



'The saddest zoo
in the world'

Festival's words and pictures sing to the imagination

In late August students at Mount Eliza Secondary College in Victoria went on an excursion to the Melbourne Writers Festival and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne. They heard writers talk and watched short films.



Neila Nazar, in Year 7, filed this report.

This was my first time at the Melbourne Writers Festival and I really enjoyed it. We went into the Screen Worlds exhibition that was filled with technology and games. That was probably my favourite part, other than the interview with authors Alice Pung and Rainbow Rowell.

Rainbow was really funny and now I'm tempted to read her books, and others, seeing how good the reviews were.

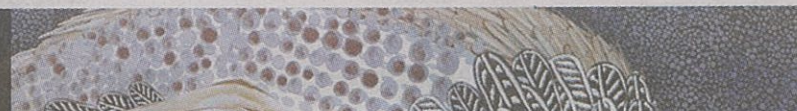
I would love to go back there another time!

I really enjoyed listening to Alice's background story, mainly because back then (in the 1980s) some people didn't really like people of Asian background in Australia and thought they were weird. So listening to her story really taught me about life in Australia at this time for them.

The four stories from the teen authors (in the "High School Stories" session) really opened up to me how different everyone can be. I felt so touched by one story about the homeless, and I liked how it was different and broke stereotypes.

Another story I adored was about romance with a twist - not a different-gender story but a same-gender love story. I liked how brave they all were reading and sharing their stories on stage.

'The Night-
ingale's Eye'
from the
animated



There are many places you might expect to find a polar bear. But Sydney student **Charlie Gilmour** who is in Year 7, was surprised to discover a lonely male polar bear in a shopping mall aquarium in Guangzhou, China.

The Grandview Aquarium has been dubbed "the saddest zoo in the world" because of the harsh treatment of its animals.

The zoo is said to display 500 species of animals, all in undersized enclosures with a lack of natural light and natural habitat fixtures, such as plants and snow. The enclosures in the "zoo" are far too small for the massive animals they keep there to behave naturally, and the cramped conditions discourage the animals from participating in natural behaviour and interacting with other animals.

The enclosures are also lit with artificial blue lights that can cause the animals headaches. Some of the species on show are beluga whales, arctic wolves, walruses and polar bears. All these animals are far too large to be kept in a shopping mall.

'WORLD'S SADDEST POLAR BEAR'

A male polar bear called Pizza has been described as "the world's saddest polar



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bear" because of his lethargic behaviour. Thousands of people have signed a petition to close the Grandview Aquarium because of its conditions, despite claims by its management that Pizza is very happy. Many people have been shocked by those words because Pizza doesn't seem to move about much.

ZOOCHOSIS

Zoochosis is the term sometimes used to describe the behaviour of animals kept in captivity. In this case, it seems to accurately describe the behaviour of the animals in the Grandview Aquarium.

Some of the symptoms of zoochosis are said to be

pacing in circles, over-grooming and tongue-biting. The beluga whales and walrus calves have reportedly been observed swimming in circles because that is all they can do in their small tanks. The arctic wolves apparently scratch at the walls of their enclosures. Most of the animals do not move at all and sleep most of the day, even though they are not nocturnal.

TAKING ACTION

Many people have taken action against the cruel mistreatment of the animals at the Grandview Aquarium. Groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Animals Asia and Change.org have started petitions to close the aquarium.

Activists have spoken up about it too, including Dave Neale, the animal welfare director of Animals Asia, who said: "The list of what they need is very long – to a point whereby you can only really answer that what a polar bear really 'needs' is to be free to live life in the wild."



Kiana Shillington, in Year 9, decided to review a film version of Oscar Wilde's fairy tale *The Nightingale and the Rose*.

The Nightingale and the Rose is a short animated film which follows a beautiful little nightingale who becomes entranced by a boy when he's walking through his garden.

The boy desperately wants a red rose to impress a girl he wants to go to a dance with and the nightingale goes to extraordinary lengths to find this rare red rose. As she tries to find it, the cost could be worth way more than her enchanting voice.

My favourite part would have to be the illustrations. They were very well thought out, detailed and expressed the illustrator's point of view very clearly.

My least favourite parts included the music and the challenging storyline.

This movie provided a lesson about how far you may be willing to go for things, and you can't be too ungrateful for these, especially if someone has gone to extreme lengths on your behalf.

The words which I think best describes this film are haunting and thoughtful. The music and storyline managed to leave an imprint on you as you walked out, almost haunting you in that way.

Overall this movie was beautiful, deep and well designed. However, it was also quite haunting and not for everyone as it included some in-depth themes.

I give it a 2 ½ stars.

The Nightingale and the Rose is suitable for older teenagers.

Charlie Gilmour is a student at St Clare's College in Sydney.