher levels of education, and even now at 18 years of age, my writing ability has been greatly boosted because of her teaching.”

Kenneth Koh, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)
(former St Joseph’s Institution and
Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary School student)

“I started to attend Mrs Tham’s English lessons at the tender age of 11. She is a remarkable and devoted teacher, who has had a positive impact on my studies. Her lessons are well organised and greatly beneficial to her students. She teaches her students many skills and techniques according to her Eureka pedagogy that has allowed me to excel in the subjects that she teaches me for. Now at 17 years of age, looking back at all the input she has given me, I have to admit – she has been instrumental in helping me get to my current standard and I am truly grateful for everything she has done for me.”

William Goh, Hwa Chong International
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Barker Road and Primary student)

“Mrs Tham has been nothing short of a fantastic teacher. Passionate and bubbly, she has made English truly come alive for me since I started going to her in primary school. Her mastery of the English language and joy allows me to appreciate the beauty of every single word. Above all, she is a teacher who doesn’t just simply impart knowledge, but inspires. Her Eureka pedagogy effectively conveyed in her Eureka series of books for secondary and primary schools have been meticulously pieced together to provide a structured learning method for students of all ages and levels to effectively navigate the otherwise ambiguous waters of the English Language.”

Sean Chiu, School of Science and Technology
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Primary student)

“Having Mrs Tham as my teacher for the past decade (since primary school) has been extremely fulfilling and rewarding. Under her Eureka pedagogy, I have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge required to achieve exceptional results in my various Literature and English writing examinations and assignments.”

Elizabeth Koh, Hwa Chong International
(former Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary School student)

“Mrs Tham’s Eureka pedagogies have helped me to improve my vocabulary throughout my primary school years and have taught me many different writing techniques which have helped me significantly in achieving stellar results in school.”

Jonathan Chng, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)
(former Anglo-Chinese School – Junior student)

For Review only

“I am proud to be the main contributor to Mrs Diana Tham’s Primary Eureka series of model essays. Personally, the Eureka series of books for secondary school students has been an interesting and eye-opening read for me, containing essays about varied topics ranging from travel to leadership. Reading one essay from the books a day doesn’t take much time, but can vastly improve one’s general knowledge. Mrs Tham’s style of teaching has been engaging for me, and even as a primary school child when I started with her at 8, I have fond memories studying under her expert tutelage and have learnt much from her Eureka pedagogy and methodology of writing and tackling English Language questions for Paper 2. I remember looking forward to the publication of her first book of the Eureka series! Now that her series has extended to the primary school Eureka series, I am confident that this series of Eureka books will be of great help and benefit to primary school students.”

Jarel Tey, Raffles Junior College



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EUREKA

A Decade Of Creative Writing For
Today's Primary School Pupils 1

Written, compiled and edited by
Diana Tham

mc Marshall Cavendish
Editions

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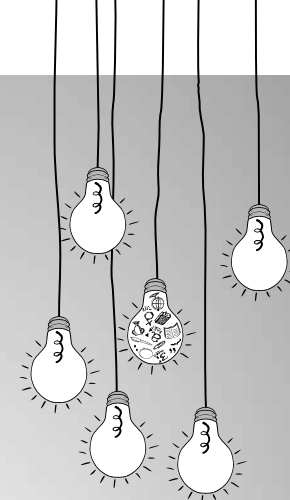
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*For Reuben,
who remains the inspiration behind
many story ideas in this series*

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Forewords



It is a privilege for me to write this foreword to Diana's latest publication, the Primary Eureka series, written specially for primary school students. Diana has been a dear friend since our school days in Fairfield Methodist Primary School, and even as we became colleagues in Fairfield Methodist Secondary years later. For as long as I've known her, she has been an avid reader and passionate writer of stories. I am so proud of her for having published her own stories and more than that, for wanting to pass on her love of writing to the next generation of students through her publications.

In this series, students can look forward to learning useful and practical strategies for tackling the composition paper, and reading a variety of different stories. Writing requires careful thought and language skills to be able to turn an idea into an engaging story for an audience. Hence, it is always helpful to refer to different models as a starting point for writing a composition. As an English Language teacher myself, I believe in the importance of having quality mentor texts. Students can use this book to gather ideas, observe different writing styles, and come up with their own stories. Teachers can use this book to guide

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their students in the brainstorming and drafting process too.

Writing compositions is an interesting journey but it can be a challenging one as well. To students, I hope that the stories you read in this series will encourage you and show that you need not go on this journey alone. In fact, besides stories written by Diana herself, the series also features budding young writers from various primary schools. With such a wide variety of topics and writers, readers will definitely be spoiled for choice.

I wish you many hours of enjoyable and fulfilling reading, and every success in your writing journey.

Grace Tham
English Language teacher
PGDE, MA (Applied Linguistics)

It is with great pleasure and honour that I'm writing the foreword for a long-time friend. Diana has been my ex-colleague at Fairfield Methodist Secondary School from many years back and while both of us have left the mainstream teaching profession, she has continued forging ahead in her pursuit of her dreams and passion for writing and teaching. This series of three books, Primary Eureka, is, as the name suggests, a simplified version of her other Eureka works and is quintessentially targeted at a younger audience compared to her earlier series of Eureka books for secondary school students, which provide guidance and inspiration to older, adolescent readers.

Like her earlier publications, these books aim to help primary level students write better and with confidence when approaching themes and pictures in short stories.

In this age of digital technology, there is no shortage of reading resources found on the Internet highway. The plethora of short stories is so vast and diverse, that for a younger reader, the difficulty in discerning a good relevant piece for inspiration to his/her own writing inevitably arises. Hence, this book comes in handy, firstly, with unique ideas for plots as well as practical teaching tips to help students structure their ideas.

The contexts of the stories have a local flavour which any student who has lived here for at least several years would be able to identify with. Writing along the lines of a familiar setting can greatly boost one's confidence and ease of communicating ideas sincerely to readers. In short, these books not only help to frame one's ideas, they also provide inspiration and motivation to start any short story. The language used in the essays is expressively descriptive and easy to emulate.

Having primary school-aged children at home, I find these books extremely useful where the quality of writing is at stake. With such useful and motivational storylines coupled with immensely interesting phrases and sentences, I am sure the Primary Eureka series will appeal to both parents and teachers alike as a practical model essay guide for children. To students, I hope these books will ignite an interest to write good compositions, augment your story bank, expand your depth of

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imagination and inspire you to express your thoughts in words that entertain, excite and move your readers!

Nathalie Anne Lim Ye Chen

Former English teacher at Fairfield Methodist Secondary School

Mother of Megan, Marielle and Nathaniel Chan

I am honoured to be asked to write a foreword for Diana Tham's new book, *Primary Eureka*. Diana has taught my two sons, Caleb and Andrew, for many years. I admire her greatly as a teacher and value her as a loyal friend.

The success of many of her students today in their writing of various text types and English and Literature pursuits attest to a relentless and unceasing dedication in her teaching. Over the years, she has developed effective tips to hone her students' writing skills, as well as make writing an enjoyable experience for them. Because of her love of teaching, she is able to inspire mediocre students to transcend and scale new heights in their English compositions.

In her series of new books, *Primary Eureka*, Diana has generously shared effective tools and methodologies for writing narrative compositions with parents, students and teachers. Undoubtedly, this new book will bring readers closer to their goal in achieving an 'A' or 'A*' for effective composition writing.

Diana writes in her Author's Note that "writing is a complex process". It is encouraging and inspiring to see how she has

simplified the plot development of a story and condensed it into a comprehensive 5-Step pedagogy – Introduction, Problem, Complication, Climax and Resolution. Helpful tips are included in each step to steer the students in their story development. Students will find the language used both in the teaching notes and the model essays written by her students and herself simple and easy to follow.

Primary Eureka is an excellent collection of captivating short stories written by Diana and her students. I believe that readers will greatly benefit from reading this book and accomplish better compositions in days to come!

Tay-Chay Mai Ling

Mother of Caleb and Andrew Tay

It is indeed an honour to write this foreword for Diana Tham. Diana has been an inspiration to my children with her passion and love for writing. Writing comes alive with Diana and she has the ability to inject a sense of awe and wonder in the way she strings and weaves words into magic. Indeed, in Diana, we can see that writing is a passion which burns brightly and it is a privilege to be warmed by her zeal.

This book is for the young writer who will find helpful instruction and strategies to pin down their amazing ideas and crystallise their vivid imagination into well-crafted and spell-binding stories. The stories found in this book were written using

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the plot development graph which can be found in the “Before You Start” section of this book.

I would like to congratulate Diana on the publication of yet another series of fabulous books which go beyond the classroom and transport young minds into a world where writing is more than a skill needed for examinations but a lifelong passion which will add fire, flavour and inspiration to the lives of budding young writers.

Samantha Woo

Mother to Ethan, Matthew and Ashley Woo

I have been blessed to be a student under Mrs Diana Tham for five years. Through her meticulous, engaging, structured teaching frameworks and enthusiastic approach towards helping her students learn, she has helped me to attain excellent academic grades over the years. Yet, more importantly, she has instilled in me a love for language, and a heightened awareness of its power to create, convey and connect. Thus, it is with great honour that I have the opportunity to pen this foreword for her latest series of books, Primary Eureka.

This compilation is a solution I wish I had in my primary school days, as I have always found creative writing to be the most challenging genre. It is unlike exposition or argumentative writing that is rooted in real world problems and controversial opinions, where one can state and elaborate one’s perspectives

on different issues. Creative writing requires the capability to turn memories or imagination into a memorable and cohesive story for readers to enjoy (and teachers to grade favourably), which is arguably a challenging feat, for people of any age.

This series is especially useful for students who find it daunting to pick up their pens and begin writing. Mrs Diana Tham has deconstructed the complex process of writing narrative stories and provided an easy-to-understand framework, highlighting vital skills and steps necessary to writing a successful story.

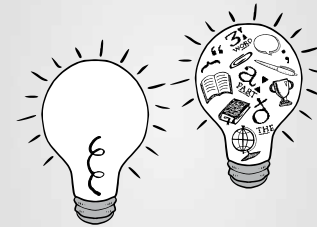
Furthermore, this series contains a plethora of unique short stories, serving as both model examples of the framework described and as inspiration for students to embark on their journey of imagination and create their own stories. Many stories are heartwarming, others exciting, but most of all, they are all relatable to any primary school student, and also serve as cogent reminders to teachers and parents of what is like to see the world from the perspective of a younger generation.

Mrs Diana Tham has once again put her brilliant mind to penning this compilation as a guiding light, as building blocks and as inspiration for anyone interested in writing or becoming a successful storyteller. I am confident, whether you are a student, teacher or parent, this book will be a beneficial read. I sincerely hope you will enjoy the journey of writing and gleaning precious gems of writing skills from Mrs Tham’s Eureka pedagogy, gaining invaluable skills for academics, as well as sharing in Mrs Diana

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Tham's infectious appreciation and passion for the English language.

Theng Shu Ee Stephenie
Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) 2014 – 2015
Student Council Vice-President
Methodist Girls' School (Secondary) 2010 – 2013
Head Prefect



Author's Note

No one is born with the ability to write. With the inception and progress of modern technology in the manifold form of electronic gadgets and devices like laptops, computers, mobile phones and iPads (the list of inventions is endless by the way), the job of igniting children's imagination and firing creative sparks so vital for writing becomes even harder.

Writing is not just a skill or talent, contrary to what many believe. Writing is a craft, a passion, an ingenuity of the mind to conceive when nothing has yet been created.

Writing is a complex process that starts with a thought, an emotion, an intent, an expression, that eventually translates into a finished product – a poem, a short story, a novel or something one would never imagine could ever be associated with the seed of writing – an advertisement, a song, a report or even a brochure. But these are the offshoots spawned by the transformative process of writing. Our children's world consists of technology that rapidly evolves, sometimes faster than they can adapt to. Writing is a process that may sometimes be slow and laborious. Many children, especially the younger ones, may find writing a dreary and boring process.

It's therefore imperative that teachers teaching the English Language and writing are able to properly inspire and ignite that first spark of creativity and love for writing.

Has anyone ever told you that he or she thought that you could never write? If your answer is yes, you are not alone. Someone once told me that she never thought I could write and the irony is that I am still writing away furiously almost every day of my life. Sometimes on paper with pen or pencil. Sometimes in my heart with thoughts, emotions or voiceless words. The greatest irony of all is that the very person who told me that she never thought I could write was my teacher.

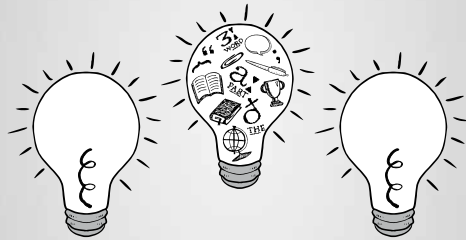
So, to all teachers out there, take heart. The most unexpected student may one day blossom into a writer and what's more, teach others to do the same. Remember that you hold the key to inspiring a student's dreams.

To all non-writers out there, take heart. Because writing is a craft, a skill, it is something that can be achieved, given sufficient time, grit and patience.

To all student writers who are already out there, this is my spark of inspiration to you.

Read on. Write on.

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About this Book

Purpose is the reason you journey.

Passion is the fire that lights your way.

– Author unknown

I cannot agree with this insightful maxim more.

Many believe that writers write to earn a living. While this may be true for some writers, writing for a living is certainly not reflective of my purpose for writing this series of books or any other books that I have written. Like what I wrote in my previous Eureka books for secondary school students, “teaching is in my blood, while writing is in my soul”, I simply cannot imagine merely teaching students and leaving the beauty of communicating thoughts, intents and emotions out from the written form. For me, writing is a means of communication, a tool to express thoughts and emotions, and a way of instructing and teaching.

And this is just what this book is for and meant to achieve – to instruct and teach primary school students to weave good plots for their compositions and to read the many diverse and varied products of this groundbreaking strategy in the form of many spellbinding and intriguing compositions.

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This series of Primary Eureka books exists for one reason: to propagate good writing techniques crystallised in the form of easy-to-grasp strategies for little budding writers, or primary school students who need guidance and tips on how to craft good compositions or express and describe thoughts and emotions.

Writing however, is a craft that starts with a thought, an intent, an emotion, an expression and a process before the finished product emerges in the form of the written word. While this book is intended to communicate an important part of the **Eureka Writing Techniques™**, which is to conceive plots rightly from pictures and then weave the plot according to the plot development graph explained in this book, there are other critical components to writing a good story according to the **Eureka Writing Techniques™**.

There are many different pictures and themes/topics that may be tested in a million permutations, hence the purpose of this book is to streamline various plot creation techniques towards the most effective plot development graph I have discovered to be the most user-friendly in all my years of teaching, on which students can base their compositions. Every single model composition in this book was done based on the plot development graph, taught in the “Before You Start” section of this book.

Remember that writing is a craft, and one that requires much practice and the right techniques as outlined in the “Before You Start” section on how to weave good plots. The pen has always

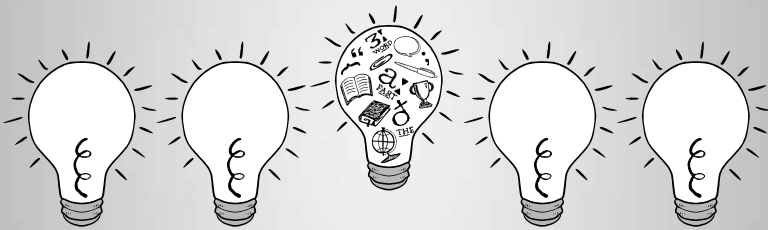
been, is and will always be mightier than the sword. Writing can create worlds and fire imaginations that swords may not always be able to achieve.

The purpose of this book is to help students discover and develop their passion for writing. This series is the brainchild borne from a fusion of purpose and passion that has compelled me to undertake the journey of writing once again. I hope you will enjoy the journey of reading this compilation of model compositions as much as I have enjoyed the journey of writing, selecting, compiling and editing them.

An Act of Mischief

With birds chirping delightfully in the sweltering heat, the June holidays were warmly welcomed by the cheery sound of nature, punctuating the air with flowers that sent out their trademark fragrance in beautiful, enviably fine blooms. Strolling through the garden of my grandfather's house along Holland Village inspired glorious ripples of euphoria that tingled through my veins. I was in seventh heaven of delight as a much longed for stay at my grandparents' house had always been something I looked forward to every June holiday. Visions of lolling about on the huge garden couch, feeding the fishes in the garden pond and gambolling with my grandmother's dogs flooded my heart with endless joy.

My grandparents' house was one of those old colonial bungalows along the Holland Road area and an adventurous exploration of the grounds of their house one day when I was much younger in search of some wild exploits led to the discovery of the house's large, forbidding and stern rooms that lay in a dreamy labyrinth-like maze that opened up from one room to another. Now that the June holidays have started, my elaborate daydreams of endless fun and play as a boisterous school boy overpowered the otherwise odious drudgery of





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school assignments and loathsome homework.

Loitering around in the colossal house and gazing at the marbled pillars that adorned the sides of the front door of my grandfather's house, what could a blithe and rambunctious boy like me be expected to achieve except get up to some mischief? I was accompanied at all times by my grandmother's pooch, Doody, who followed me around like a shadow in my grandparents' absence since both had gone for their medical appointments accompanied by their housemaid, Siti. Doody seemed to have taken it upon himself to chaperone me around, ensuring that I did not do anything a canine would disapprove heartily of, like feed stray felines, and inspecting my every move in the meanwhile.

A white, old Maltese of pedigree descent, Doody was pint-sized, with the typical canine intelligence and shrewd wit that is hardly displayed in dogs of normal intelligence quotient as he stood, stiff-bodied, tail suspended in mid-air, rigid with attentive detail and eyes riveted on his human suspect, in vigilant observation of the human's every move. This he did, right away with me, as my eyes glanced surreptitiously around the garden for some sport to engage in.

Careful, I'm watching your every move, Doody seemed to articulate telepathically in his mind as he kept his watchful eye on me.

Espying a new, unopened mineral water bottle lying in the sun that appeared to be concealed cleverly behind the marble

pillar, I made my way towards it. Its clean, fresh bottle wrapper suggested that it was newly tossed aside as unwanted litter or dropped by an unsuspecting visitor or Siti the housemaid, or Ali the gardener, or by goodness knows whom. As I reached over and grabbed hold of it, a wicked idea sidled into my mind as I reached into my pocket where I kept a stapler along with some staples. I had brought these objects into the beautifully landscaped garden of my grandparents with the intention of conducting some scientific experiments like stapling some specimens of grass and leaves for observable botanical results and reactions.

I shot Doody a look of mischief. Doody remained unrelenting in his gaze. He seemed to have wisely surmised that I was better left alone before he trotted over to a corner beside the pillar and lay down. I then decided to tease that old canine with a small trick. With the stapler in my hand, I punched some staples into the cap cover of the mineral bottle filled with liquid, presumably with water or mineral water. The holes punched by the stapler were sufficiently numerous as to be able to shoot water out from the bottle with ease in rapid jets.

As the hapless dog lay unsuspectingly in the shade offered by the huge pillar, licking his paws and sniffing the air with his eyes closed in response to the roasting heat of the noonday sun, I sneaked behind Doody and tried out my latest invention.

"Gotcha! Shoot! Shoot! Shoot! Kill!" I howled in a mock Red Indian yowl as poor Doody leaped high into the air in sudden

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I was therefore chastised by my angry grandparents and equally livid parents who had rushed over to the hospital, vexed and frantic. “Do you even know how to spell the word “stupid”? Do you know how lucky you are to be alive? Do you know what would have happened had you swallowed the staples? Do you...?” And the list went on. The questions plodded on. Their frustration wore on. And my resolve never to do something so dumb as to land myself in an alarming accident became more firm.

Till this day, I treat Doody like a prince, giving him the best cuts of meat, the tastiest fried bacon bits and his favourite fried chicken meat for saving my life and being that vital ‘alarm bell’ in alerting the gardener of that alarming accident years ago.

Friendship

Dogs are proverbially Man’s best friend.

Birdie was mine. Birdie was my best friend. But Birdie was a dog, not a bird. Mind-boggling? Maybe.

Birdie was a brown-and-white Shetland sheepdog of seven, energetic and highly rambunctious in nature. He was a birthday gift from Grandma when Grandpa died, and Birdie was given to help me get over the loss of a playmate who had borne me on his shoulders and who had crawled around on the floor while I rode him like a horse. Subsequently, Birdie became my best friend when Grandma decided to join Grandpa in his heavenly abode, leaving me without the cupcakes and cookies she would bake for me every week. As I grew older, Birdie retained his special place in my heart as Daddy and Mummy were often hard at work and Birdie was my constant companion whenever I returned from school. Relentless in his quest for play with me every hour after I returned from school, Birdie would wait impatiently at the gate when his doggy sense told him my return was imminent. He would whine till he detected my scent, one that only a canine companion could sense.

Many have asked me why I called my dog Birdie. It was just plain silly, they said. But if they had seen how Birdie leapt high



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into the air in an attempt to catch little hummingbirds which loved to dart in and out of bushes...if they had seen how Birdie twisted and turned his body to crawl into the thorny briars in the nearby park to spy on the brown sparrows resting in the branches...if they had only seen how Birdie peered as closely as he could at caged parrots and budgerigars that hung outside the rows of old shophouses, his eyes afire with curiosity and possibly ravenous hunger, knowing his sly canine greed...they would agree that Birdie was my doggy and that my doggy was Birdie. His crazy fascination with birds extended to anything with feathers, even the *chaptch**.

Unhappily, it was Birdie's obsession with feathered objects that led to his eventual untimely demise...

Little Dumb Dan, Cheeky Charlie, Fatty Bom Bom and I were the Gang of Four, who often got into scrapes together. Like the mystery-busters writers often wrote about, we fancied ourselves to be the *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* type of investigators who solved unsolvable mysteries, and we had to have a pet, akin to the canine companions these series usually featured. Of course, Birdie, our family pet, was allowed to join us in all our childish games. He joined us in escapades that included the time when we explored parks that we pretended were the crime-ridden empires of thieves, smugglers and dangerous kidnappers in the Sahara Desert. He was there when we trekked forests and jungles down in Little Dumb Dan's garden and when we embarked on spy espionage aboard ships imagined to be enclaves of pirates.

Birdie was not my pet dog, he was an important inclusion and esteemed member of our Gang of Four which we all adored.

Birdie greeted me as usual that day, his tail up in the air and wagging rapidly at my return from school, ready for another game of catch, or toss the ball, or Frisbee, the game for canines.

"Hey guys, Dad bought me a new set of *chaptch*. Want to play that?" Fatty Bom Bom asked hastily as he skipped into my house, brandishing a few sleek plumes of green- and pink-coloured feathers atop some black pieces of rubber. Fatty Bom Bom preferred games that did not require much physical strain like running in the sun, crawling in the mud and chasing after Frisbees.

It was decided then. The relentless heat of the noonday sun beat down ceaselessly on passers-by as they strolled outside the gates of my house. We kept the gates open so the others could stroll in and join our game upon their return from school. It was an intense game as Fatty Bom Bom was the best *chaptch* player among us and it was hard to beat him. With great interest, Birdie gazed, enchanted, each time we played *chaptch* and tried occasionally to grab the falling *chaptch* with his mouth while he leapt high into the air.

"Fifty-six, fifty-eight...sixty!" Fatty Bom Bom counted breathlessly, skipping with intense concentration.

"Hey! You cheater-bug! You miscounted on purpose!" I hollered at Fatty Bom Bom, enraged at his brazen attempt at inflating the number of times he had successfully hit the *chaptch*.

About the Author

Diana Tham, born Diana Lim, has been teaching for more than a decade, writing for more than three decades and loving every minute of it. Throughout her teaching career, she has taught more than a thousand students a plethora of academic skills, ranging from comprehension and critical writing skills for English, to literary skills for Literature.

Her passion for teaching and writing has inspired countless students to love English and Literature as she brings learning and writing to greater heights throughout the years. Her teaching is a synthesis of writing techniques that she teaches her students as well as an amalgamation of skills that she has gleaned from years of teaching. It is her lifelong vision to impart a love of reading, writing and learning to as many students who are keen to learn as possible. Also an International Baccalaureate (IB) certified teacher, Diana currently teaches English and Literature and finds great joy and satisfaction raising her two children in the joys of reading and writing.

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