



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary

CONTENTS

1. Plot summary 1
2. About the author 2
3. Author's inspiration 2
4. Main characters 2
5. Themes, questions & activities 3
6. Further reading 4

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, the Arts, Health & Physical Education; Humanities & Social Sciences.
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, critical & Creative Thinking; Personal & Social Capability; Ethical Understanding; Intercultural Understanding.
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Asia & Australia's Engagement with Asia.

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To learn about leadership and teamwork
- Understanding your strengths and having the confidence to use them.
- Navigating friendships

THEMES

- Confidence/self-belief
- School life
- Leadership & teamwork

PREPARED BY

Oliver Phommavanh & Penguin Random House Australia

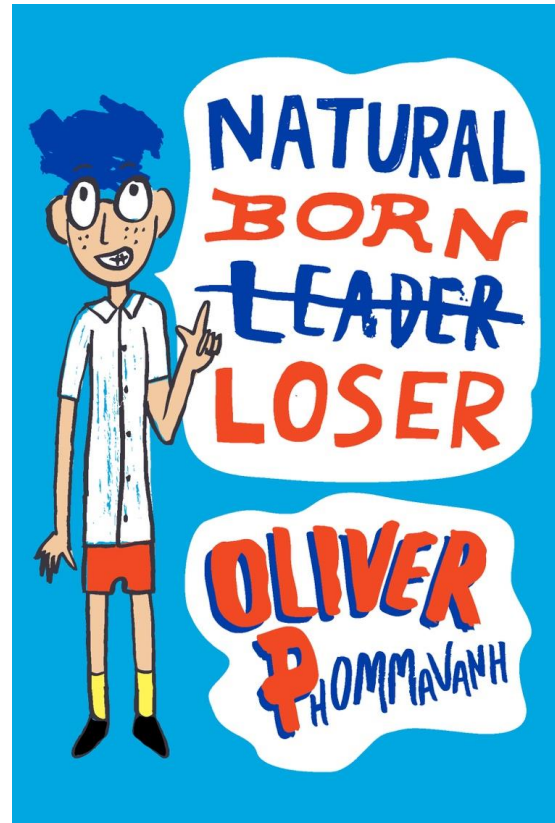
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NATURAL BORN LOSER

Oliver Phommavanh

PLOT SUMMARY

I'm Raymond, and my school is a JOKE.

It's full of bullies and troublemakers. My solution? Be a nobody and fade into the background. But our new principal has blown my cover because he's chosen me as a prefect! It was looking pretty bad, until I made a crazy promise to get new air con for the classrooms.

Now I'm really in trouble!

From the mad-cap best-selling author of *Thai-riffic!*, *Con-nerd* and *The Other Christy*, comes this completely inside out, crazy tale of a very reluctant hero who might just find out he's a natural born loser – ahem – leader.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oliver is a young Thai-Australian writer for children. He has featured on panels at the Sydney Writers' Festival among many other appearances at festivals and writing events as well as in blogs. He has worked as a primary school teacher and now spends his time writing and sharing his writing passion with kids and engaging them with humour. He's also a stand-up comedian and has appeared on national TV and radio as well as a number of well-known comedy venues such as the Comedy Store in Sydney. His first book, *Thai-riffic!*, was published to critical acclaim, followed by *Con-nerd*, *Punchlines*, *Thai-no-mite*, *Ethan* in the Stuff Happens series, *The Other Christy* and, most recently, *Super Con-nerd*.



AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Natural Born Loser has been a passion project of mine. I started writing this story called *Nobody's Prefect*, about a bunch of prefects at a rundown and rough school. It was a reflection of my experience at high school. I became a prefect in Grade Eleven, after an exodus of brighter students in Grade Ten. I kept thinking that I was only picked because there was no one else.

This feeling lingers with Raymond, when he gets picked for prefect at Barryjong Primary school. Everybody makes fun of his school, they think it's a training ground for feral kids and bullies. All of my books have plenty of scenes at school, but this is one story where the school itself is a main character too. As a relief teacher, I've taught at schools like Barryjong, where they have a reputation for being a notorious place, and school morale is at an all-time low.

However, there are so many good kids in schools like Barryjong. Kids who stay out of trouble like Raymond. Bright kids who feel like rats on a sinking ship, like Randa. I've been back to some of those tough schools as a teacher and author, and have seen how just a few positive changes can help turn the school's morale around. So that's when I wanted to write how this might happen to Raymond and his school.

Raymond's reluctance to become a leader also echoes my own personal feelings. While I loved being a class clown, who would follow me if I became a leader? I would feel so vulnerable. I know a lot of people who are natural born leaders, but can you actually learn to be one? It was something that I wanted to explore when I was writing this book.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Raymond

Raymond is a likeable guy who is happy to be in the background. His best friend is Zain. He likes playing soccer, but he's not that good at it. Raymond has no idea why he was picked as a prefect, but it's Raymond's 'normal-ness' that makes him stand out. He is relatable to all the prefects and even acts as a referee to keep the tensions down among the other prefects.

Zain

Zain is Raymond's best friend and dare buddy. Raymond and Zain share a love of soccer, but when Zain's ambitions to become school captain kick in, Raymond discovers another side to him. Zain's based on a friend of the author who would always try to dare him to do crazy things all the time at school (some of which are in the book).

Randa

Randa is one the brightest kids at Barryjong and she knows it too. She's a master organiser but she can also be a little pushy and bossy too. Randa approaches her prefect role with vigour and plenty of ideas, but she has to learn to get along with others. The other prefects help Randa to lighten up.

Ally

Ally's an artist and dancer. She is loosely inspired on a comedian friend of the author, who is just as chirpy and positive as Ally. Ally feels a little weird because her parents are health freaks, but she fits in quite well with the other prefects.

Mr Humble

Mr Humble is probably one of my favourite characters. He's a jolly principal who gives the prefects the freedom to make their own decisions and come up



with their own fundraising ideas. He gets to know each of the prefects, in particular Raymond, who Mr Humble has picked for a special reason. I've worked with principals like Mr Humble, who are vibrant and hands-on. They really can change schools around.

Raymond's mum

I love having this idea of a child going to the same school as their parents, and even having the same teacher! Mrs Saxena is based on a real teacher I had back in high school, and she was old back then. Raymond's mum had ambitions to become a school captain when she was a kid, so her own journey to help out the school runs parallel to Raymond's own efforts.

THEMES, QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

Confidence/self-belief

Raymond thinks he's a natural born loser and is happy to be a follower. But when he's dared to try out for prefect, he questions himself and wonders if he could actually be one.

- Have you ever felt like Raymond? What is something that you're not quite good at, but really wish you were. How could you overcome your own worries and try to become better at those things?
- If you had to take on a leader of a group/team, list 4 of your strengths that could help you in that role.
- Raymond is given a sheet with 4 tips on how to become a leader. If you were teaching someone about something that you were good at (eg. Soccer, playing a video game, doing fractions), what 4 tips would you give?

School life

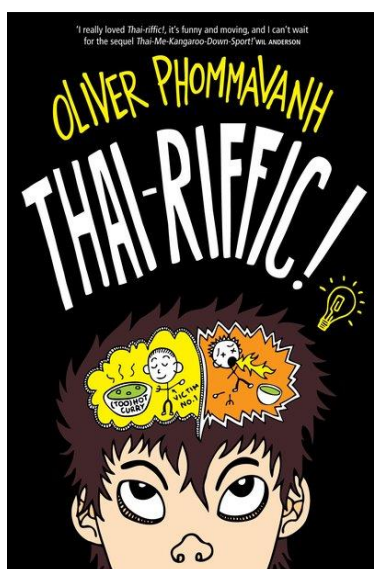
- Raymond attends Barryjong Primary, a rough school that's quite run down. The prefects make a list of things to try to improve their school. What kind of things would you do to make your school a better place? How would you achieve this?
- The prefects come up with some crazy fundraisers? Could you think of some of your own? Make up a poster advertising one of your fundraisers.
- The kids and teachers at Barryjong Primary have a lot of fun doing the dareathon. What would you do if your school or class held one?

Leadership and teamwork

- Why do you think Mr Humble has picked these four prefects? Write down each of the prefects' names and list their strengths and weaknesses. How does each prefect contribute to their 'Barryjong United' team?
- Choose a scene where the prefects are trying to work together. How did it work out? What could they have done better?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Thai-riffic!
by Oliver Phommavanh

Albert (Lengy) Lengviriyakul, is fed up with being Thai. His parents own a Thai restaurant with the cheesy name of Thai-riffic! and Lengy is sick of being his father's curry guinea pig, longing to just eat pizza! At school he is a bit of a troublemaker, going to any lengths to hide his background. But when his best friend decides to become Thai for a day for a school project, Lengy stubbornly comes to the realisation that there may just be some pretty cool things about his culture.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Con-nerd and Super Con-nerd
by Oliver Phommavanh

It's one small step for nerds, one giant leap to being cool.

Connor's mum tells him he's gifted and talented. But he knows the truth. He's just a nerd. He's supposed to become a doctor, but he has a deep dark secret: he wants to be a cartoonist.

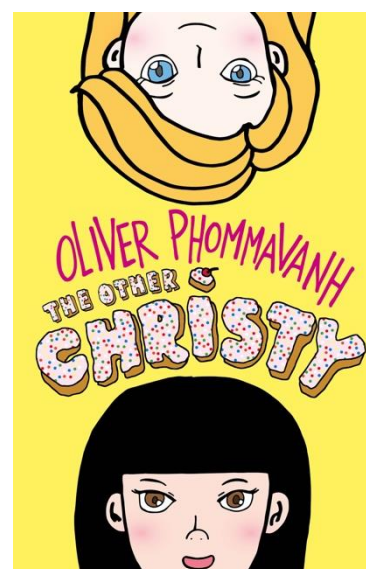
But will his mother ever see that it's his true destiny?

Con-nerd is a totally engaging and hilarious story, set in the last year of primary school, about a boy finding his own special talents and having the confidence to use them.

Super Con-nerd takes up where *Con-nerd* left off – a funny and insightful take on Connor starting at a high school where there are way better nerds than him. Suddenly he doesn't feel so bright anymore.

Will he ever have time for his real destiny – drawing comic books?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



The Other Christy
by Oliver Phommavanh

A touching and funny tale about quirky families, baking sweet desserts and two girls who find out they have a lot more in common than just their name.

My name is Christy but nobody calls me that. I'm in the same class with another girl named Christie, so I've become just the other Christy, the spare Christy. Not the popular, loud one everyone likes.

Just once I'd like to be noticed, and have a real friend. Someone I can bake treats for and who just gets me . . . and my weird fussy Grandpa at home.

Could that person ever really be Christie? Could I be friends with my enemy?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<i>Natural Born Loser</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143505730	5+	\$16.99		
<i>Thai-riffic</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143304852	5+	\$16.99		
<i>Con-nerd</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143304869	5+	\$16.99		
<i>Super Con-nerd</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143306535	5+	\$16.99		
<i>The Other Christy</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143505723	5+	\$16.99		
<i>Thai-no-mite</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143306528	5+	\$16.99		
<i>Punchlines</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143306511	5+	\$16.99		
<i>Stuff Happens: Ethan</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143308171	5+	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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