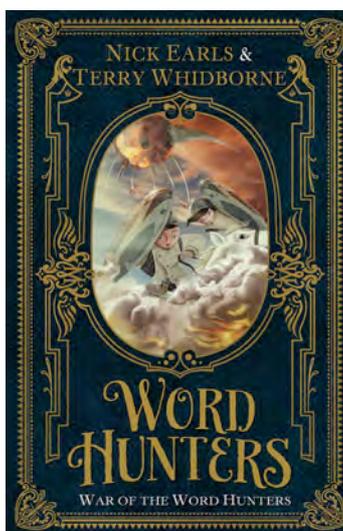




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# WORD HUNTERS: WAR OF THE WORD HUNTERS Nick Earls & Terry Whidborne



## Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising Teacher Librarian in context with the Australian Curriculum (English)

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Staff House Road  
St Lucia QLD 4067  
Australia

PO Box 6042  
St Lucia QLD 4067  
Australia

Ph: (+61 7) 3365 2606  
Fax: (+61 7) 3365 7579

uqp@uqp.com.au  
www.uqp.com.au

University of Queensland Press  
ABN 63 942 912 684



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## SYNOPSIS

In the third and final instalment of the Word Hunter series, Al and Lexi have joined forces with Grandad Al, Will and Mursili for the inevitable showdown with the grey-robed villains who have been pursuing them throughout the centuries. Their quest leads them to discover the origins of words such as 'ye', 'tawdry' and 'weird', but they also find themselves faced with the mammoth task of fighting an army of men who are armed with knowledge from the future.

Interweaving history with etymology, classic literature and adventure, *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters* brings to a head Al and Lexi's plight to safeguard the future by protecting the past.

## THEMES

Family and Friendship:

- Al and Lexi are joined by Grandad Al, Will and Mursili in their efforts to protect the past.
- Lexi and Al understand the sacrifices they have to make in order to protect their family and friends.

Etymology/Origin of Words:

- Many words' meanings have evolved; different contexts transform the definitions of some words.
- The alphabet has undergone changes over time, yet has remained unchanged now for many centuries.

History:

- If certain historical events had different outcomes, the English language may not have survived.
- There is more at stake than language alone; John Johnson is attempting to change history itself.

Mystery and Adventure:

- Al and Lexi are thrust into many situations that require wit and intellect for survival.
- The team of five must problem solve and work together to achieve victory.

Courage:

- Courage and selflessness are necessary components of the team's success.

Time Travel:

- The team continues to time travel in order to trace the origins of words and to defeat the grey-robos.



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## WRITING STYLE

*Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters* is written in third person, past tense and is appropriate for younger readers – 9+ years. It successfully combines history with the modern era, integrating language of various historical periods with today's dialect. The narrative is fast-paced and cleverly written.

## STUDY NOTES

- The text begins in modern day Fig Tree Pocket, as Grandad Al prepares the group for the many challenges ahead. What is he asking them to practise for and why? Why is careful and considered preparation such an important ingredient for their success?
- Mursili has played a relatively minor role in the Word Hunter series so far. What contributions do you think he may make to the group in *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters*?
- The first word 'ye' takes the group on a journey to discover the origins of the printing press and mass-produced books. How has the printing of books changed history? Research William Caxton, England's first printer. Create an information report about the contributions of printing and people like Caxton to literacy.
- In Caxton's time, the printer was a revolutionary invention. In small groups, brainstorm what you consider to be modern revolutionary inventions (e.g. iPhones, iPads, the internet, GPS satellite navigation etc.). Suggest the impact of such inventions.
- Brother Byrhtferth went to great lengths to establish the calendar for the dates of Easter. Using this calendar, predict future dates for Easter.
- England was not always called England. Investigate the history of modern-day England in terms of borders, names and groups who came and went from this region.
- The alphabet has undergone changes over time. Write a paragraph that explains some of these changes. Why has the alphabet stopped changing?
- Mursili reorganises Caractacus's scrolls using the Dewey Decimal System. Revise this system of ordering. How can you use it to find non-fiction books quickly?
- Re-read the passage on p76 in which Lexi thinks about the importance of her quest. Why does she have to continue with it? Why can't she ignore the dictionary and go shopping with her friends instead? What does this realisation tell us about Lexi's character?
- Create a map of the world to track where the word hunters travel in *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters*. Some of these places had different names historically. Make note of these changes on your map. Use the cartographic conventions of maps when creating your map.
- Al and Mursili often google things to help prepare for their next word hunt. Use Google to teach explicit internet search techniques such as



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search terms, evaluating websites, conducting advanced searches and extracting relevant information from quality websites.

- The illustrations in *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters* are very stylistic. Select one of Terry Whidborne's illustrations to copy, or try creating a drawing of your own to suit one of the scenes in the same style.
- Grandad AI suggests which body parts are best to target in battle, making reference to the femoral arteries. Investigate the human body, in particular those parts mentioned by Grandad AI. Why are those the most logical body parts to target?
- Each of the five word hunters brings their own strengths to the group. Create a table that shows these strengths. What does this tell us about the power of working together?
- Read a young reader's edition of *Beowulf*. Make comparisons between the final showdown of the two armies in *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters* and this classic story. Use a graphic organiser or Venn diagram to help make this comparison.
- Write a reflection that shows your understanding of how *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters* addresses the concept of 'fate'. How does this text show the fate of AI, Lexi and the others?
- Re-read the description of the sun rising over the water on p250. Discuss the use of figurative language and the contribution of this type of writing to the text.
- Select one of the following topics from *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters* on which to write inquiry questions. Then use your research skills to answer your questions:
  - Brother Byrhtferth and the Easter calendar
  - Caxton and the printing of English books, including *The Canterbury Tales*
  - Wynkyn de Worde
  - The alphabet
  - 'Germania' by Tacitus
  - *Beowulf*
  - John Johnson and Guy Fawkes
  - Saint Audrey
  - Puritans and John Bunyan
  - Witches during 17th century England
  - Christopher Wren and the churches of London
  - The Great Fire of London
  - The history of vegetables such as pumpkins, potatoes, tomatoes, or green peas
- In *Word Hunters: War of the Word Hunters*, Grandad AI teaches the others a variety of battle strategies, depending on which era they find themselves. Research the various approaches to warfare and weaponry



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throughout the major periods and civilisations of history. Select a method in which to present your research, for example a website, Prezi, PowerPoint or graphic organiser.

Visit the Word Hunters website at [www.wordhunters.com.au](http://www.wordhunters.com.au).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Earls is the author of 16 books, including five novels with teenage central characters. *48 Shades of Brown* was a CBCA Book of the Year, and his other four young adult novels were Notable Books. *After January* was also shortlisted for the National Children's Literature Award, won a 3M Talking Book of the Year Award and was shortlisted in the Fairlight Talking Book Awards. The International Youth Library, Munich, included it in its White Ravens selection of international notable new books. It was the first of five of Nick Earls's novels to become plays. Two have also been adapted into feature films.

[www.nickearls.com](http://www.nickearls.com)

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Terry Whidborne has worked in the advertising industry for many years, and is now recognised as one of Brisbane's most award-winning senior Art Directors. But as Terry's family grew, so did his interest in illustration. He began developing his style for clients such as *Vogue*, Virgin Blue and many of London's top ad agencies, before deciding that what he really wanted to do was concentrate on books, film and animation. He lives in Brisbane with his wife and two kids. [www.the7thworld.com](http://www.the7thworld.com)

### AUTHOR MOTIVATION

For years I've loved the stories behind the origins of words and phrases, but never thought it was something I'd write about. Three things in particular stuck with me – the almost-certain origin (and complicated life) of 'okay'; the possible origin of 'hello' that came up when I joined a few dots; and the almost-lost letter 'thorn', which persists only in the 'th' sound that we mispronounce as 'y' when we see 'ye olde'. I came up with the beginnings of an idea for series of stories that might weave this material in. Yet again I didn't expect to write it, and told no one about it.

I'd got to know Terry through an advertising campaign for Brisbane Marketing, and was frankly amazed at his talent as an artist. And he wanted to illustrate books for children. I was convinced Terry could be the next Shaun Tan, and still am. I wanted to work with Terry and wondered if my germ of a series idea could be the right project. We pitched an early version to a few people, and signed up with UQP. After one meeting with them, the whole thing immediately became way bigger and way better. We had a big, bold story to tell, I was truly excited about it and off we went looking for all its parts. I loved that search and still can't believe some of the huge and tiny things we've found that have made their way into the books.

Staff House Road  
St Lucia QLD 4067  
Australia

PO Box 6042  
St Lucia QLD 4067  
Australia

Ph: (+61 7) 3365 2606  
Fax: (+61 7) 3365 7579

[uqp@uqp.com.au](mailto:uqp@uqp.com.au)  
[www.uqp.com.au](http://www.uqp.com.au)

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**ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION**

I have always loved time-travel films. Being a visual person, I am in awe of Jules Verne and his many adventures into strange lands and time. From *The Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *Time Machine* the designs and imagination that generated those worlds were brilliant. His work also spawned the genre 'Steampunk' in later years. The gadgets and machines were amazing. I met Nick during an ad campaign I was working on and we have kept in touch ever since. I remember having dinner and saying, 'Where does "okay" come from?' and with that Nick launched into the history of the word 'okay'.

A few years later he approached me about a project and what he mentioned got me excited. It included time-travel and gadgets. Between Nick's award-winning writing talents and his expansive brain for detailed facts, how could I not do it? Over a few weeks we talked about the story and I did some illustrations and pitched it to UQP. They instantly embraced the idea and moved it up a couple of notches to make the project amazing. I have learnt a lot from the research which had to be done for the illustrations and was also surprised at what Nick had found to spin his story around.