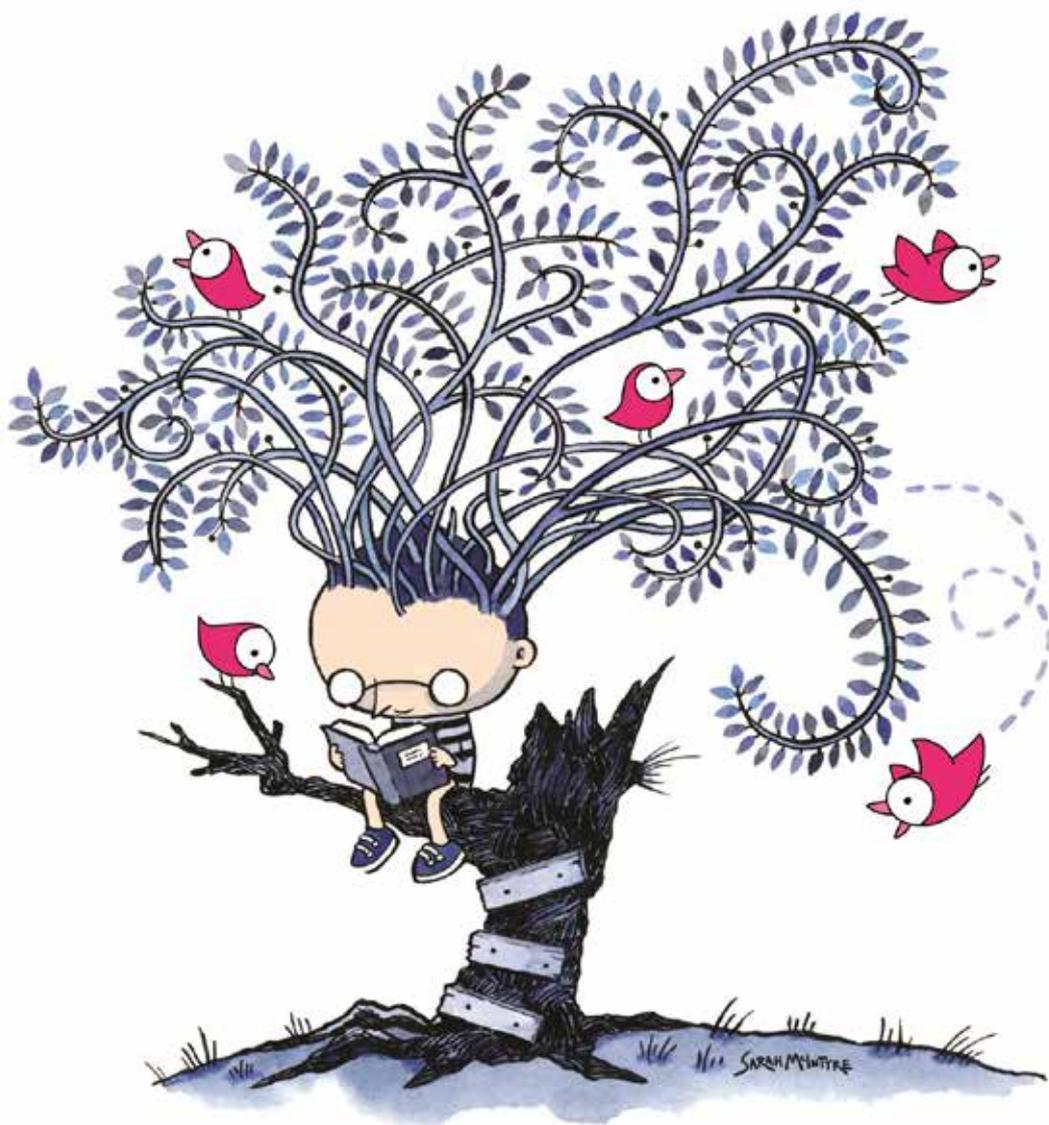


# Just Imagine Book Guide

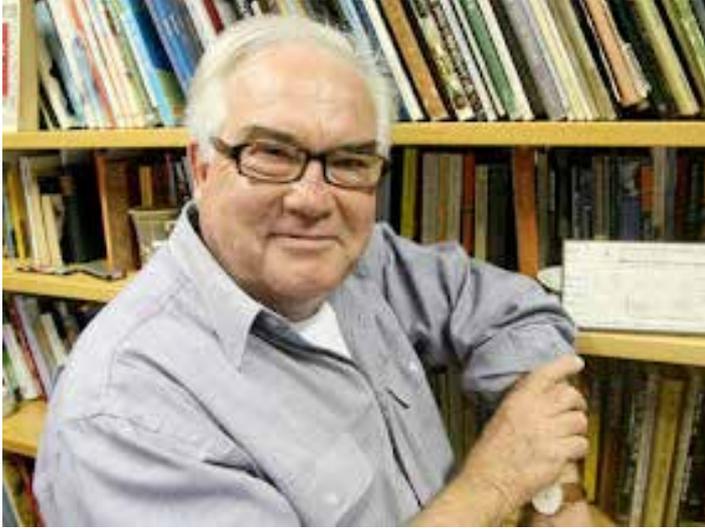
## *Memorial*

Written by Gary Crew  
Illustrated by Shaun Tan



# Just Imagine...

# About the Author



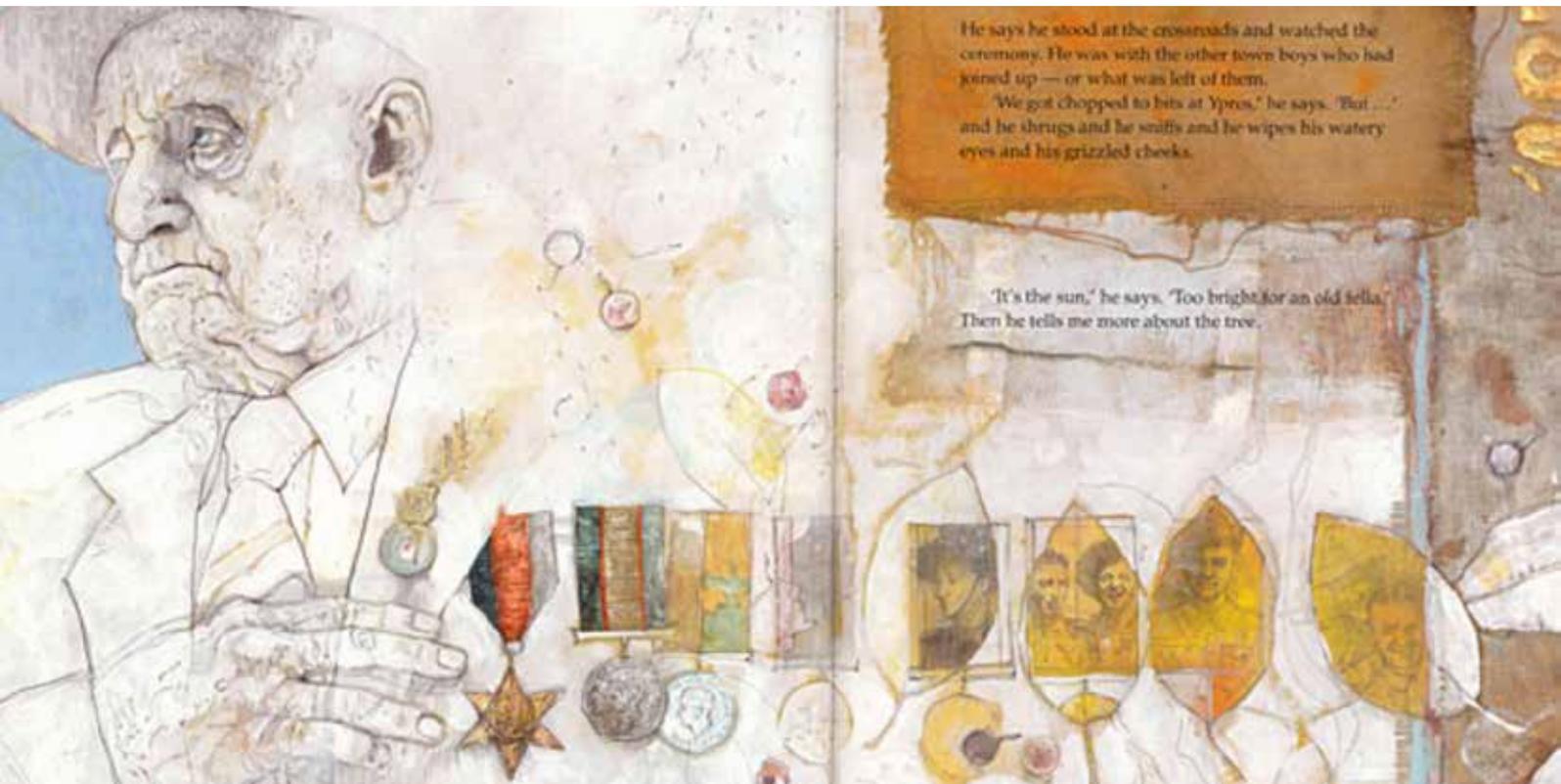
## Gary Crew

Gary Crew is an award winning Australian writer. Born in Brisbane in 1947 childhood illness kept him away from school but enabled him to develop an interest in reading and adventure stories. After finishing his education he trained as a draftsman and after 10 years working in this field he decided to train as an English teacher. He started writing in order to provide material for his students. In 1986, he published his first novel. Since then he has published many books, particularly Teenage Fiction and Picturebooks. He lectures in creative writing at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

# About the Book

*Memorial* is a story about a tree planted beside a war memorial for the Unknown Soldier, in a small country town by returned servicemen. Years on, the tree has grown to be huge and unruly, dislodging the statue next to it and creating a traffic hazard in what is now a much larger, busier town. A decision is made by a local council to cut the tree down. Four generations of one family recount their memories of the tree referencing family history and the three wars that they have impacted their lives.

Crew's conversational narrative combined with Tan's symbolic illustration create spaces for readers in upper primary and secondary schools to reflect on major themes of love, loss, war, hope, memory and remembrance.



He says he stood at the crossroads and watched the ceremony. He was with the other town boys who had joined up — or what was left of them.

'We got chopped to bits at Ypres,' he says. 'But ...' and he shrugs and he sniffs and he wipes his watery eyes and his grizzled cheeks.

'It's the sun,' he says. 'Too bright for an old fella. Then he tells me more about the tree.'

# Before Reading



Before showing the book write the word Memorial on the whiteboard and ask what the word means to the group. Share initial ideas.

Ask if they know any local or famous memorials. You might want to share pictures of some of the world's most famous war memorials and discuss what they show and what they represent. Suggestions: Cenotaph, London; The Lion Monument, Lucerne, Switzerland; The Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium; The Motherland Calls, Volgograd, Russia; The Peace Park, Hiroshima, Japan; Marine Corps War Memorial, Arlington, USA; Saint Julien Memorial, Saint Julien, Belgium; Vietnam War Nurses, Washington USA.

## Front cover

- Look at the front cover and ask the children to comment on anything they find interesting. Allow time for free discussion. If necessary, offer prompts that draw attention to the way the pictures have been made.
- Can you tell what materials have been used to create the picture?
- What is happening in the picture in the centre of the cover? Who do you think the two people might be?
- Are there any clues that tell us when or where this story is set?
- Look at the back cover.

## First encounters

If possible ask the children to read the book independently. This could be done at home or during a reading lesson. Invite them to record their first responses without sharing with anyone. Offer some prompts to help them formulate their ideas. Keep the prompts general to avoid narrowing the discussion too quickly. Prompts might include:

- What did you find interesting?
- Did the book remind you of anything you have read, seen or heard? What?
- Was there anything that you found strange or difficult to understand?
- After reading the book do you have any questions about anything that you have read or seen in the pictures?
- Record the children's questions and retain them for reference during reading. Review the questions periodically to see if they have been answered.

# During Reading

## Endpapers

- What can you see?
- What do you think the duck is doing in the bottom right hand corner?

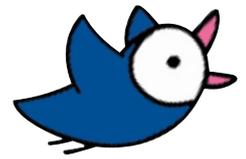
## 'My great grandpa says...

- What do you notice about this page?
- Turn the page to view the wordless double page spread. How does this spread make you feel?
- How much time do you think has passed between this page and the previous page?
- Allow time for the pictures to be explored at the children's pace.

## ‘He says he stood at the crossroads...’

Read the page together and then talk about the things the children find interesting.

Possible prompts to encourage deeper reading, if required:



- Do you see any connections between the image of the old man and the tree on the previous spread?
- What do you notice about the medals? Why do you think Shaun Tan may have chosen to illustrate them in this way?

## ‘I came home in 1918...’

- After reading this spread check that the children know which wars are being referred to. What do they know about the First World War? If necessary provide a general overview.
- What effect is created by the juxtaposition of the first two paragraphs on this page? Introduce the term ‘irony’, if it is not already known.
- Encourage the children to relate their own experiences to the family telling this story. Do they know anyone like Old Pa who can remember things from long ago but finds it hard to remember more recent things?

## Wordless spread soldiers on the battlefield

- How has this image been created? Why do you think it has been made in this way?
- What is the connection between the black and white and the sepia images on this spread? Why do you think Shaun Tan might have chosen these colours?

## ‘It wasn’t no piddly tree when I remember it...’

- Who is talking on this page?
- How much time has passed between the previous memory and the one that is being recounted on this page?
- What do the images add to the text? Do they directly illustrate the text or do they add something extra?

## ‘You were talking about the big town tree, Pa’

- After a general sharing of points of interest on this spread direct attention to the words *‘I’m remembering that all old people forget...’* Does this story support that assertion?
- What good memories are associated with the tree?

## Wordless double page spread

How does this picture make you feel? Why?

## ‘You know your mother and I had a tree house...’

- Who is talking on this page?
- What does the reference to Vietnam mean? Provide a brief overview if children haven’t heard of Vietnam.

## ‘But speaking of that tree...’

Does the boy think the tree or the statue is the best memorial? What evidence can you find to support your thinking?



## ‘The big boys will beat you every time. They will chop you to bits’

- Following a general sharing of thoughts draw attention to the details, if they have not already mentioned them
- What is the beetle doing? Why is the last square empty?
- What is happening in the painting on the right-hand side of the page?
- What do you think will be shown on the next page?
- What do you think Pa means when he says, ‘*The big boys will beat you every time. They will chop you to bits.*’?

## Wordless spread of statue and leaves

- What does this page make you feel?
- Why do you think the statue is taking up just one corner of the spread when it could be positioned in the centre?

## ‘Then he smiles...’

- What is happening on this page?
- Why do you think Shaun Tan has chosen to make the ducks and the beetle an important part of this picture?
- ‘*Memories, they’re ever-livin things.*’ Do you agree with this assertion?

# After Reading

## Reflection

Ask the children if they have learnt anything new from another pupil during the book discussion. Make explicit the point that listening and learning from each other helps us to take our thinking deeper.

## Review

Review the initial questions the children posed. Do any questions remain unanswered? Consider whether it is possible to answer the questions. Are the answers likely to be found in the book or elsewhere?

## Revisiting the text

Following the group discussion, allow time for the children to re-read the text either independently or in pairs.

The pictures in *Memorial* make use of symbols – find instances of seeds, birds, insects, photographs, picture frames. How are they used to convey meaning?

## Wars

Use a range of sources including books, images and the internet to find out about Ypres and World War 1.

Use the internet to find lyrics and audio clips of Eric Bogle’s anti-war songs: *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*; *I was Only Nineteen*; *The Diggers’ Legacy*. What connections can you find between these songs and *Memorial*?

Choose one of Wilfred Owen’s poems to read to the group.

Provide some background to the poet and his life.



## Memorial

Make a list of arguments that propose the tree as the most fitting memorial to mark those who died in the war

Make a list of arguments that propose the statue as the most fitting memorial to mark those who died in the war.

Role play the council committee meeting. Ask two children to present opposing sides of the argument and then have a debate before finally voting to either cut down the tree or save it.

## Family Stories

All families have stories passed down through generations. Invite the children to share some of their stories.

# Further Reading

- Michael Morpurgo *The Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha*
- Michael Morpurgo *Private Peaceful*
- Michael Morpurgo *War Horse*
- Marcia Williams *Archie's War*
- Michael Foreman *War Game*
- Barroux *In Line of Fire*

