

Sonya Hartnett Papers

Australian Manuscripts Collection MS 15486

Acquired 2015

The Sonya Hartnett Papers are an important collection from one of Australia's pre-eminent contemporary authors. They include a wide variety of items used by Hartnett (b. 1968) in the pursuit and promotion of her craft as a writer from an early age. Her papers have been acquired in five instalments; this article focuses on the latest purchase, assisted by the State Library Foundation, of papers received in 2015.

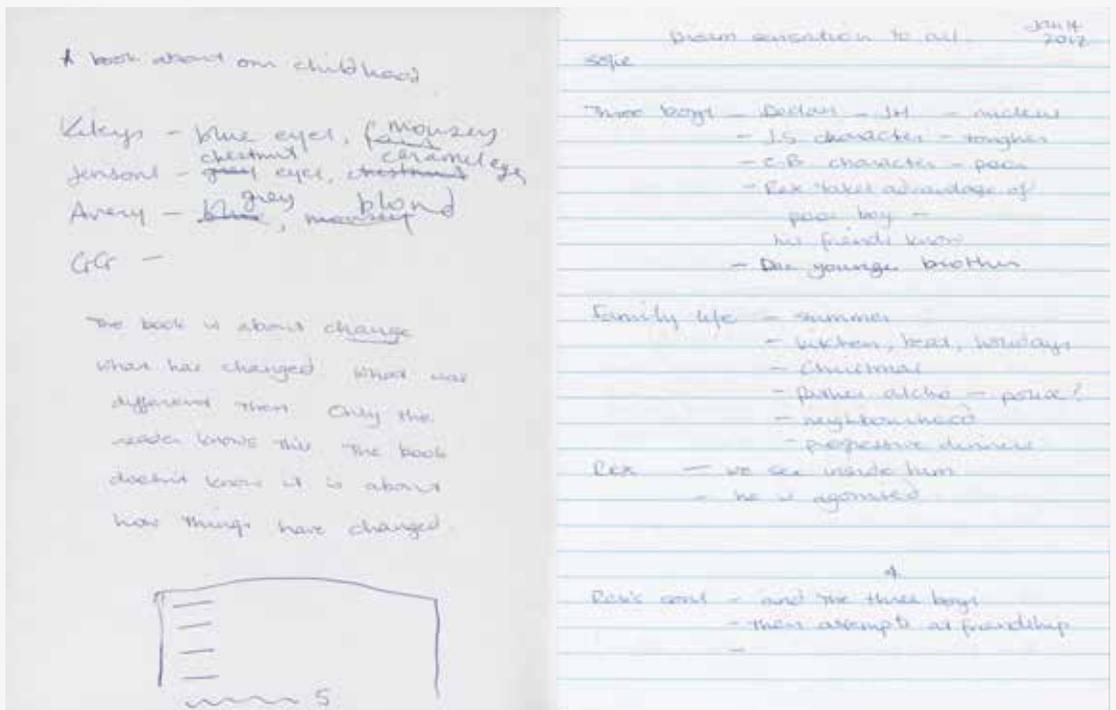
A highly accomplished and prolific author writing for all age groups, Hartnett has a career that spans 30 years and some 25 books, starting from her first novel, *Trouble all the Way*,¹ written at the age of 13 and published two years later.

Exercise books are an essential part of Hartnett's creative method. Known for her rigorous and meticulous writing practice, Hartnett begins with 'story-boarding' her ideas, a process similar to that used for filmmaking. When there are sufficient ideas to support a book, she purchases an exercise book and writes the title and date on the front. Typing on her laptop, 'often with coffee and chocolate to help me along',² she also continues to annotate her exercise book with ideas on characters and other notes. Describing her writing process, Hartnett says: 'It usually takes about two or three months to write the original draft. But the ideas can take months, even years, to gather in numbers large enough to make a novel'.³

A perfect illustration of this unique writing process can be found in the latest consignment of papers. These include an exercise book of notes, with the words 'Rex. 2012' inscribed on the front cover, containing phrases and paragraphs, and descriptions of characters and events. This detailed approach culminated in the novel for adults published under the title *Golden Boys*,⁴ which won the Indie Book Fiction award in 2015 and made the shortlist for the 2015 Miles Franklin Literary Award.

Associated with *Golden Boys* and included in these papers are edited drafts, galleys, correspondence, her laptop and a proof copy of the book featuring a luminous golden front cover, not used for the final publication. Other items of note are photographs of a young Hartnett on her first author tour of Sydney, in 1984, a braille copy of *The Silver Donkey*⁵ and two large pencil drawings by artist and illustrator Don Powers.

In 2016 the 'Golden Boys' exercise book, the gold-covered proof copy and Hartnett's laptop were displayed in the State Library Victoria exhibition *Mirror of the World: Books and Ideas*.



Exercise book with 'Rex. 2012' inscribed on the front cover, containing information and ideas for the novel that became *Golden Boys* (2015). Sonya Hartnett Papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, MS 15486, box 54