



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper Primary and Lower Secondary

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Languages
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Sustainability

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Overview of the basics of poetry and slam poetry
- Discover tips for writing and performing poetry
- Analysis of different forms of poetry and slam poetry

## THEMES

- Poetry
- Slam poetry
- Activism
- Environmentalism
- Creative writing
- Public speaking/performing
- Youth voices

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and Jean Yates

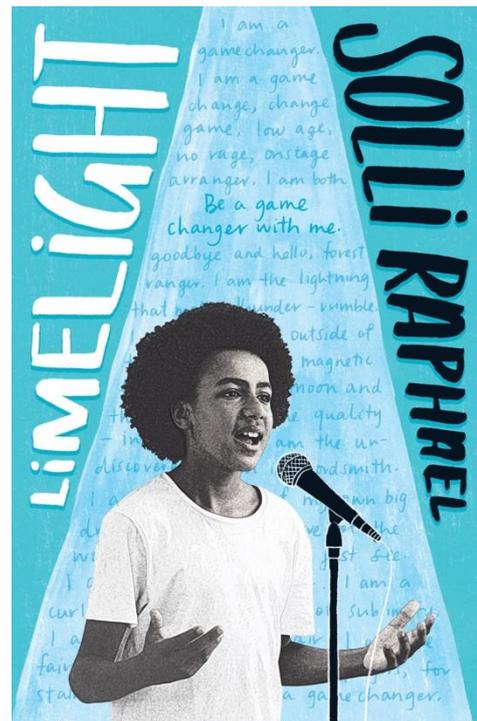
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## Limelight Solli Raphael

## SUMMARY

*The future needs you and me  
to create equality  
across all levels  
of humanity.  
~ Solli*

Thirteen-year-old award-winning slam poet Solli Raphael is taking on the world by creating poetry that inspires social change and positive action. This unique collection introduces the powerful world of verse and includes over 30 original poems, while also sharing Solli's experiences and tips for writing and performing. Voicing current social concerns for his generation, this remarkable wordsmith and performer has put out the call: *Be a game changer with me.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At 12, Solli Raphael is the youngest winner of the Australian Poetry Slam held at Sydney Opera House annually. A budding humanitarian, he hopes to become an inspirational leader among his peers. Solli enjoys writing powerful and emotive poetry and performing pieces to instigate change in the areas he feels are critical for attention and action such as social equality, the environment and animal protection.

Solli loves hanging out with his Chihuahua, Winston, and thrives on challenges such as training for 10 km running events. As well as his school work and performing at festivals and public speaking events, this motivated teen enjoys playing the saxophone, swimming, drama and playing boules with his great-grandmother. He hopes to become a pilot one day.

Now 13, at the time of publication, Solli is keen to use the platforms of performing and writing to tackle current social issues – big and small. He wants to encourage his generation to participate in conversations about issues that affect their lives, sending out the challenge, *be a game changer with me!*

## WHAT IS POETRY?

Poetry is a style of writing that is surprisingly difficult to define. Consider the following definitions of poetry:

- Poetry is writing that has regular rhyme and rhythm.
- Poetry is writing that is very descriptive and emotional.
- Poetry is writing that makes me see the world in a different way.
- Poetry is a type of literature, or artistic writing, that attempts to stir a reader's imagination or emotions. The poet does this by carefully choosing and arranging language for its meaning, sound, and rhythm.  
(<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/poetry/353645>)
- Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted (Percy Shelley).
- Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words (Robert Frost).
- Poetry is what gets lost in translation (Dylan Thomas).
- Poetry is what in a poem makes you laugh, cry, prickle, be silent, makes your toenails twinkle, makes you want to do this or that or nothing, makes you know that you are alone in the unknown

world, that your bliss and suffering is forever shared and forever all your own (Kahlil Gibran).

- Poetry is a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary (Rita Dove).

### Questions

1. Which of these definitions do you like most?
2. How would you define poetry?
3. Why is poetry such a hard thing to define, yet something we so easily recognise?
4. Do you think poetry has to rhyme?
5. Do you think poetry has to follow a specific structure?
6. What is the impact of writing poetry that breaks the rules and conventions?

### Activity

Consider the poem 'Grasshopper' by E E Cummings.

1. Would you classify this as a poem? If not, what sort of writing is it?
2. What elements does it have that make it a poem? How is it different from traditional poetry?

## POETRY AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Poetry, often in the form of song lyrics, and now slam poetry, has traditionally been used as a way of alerting people to social issues and encouraging them to make change.

### Activity

Watch some of Solli's favourite slam artists (Omar Musa, Harry Baker, Luka Lesson and Ian Keteku) on YouTube.

1. How do they manage to draw their audience in and make a connection with them?
2. How does their style of poetry differ from more traditional forms?

### Questions

1. Why is poetry a good medium through which to raise social issues?
2. Why is it important to find a way to make social commentary?
3. What sort of social issues can you think of in our society that should be raised and discussed?
4. What is the difference between discussing these issues in poetry form as opposed to prose (usual sentence and paragraph structure)?



- Just looking at Solli’s poetry, how does his poetry use text and language differently from traditional prose?
- Poetry is allowed to break the rules more than prose is. How might this help to get a message across?
- Why might a regular rhythm and rhyme scheme be helpful in conveying an issue?

**Activities**

- Make a list of modern songs that are a form of social commentary (Eg. ‘Hey Mr President’ by Pink; ‘They Paved Paradise’ by Counting Crows).
- Watch civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr’s iconic ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. This event took place on 28 August 1963 at a civil from the rights rally in Washington DC that was officially known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.  
  
Take a paragraph from this speech and rewrite it as a piece of slam poetry. How can it be seen to be more powerful in this format?
- Try to same with another famous speech (Eg. Winston Churchill) and consider how it can be written for maximum impact.
- In 2018 rapper Kendrick Lamar won the Pulitzer Prize for music. Why is this significant?

**POETRY TERMS**

To be able to talk about poetry, it is handy to understand the terminology we associate with it.

**Activity**

Look up the meanings to each of these terms. Not every poem will use of these techniques, but it makes it easier to analyse and discuss poetry if you use these terms.

POETIC TERM	MEANING
rhyme scheme	
rhythm	
stanza	
couplet	
iambic pentameter	
ballad	
sonnet	
haiku	
simile	
metaphor	

alliteration	
assonance	
onomatopoeia	
personification	
villanelle	
quatrain	
limerick	
free verse	
blank verse	

**PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PERFORMANCE ANXIETY**

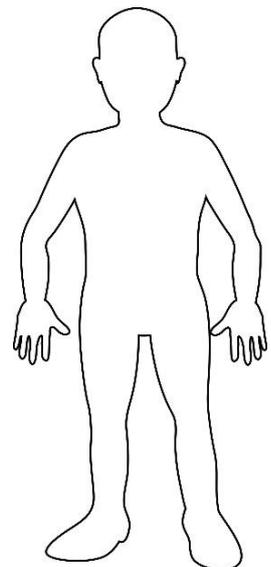
Many people rate speaking in public as one of the most terrifying things they ever have to do – even worse than dealing with snakes and spiders.

**Questions**

- Have you ever had to perform in public and been really scared? Write a description of how you felt.
- How can a little bit of performance anxiety actually improve your performance?
- Why is it important to vary your pitch, pace and volume when speaking to an audience?
- How do gestures help you to connect with an audience?
- How is the use of pause important to help you to connect with the audience?

**Activities**

- Solli gives you his top 10 tips for dealing with public speaking nerves (pp34-36). Try to add some tips of your own.
- Consider the physical impact nerves can have on your body. Note the symptoms on this body outline.



## WRITER'S BLOCK

In *Limelight* Solli talks about the struggles of writer's block – wanting to write, but not managing to find the words.

### Questions

1. Have you ever experienced writer's block? How does it make you feel?
2. Why do we often experience writer's block when we are given a specific topic to write about?
3. Do you find it's easier to write to a set topic, or to have the freedom to write about anything you like?
4. Solli provides a number of ways to overcome writer's block (pp25-29). What tips could you add to this list?

## WRITING AND BRAINSTORMING

Throughout *Limelight* Solli gives a number of suggestions for honing your writing skills. As a class discuss any other ways you might already get inspired for doing your school work or completing a creative writing task.

### Activities

1. Pick an item each day of the week and write about it using different methods of figurative speech (p21).
2. Use Solli's writing starters (p23) to create a piece about what you want to do on the weekend.
3. Write your own original limerick.
4. Learn a new word each day and use it in a sentence, and try to pair it with a figurative device.
5. Rewrite common proverbs to make them more effective.
6. Write a shape poem in which the meaning is conveyed by the shape or layout as much as by the words.

## ANALYSIS OF POEMS

### Pre-reading questions

At the beginning of Part 2 Solli explains how the way his poems are formatted in the book reflects sections of his poems that he sings or recites quickly.

### Questions

1. How does knowing these differences in the written forms of the poems change the way you read them?

2. What forms of poetry have influenced you in the past? Eg. nursery rhymes, songs.

### Welcome to the Wonderful World of Poetry

1. What does Solli's poem suggest that poetry can do?
2. Try reading the poem aloud. How does the layout help you to know how to recite the poem and emphasise key ideas?
3. How does Solli use words in an unusual way for maximum impact? Underline any words that may have surprised you.
4. How does this poem help to make you feel enthusiastic about poetry?

### Limelight

1. What do we mean by the term 'limelight'?
2. How does Solli manage to create a sense of nervous anticipation?
3. How does hyperbole (or exaggeration) help to make the poem more entertaining?
4. What power does Solli suggest performers can have?
5. What is a gamechanger? How can a poet be a gamechanger?
6. Why do we need change?

### Evolution

1. Why does the poem start off with the word BANG!?
2. Why does evolution require something that is unique and new?
3. How does Solli suggest humans have evolved and changed?
4. Do you think our new world is better? What aspects does he suggest might in fact be worse?
5. What do you think he means by his statement that we want 'to prove evolution'?
6. What is the significance of writing this line in capital letters?

### Game Changer

1. What does it mean to be a gamechanger?
2. What can a gamechanger achieve?
3. What is meant by the last 5 lines of the poem?
4. How does this poem inspire you to make a difference?
5. What could you do to be a gamechanger?



6. What elements in society do you think you would like to help change?

### Australian Air

1. Why do we need air?
2. Other than the physical act, what does it mean to breathe?
3. How might a slower pace of life help us to make the air more breathable?
4. What message is Solli giving us about the air around us?
5. Is this poem actually about environmental pollution? What does he suggest is destroying our clean air?
6. What does Solli want people to do in order to make a change?
7. Do you agree that in order to improve the future we need to change our attitudes?
8. What old beliefs and behaviours concern him the most in this poem?

### Tree Trunks' Trust: Part One

1. Why do we need trees?
2. What threats do trees face?
3. We are planting more trees, but why is this not enough?
4. How does Solli use alliteration in this poem?
5. What do you think is the Tree Trunks' Trust?
6. What changes can people make to protect trees?

### Maybe

1. What does this poem suggest about people's attitudes?
2. What does it suggest about our sense of materialism?
3. Do you think people focus more on what is wrong with their lives than what is good?
4. How does Solli suggest this is damaging our society?
5. What does he suggest might help to improve things?
6. Do you think people need to be reminded to be grateful for what they have? What evidence do you see of this?

### Through the Sea, Was a City

1. What social problems does Solli suggest in this poem?
2. How does it turn from a negative story to a positive one?
3. What does this suggest about societies and social change?
4. What does he suggest is the key to social improvement?
5. What is the impact of starting each line the same way?
6. Why is the final line different?

### Embrace our Differences

1. When did you last spend a day without technology?
2. How does it change the way you do things?
3. Do you think our modern world has made us more stressed?
4. How has our modern world tried to make us all the same?
5. Why is it important to recognise and embrace our differences?
6. What would our world be like if we were all the same?
7. Read aloud the stanza that starts 'Don't justify your quantity of quality frivolities'. How challenging is it to get your tongue around all of these words? Why might Solli have chosen to make this stanza so complicated? How does it help to reinforce the point he is making? In contrast, why does he space out the words of the last line so much?

### Go!

1. Have you ever run a long race?
2. How do you pace yourself to last the distance?
3. How is this steady pace depicted in the poem? Where does the pace change? What impact does this have?
4. How does the runner use his mind to help him complete the race?
5. How does the runner feel at the end of the race?
6. Could this poem be a metaphor for another challenge or event?



### Media Literacy: Fake News

1. What does Solli mean by 'lots of time is spent on devices'?
2. What are the positive and negative aspects of social media and easy access to information?
3. What is meant by the term 'fake news'?
4. How is it possible for news to be published if it is not true?
5. How can we make news more kid friendly and involve young people in social issues and conversations?
6. How does Solli suggest young people can make a difference?
7. Do you think the way we receive our news encourages people to take action?
8. Read Bruce Dawe's poem, 'The Not So Good Earth'. What does this poem suggest about the way we react to world news and social issues?
9. What can we do to make people take a more active response to the news?

### We can be More!

1. How does the poem suggest we are damaging our environment?
2. What does it suggest we can do to make a change?
3. How do the messages from the government and the environment differ?
4. How does the poem inspire you to make a change?
5. What is the impact of finishing the poem with a rhetorical question?

### Tree Trunks' Trust: Part Two

1. How does Solli use puns (play on words) throughout this poem?
2. What is 'the terrible tree tragedy'?
3. What is the greatest challenge facing the tree trunks' trust?
4. Why are the factories wanting to cut down the trees? What products are made from these trees?
5. What does the poem suggest is needed in order to save the trees?

### New Ripples

1. What do you think this poem is about?
2. How do many of us react to change, or 'new ripples'?
3. What are the negative aspects of change?

4. What are the positive aspects of change?
5. How does Solli think we should react to change?
6. How does the layout and writing style of the poem reflect its message?

### Changes

1. Do you think formal education has a positive or a negative impact on children?
2. What problems does Solli identify in schools?
3. He describes bullies as  
... *Bulls filled with lies trying to own you, with horns connected to their minds. Piercing you with the devil in their eyes.*
4. Why is this an effective description of bullies?
5. Why does Solli describe the experience in the classroom as drowning?
6. What happens to students who stand up against these problems?
7. Do you think the experience he describes is common for many students?
8. What would you like schools to change to make the experience better for students?
9. Why do you think teenage suicide rates are getting higher?
10. What is the impact of repeating the question 'Are we changing?'

### Fly

1. What sensations do we associate with flying?
2. What other meaning is there of the term 'to fly'?
3. Why do we need to encourage people to fly, to strive for their dreams?
4. What can positive support and encouragement help you to achieve?
5. How can self-belief help us to achieve our dreams?
6. How can freedom be 'determined by not the fence around but the fence within'? What does this suggest often stops us from achieving our dreams?
7. If you could achieve anything, what would you aim for?
8. Find or write some inspirational quotes that will help provide you with the motivation to fly.
9. Look at the punctuation used in this poem. Why do you think Solli has chosen to use full stops in this way?



### Arbol De Helado

1. Read this poem which Solli has written in Spanish. What do you think it is about?
2. Now read the English translation below and discuss the difference when reading the poem in a language you can understand.

#### Ice-cream Tree

*If ice-cream grew on an ice-cream tree, then an ice-cream tree would be for me.*

*This means I could eat ice-cream whenever I want, which means I could eat every second, that's not a could, that's an if.*

*I would have chocolate, strawberry, vanilla and mint. I would have every flavour, in my jungle of ice-cream trees.*

*So if you like ice-cream, then you should buy an ice-cream tree. It has a creamy taste, which is really nice.*

*Because if an ice cream tree is for me, then an ice-cream tree is for you.*

*And if an ice-cream tree is for you, then an ice-cream tree is for me.*

3. If you know a language other than English, see if you can write a poem about ice-cream.

### Goodnight

1. 'Goodnight' is a haiku. Use the same form to write your own goodnight haiku.
2. Research the origin of the haiku form.

### When the Sky Came Alive

1. What might Solli mean by 'the fifth season'?
2. What would it be like to have a time when all different types of weather occur on the one day?
3. Solli writes about this as a positive experience. Do you think it would be positive or negative?

### A Split Second

1. Have you ever felt that a split second was actually a long time?
2. Why might this be?
3. What difference can a split second make in your life?
4. Think of some ways in which your life might change in a split second. Use this idea to write your own poem.

### On The Rainbow

1. Why do we often treat rainbows as if they are mystical?
2. How are rainbows different from other natural elements?
3. Why are they regarded as a positive symbol?
4. Indigenous culture talks about the Rainbow Serpent as an important part of their creation story. Read some stories about the Rainbow Serpent.
5. How does this poem reflect the importance of the land and nature in our lives?

### Drips & Drops

1. How does the layout and typefaces of this poem add to its message?
2. What image comes to mind with the use of the verbs 'racing' and 'hitting'?
3. Use Solli's poem as a model to write your own poem about rain.

### Crossing Tightropes

1. Do you think this poem is literally about walking a tightrope?
2. How do we use the term 'tightrope' in a figurative way?
3. Why is this an effective term to describe a difficult or dangerous situation?
4. What 'tightrope' experiences have you had?
5. What do you need to get you through these difficult situations?
6. How do you feel when you successfully achieve something difficult?

### The Candle Flame

1. How does the shape of the poem reinforce its message?
2. How is personification used in this poem?
3. How does the poem make you feel?
4. What words or images have helped to create this mood?
5. Use this poem as a model for one of your own on a different topic. For example: the ocean.



### Sea Mist

1. This is a more traditional style and form of poetry. Identify the rhyme scheme and rhythm in the poem.
2. Why might Solli have chosen a more traditional style for this poem?
3. What is the impact of its simplicity?
4. What mood is created in this poem and what techniques helped to create it?
5. Why do you think Solli has used minimal punctuation in this poem? Do you know of any other famous poems/poets that use punctuation (or lack of it) as part of the poetic experience?

### Think

1. What does this poem suggest people are doing wrong?
2. What does Solli want to encourage us to do?
3. Do you agree that many of us are looking for someone else to save us? What is the problem with this attitude?
4. What does the poem suggest about the role of money in our society?
5. How has innocence been lost in our modern world?
6. How has terrorism affected our world?
7. Do you agree that governments disguise or hide social problems from the people? Why would they do this?
8. Do you think people should be made more aware of social issues, or would this just make people unnecessarily afraid?
9. What changes do you think people should be fighting for in the modern world?

### The Controlling Remote

1. In what way can a remote control be seen to be controlling our lives?
2. What does this suggest about modern society?
3. Why do we replace technology as soon as it breaks? Why would we struggle to live without it?
4. What would your life be like without TV or other technology?
5. Have we allowed technology to change the way we live and the way we behave?
6. What would be the benefits of living without modern technology?

7. Record your actions for a day in which you use technology. Now challenge yourself to spend a day technology free and record your activities. What differences did you notice? What were the negative aspects and what were the positive aspects?
8. Do you think we should be more aware of how, why and when we use technology?

### Mental Marathon

1. Have you ever gone to bed with your brain in overdrive?
2. What sort of things over-stimulate your brain?
3. What can you do to calm your thoughts?
4. Is the image of ideas and thoughts being bullet trains an effective one? How?
5. What other metaphor could you think of to describe an overactive brain?

### 14th Of November

1. What mood is created in this poem?
2. How is this mood established?
3. The poem is very short and doesn't tell you a series of facts about the day, yet we have a clear vision of what it is like. Write down as many 'facts' about the day as you can. How do you know all of this information in just 6 lines?
4. Use this poem as a model to write your own poem about one particular day in the year. Focus on creating a specific mood.

### After Lunch

1. This is a limerick. Mark out the rhythm and rhyme scheme.
2. Use this poem as a model to write your own limerick.

### Living in Luggage

1. We often think of travel as being exciting and exotic. But what would it be like to travel all of the time?
2. What are the positive elements of travel described in this poem?
3. What are the negative elements of travel?
4. How does the structure and word choices create a sense of busyness in this poem?
5. Why do you think Solli chose to call this poem 'Living in Luggage' rather than 'Travelling'?



### Snow

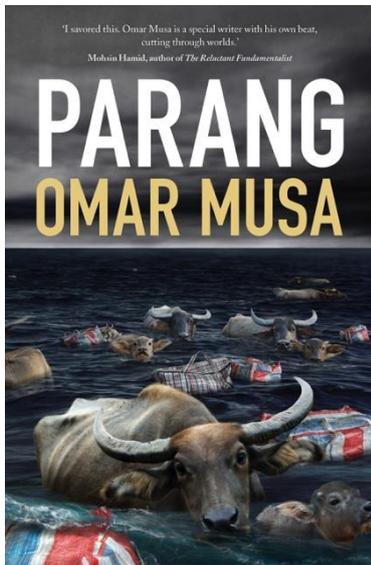
1. What type of poem is this?
2. Use it as a model to write your own haiku.

### The Places You Can Go With One Idea

1. What is the purpose of this poem?
2. Do you agree that one idea can take you lots of places?
3. How can ideas open doors?
4. Why do we need to let go of fear?
5. What do we mean by the phrase to achieve something through 'blood, sweat and tears'?
6. What are the benefits of using your imagination?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

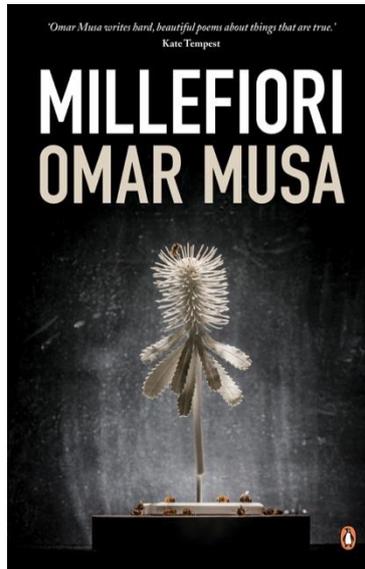


*Parang*  
by Omar Musa

**Why this story?** Read it as another example of poetry and Australian voices.

*Parang* is the second collection of poetry from former Australian Poetry Slam winner Omar Musa. Written over four years, the collection explores Malaysian jungles, dark Australian streets, and dreams.

'Never mind page versus stage, this is poetry: listen.' **Jeet Thayil, author of *Narcopolis***



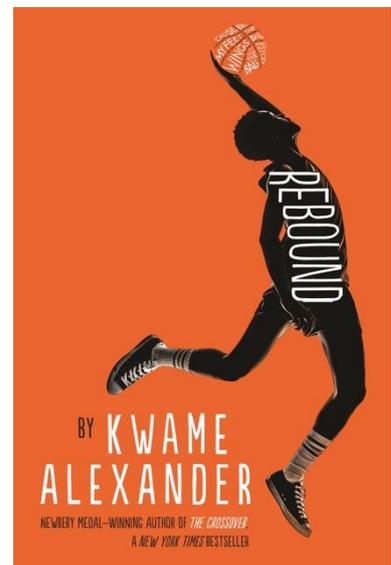
*Millefiori*  
by Omar Musa

**Why this story?** Read it as another example of poetry and rap.

A collection of love poems and fierce raps, *Millefiori* is Omar Musa's third book of poetry. Both dream-like and gritty, it also includes gorgeous illustrations and draft poems from Musa's notebook. Heartbreak, cocaine, colonial violence, memory and cave paintings: this is a world full of unbearable beauty and brutality.

*We know the world is a horror story, but it's also got love notes in the margins.*

'Omar Musa writes hard, beautiful poems about things that are true.' **Kate Tempest**



*Crossover*  
by Kwame Alexander and Dawud Anyabwile

**Why this story?** Read it as another example of poetry.

*Hoop kings SOAR in kicks with wings. Game so sweet it's like bee stings.'*

It's 1988. Charlie Bell is still mourning his father, and struggling to figure out how he feels for his best (girl) friend, CJ. When he gets into trouble one too many times, he's packed off to stay with his grandparents for the summer. There his cousin Roxie introduces him to a whole new world: basketball. A legend on the courts is born. But can Charlie resist when trouble comes knocking once again?

With comic-book illustrations from award-winning graphic novel artist Dawud Anyabwile.



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Limelight	Solli Raphael	9780143793762	3-8	\$16.99		
Revolting Rhymes book + CD	Roald Dahl	9780141374239	3-6	\$19.99		
Parang	Omar Musa	9780143572275	9-12	\$19.99		
Millefiori	Omar Musa	9780646969244	9-12	\$19.99		
Rebound	Kwame Alexander	9781783447206	8-12	\$17.99		
Booked	Kwame Alexander	9781783444656	8-12	\$19.99		
Crossover	Kwame Alexander	9781783443673	8-12	\$19.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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