

Writing competition

Step into a symphony of stories!

Imagine a world where books burst open and amazing characters from every kind of story leap out!

Write a short story about a wonderful world filled with colourful characters.
(Limit of 3 pages per entry.)

The Australian Symphony

The first note began before the sun rose. Cadence heard it as she opened her bedroom window. A magpie sang from the gum tree outside, with its call floating through the cool morning air. The leaves rustled softly in the breeze, and somewhere in the distance, a dog barked. Most people would have called it noise, but Cadence called it a symphony. She imagined an invisible orchestra performing all around her every day. The birds were flutes, the wind was the strings. The rumble of buses became deep drums, and people's cheerful conversations sounded like bright trumpets. To Cadence, the world was full of music, even when no one else noticed.

Every morning on her walk to school through her small country town, she listened for new instruments in nature's orchestra. The kookaburras laughed like cheerful trumpets welcoming the day. Sulphur-crested cockatoos screeched high above like lively violins tuning before a concert. The steady chirping of crickets became gentle percussion, while the distant mooing of cattle rolled across the paddocks like deep cellos. Even the gentle trickle of the creek after rain sounded like a harp playing a peaceful melody. When Cadence explained the nature's orchestra to her classmates, they simply laughed.

"That's just birds making noise," said Liam.

"And it is just the wind," added Sophie.

Cadence smiled politely but said nothing. She knew they weren't hearing what she heard.

One Friday, Mrs. Taylor announced an exciting project.

"Next month our school will host the Australian Heritage Festival," she said. "Each class must create something that celebrates Australia."

Ideas flew around the classroom like sparks from a hot fire.

"We could paint the Harbour Bridge!"

"We should build a model of Uluru!"

"What about Australian animals?"

Everyone talked over one another until Mrs. Taylor clapped her hands.

"Brainstorm your ideas on the weekend, I look forward to ."

As Cadence walked home, she enjoyed her local afternoon symphony. Galahs chattering noisily in the trees. The breeze sweeping through the eucalyptus leaves with a familiar whisper. Somewhere, children's laughter echoed from the local park. Suddenly, Cadence stopped. Australia already had a masterpiece, its symphony.

On Monday she nervously shared her idea with her class.

"What if..." she began, "instead of showing Australia, we let people hear it?"

The room fell silent. Mrs. Taylor smiled.

"Tell us more."

Cadence explained that every place across Australia has its own music. The Outback has the wind, cicadas, and the calls of wedge-tailed eagles. Rainforests echo with frogs, waterfalls, and colourful birds. Beaches sing with crashing waves, squawking seagulls and children's laughter. Country towns have tractors, magpies, sheep, and the rumble of old utes driving along dusty roads.

"It is like Australia is one giant orchestra," Cadence finished.

Mrs. Taylor's eyes lit up.

"I think that is brilliant."

The whole class agreed excitedly and immediately began working together. Some students recorded the sounds of the bush using their phones. Others collected recordings from family holidays to the coast. One student's uncle, a park ranger, shared recordings of dingoes howling at sunset. Another student's grandmother, who lived in Far North Queensland, sent recordings of tropical rain falling through the rainforest canopy. The music room soon filled with sounds from every corner of Australia.

As the festival approached, Cadence helped arrange all the sound files into one long performance. The gentle morning song of magpies became the opening movement. Laughing kookaburras followed. Ocean waves rolled in beside the cry of seagulls. Rain pattered through rainforest leaves. Then came the deep silence of the Outback, broken only by wind whispering across red earth and the distant call of a wedge-

tailed eagle soaring overhead. Finally, every sound blended harmoniously. No single sound was louder than the others. Each had its place. Each mattered. It became a true Australian symphony.

On festival day, parents, teachers and visitors gathered in the school hall. Instead of pulling back the curtain to reveal paintings or costumes, Mrs. Taylor dimmed the lights.

"Close your eyes," she announced to the audience.

The room became quiet. First the magpie sang and people smiled. Next came the breeze through the gum trees. Waves crashed onto the shore. Cockatoos screeched. Kookaburras laughed. Rain fell. Crickets chirped. The gentle clap of footsteps on a wooden jetty mixed with children's laughter, the rumble of a train crossing the countryside and the soft crackle of a campfire beneath a sky full of stars. For ten minutes, nobody saw Australia. They heard it. When the final note faded, the audience remained silent. Then applause filled the hall. Cadence smiled. For the first time, other people were delighted in hearing the symphony she listened to every day.

As Cadence walked home that afternoon, the familiar sounds welcomed her like a familiar friend. A magpie called from the gum tree. The breeze rustled the eucalyptus leaves. A kookaburra laughed somewhere beyond the creek. The distant rumble of a tractor drifted across the paddocks. Cadence realised that Australia's greatest treasure wasn't something you could hold or hang on a wall. It was something you could only truly appreciate if you stopped, listened, and allowed every sound to play its part. Because Australia wasn't just a country. It was a symphony, one that had been playing for thousands of years, waiting for someone to hear its beautiful music.