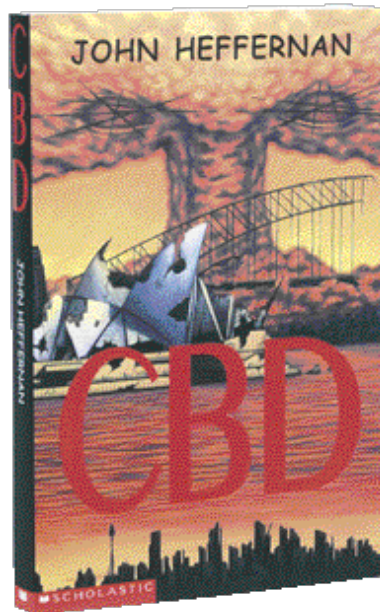


TEACHER NOTES

CBD

By John Heffernan



Some thoughts on writing the book, from John Heffernan

CBD is a futuristic book about two worlds and two times that strangely come together. The main story is set at the end of the twenty-second century in the vine-walled city of CBD, built by the powerful CroNulla tribe from the ruins of what had once been the centre of Sydney. This is the story of Gheera, a young scribe who writes down the words of Yrec the Yarncarrier as he tells his history of the CroNullas. But as Gheera records the blind man's words, she wonders about their truth, for she has a set of secret diaries from another time. These are Bill's diaries, from the mid twenty-first century, and they tell a very different story of the past. Gheera sets out on a search for the truth, a search that is filled with surprise and menace. She becomes embroiled in the dirty power play of the CroNulla world, and is dragged along by a series of events that spin out of control.

For young Gheera, the city of CBD is grey and claustrophobic. She longs to escape, and partly achieves this through Bill's diaries. These diaries are written by a farm boy, in rough, phonetic script, full of spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. But they are alive and exciting, and the more Gheera reads, the more she longs to discover the real world. Her chance comes when she meets a young boy, an illiterate tunnel-dweller who hangs on her every word as she reads the diaries aloud. Gradually an escape plan is hatched. But, as the pair discover, there's more to escaping than just running away.

In writing *CBD*, I wanted to tackle a whole heap of things. It's a book about civilisation, about what happens when law and order crumble and the skyhooks of society fall, when cities become so huge that they self-destruct and the veneer of civilisation peels away. It's also about history and myth making, the elaborate stories we write in order to find (as well as hide) the truth. And it's about power, especially the power of the word versus that of the sword. But most importantly, I wanted *CBD* to be a human story, a tale about care and friendship and loyalty, trust and understanding. If there's a single point to this novel, that is it. Very simply, we're human. With all our mixed bag of qualities, from the noble right through to the far-from-noble, we are human.

So *CBD* is a story about people. There's Gheera, the spirited young girl who longs to discover everything about life; Yrec, the blind old wise man who no longer has all the answers; the tunnel boy who lives in a world of darkness but gives off a light of his own; the genetically deformed Mutals, despised, but capable of more feeling and love than all the fine CroNulla aristocrats. And then there's Billi, the farm boy who speaks across the centuries to Gheera through his diaries. Through him we meet Mum with all her anger, Dad with all his dogs, and sister Lucy, who can only doodle with a grin and dribble, as well as characters such as the Hendersons who breed like rabbits, and the even more feral Fowlers. These are country people who rarely leave their own valley, but instead see the world on the Webwall.

They now visit the city through the eyes of Dingo, the long observer who lives in the ruins of Sydney and records all with his Camcap. All these people are the real substance of *CBD*.

This was an exciting novel to write, because it's a mix of times and worlds, of exciting ideas and issues. But most crucially, as far as I'm concerned, it is a book about the most important things we have as humans — our humanity. It is intended to be the first in the Mythos Trilogy and I look forward very much to writing the second.