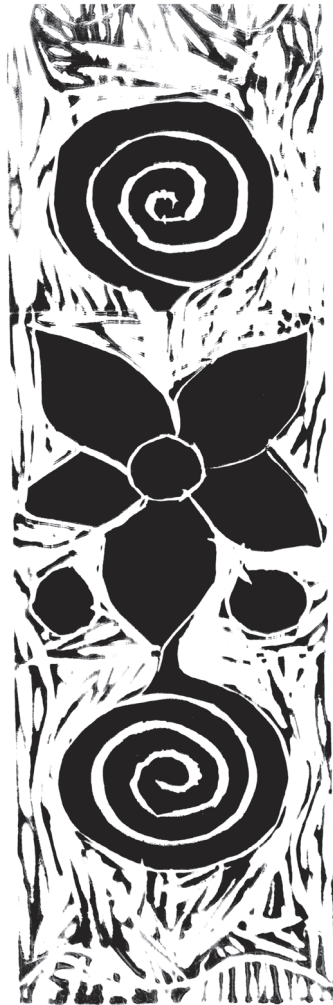


# From There to Here

a collection of young people's writing



*From There to Here* is a collection of writing from young people who came to New Zealand from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The Ministry of Education would like thank in particular Diane Percy, Pam Drake and Abby Storey who made their time and expertise available to mentor these young people as they developed their stories, through recollections and art work.

Abraham Mamer, Auckland Refugee Education Coordinator,  
Ministry of Education, 2006

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# School in Ethiopia

by Haileab Gesese Ethiopia Avondale College

Because my mother worked in many different places I went to many different schools. The school I liked most was Debre Markes Secondary School because I had many friends. I joined the school soccer team and we traveled to other schools to play.

Our school uniform was blue trousers and a blue shirt. We could wear any shoes or sandals we wanted.

Before school I had a breakfast of tea and maize bread which the women made at home, and then I walked to school with my friends, and on the way we would see many animals. We would walk past sheep, cows and goats see many people going to work, school or church.

There were four thousand students at secondary school, with sixty or seventy to a class. There were more boys than girls. We would take ten subjects with a different teacher for each subject. My favourite subject was Maths, and one of my favourite teachers was Mr Mesfia, because he was nearly always smiley and would tell jokes at the end of the Maths lessons.

In Ethiopia most schools run in two shifts, one from seven o'clock until noon, and one from one pm until six. One week we would go to school in the morning and the next in the afternoon.

I would have lunch at home with my mother, who would come home from the office to be with us. When I wasn't at school I would be at home with my brothers and my grandmother.

For lunch we would eat the local bread called injera, which was made from a grain we called teff. I would do my homework and then play soccer with my friends until dark, when the family would go to bed.

I have special outfit which I wear for festivals. It is a white tunic and long white trousers with white shoes and socks and a sash across my chest in the colours of the Ethiopian flag, which is green, yellow and red. I have a leather sun visor made of leather with the colours of the flag on it.

# School in Khartoum

by Rahwa Berhane Sudan Avondale College

My name is Rahwa, and I speak four languages, Tigreya, Amhara, Arabic and English.

I was about seven or eight years old when I went to school. I would get up at seven and have a cup of tea, then run to school by half past seven. I was lucky, because many children had to walk a long way.

On my first day at school I went with my uncle. I felt very nervous and thought the kids would be mean to me because I was new. They teased me about my name, which is Rahwa. They called me Rahwa Bahawa which means king of coffee. Actually I think the name Rahwa means light or something. I don't know why my father gave me that name. It is usually the mother who names her children. I have three sisters and a brother and they were named by my mother or grandmother.

People at school were mean sometimes. They would steal your stuff if you left it, your bag or your books. If they don't have that kind of stuff they take yours. There were no tables or chairs at school. Before we went into the classroom we sang a national song, the Tigerya national anthem. I still remember it. We sat on the floor and wrote on slates with chalk. It was hard to study because we couldn't take the slate home.

I was at that school for about a year and a half. The best thing that happened was that our teacher would be kind and let us play games sometimes, like hopscotch and a game with a stick which we tried to balance on your hand.

We would get back home at about eleven or twelve and have something to eat, usually injara, which is made from flour and is soft like bread. We would drink cold water from a tap a long way away, because our tap was usually full of muddy water. We had to take a bucket to the other tap. Usually after that I would give my sisters and my brother a shower, and have a shower myself. The shower is a big round bowl which we would stand in and pour cups of cold water from a bucket over our heads.

After that I would often go to my friend's house next door and watch a movie on TV. My friend was called Marina. She's very tall and skinny and she's very friendly. I don't talk to her now. She hasn't got a phone.

# Snake

by Mohamed Mohamud Somalia Lynfield College

I remember the day when I was at home in my village of Hadnftimn in Somalia. It was lunchtime and I was at home with my mother, my grandmother, my two aunties and my brother. My mother was cooking a lunch of rice and meat and salad. My younger brother was getting ready to go shopping with my aunty Zainab to buy food and drink for the family. I was going out to my friend Ahmed's house.

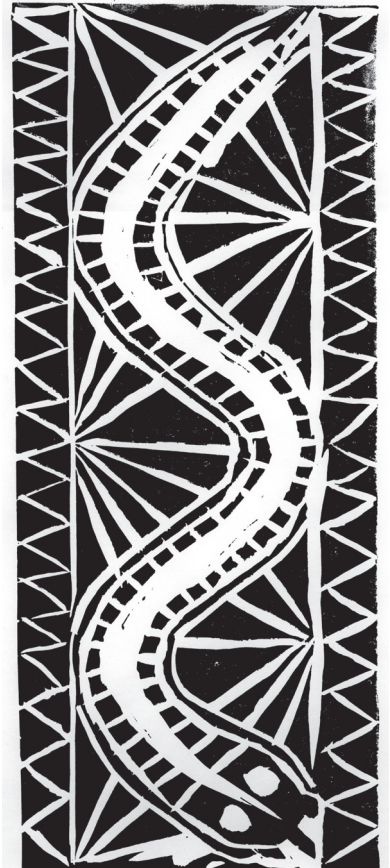
On the ground outside my house I saw a spotted black snake as big as my arm. I was very scared because I knew it was a poisonous snake. I stood very still. My heart was thumping hard. I watched the snake come towards me slowly. I was terrified, but the snake slid right round me.

A man from the village saw this happening. He picked up some rocks and tried to hit the snake. I ran away towards Ahmed's house.

When my mother came out and saw the snake she shouted, "Come into the house."

I said, "I'm going to Ahmed's because it's closer," and I ran to my friend's house as fast as I could.

My mother said, "Wait there until I come to get you." Later she came and took me safely home.



# Some Facts about Ethiopia

researched by Hialeab Geses Ethiopia Avondale College

There is a saying that Ethiopia has thirteen months of sunshine every year. What this actually means is that our calendar has thirteen months in the year, which means that 2004 is actually 1997.

There are many different peoples in the country, and each has its own language, so there are eighty-two languages spoken. Amharic is the official language, but Tigrinya is spoken in the north and Orminya in the south. The Oromos are the largest ethnic group.

The Ethiopian Orthodox church has been the most important religion since the fourth century A.D. Believers fast every Wednesday and Friday, when they don't eat meat, dairy-food or sometimes even fish.

People in Kefa in the south claim that coffee originally comes from that area, and was first grown about the year one thousand A.D.


What some claim to be the fossils of our earliest human ancestors, called Homo, come from the west of the country and are 3.2 million years old.

In 1889 the Menelik people of Ethiopia signed a treaty of friendship and co-operation with the French colonizers, but the French version and the Amharic version were different, and the Italians claimed it made all of Ethiopia their protectorate. War broke out in 1895, which the local people won decisively.

## Speaking Oromiffa-Learning English

by Hiko Deddefo Ethiopia Avondale College

Hello, my name is Hiko Abraham Deddifo and I come from Ethiopia, which is in East Africa. I used to live in a small village called Qararu, and I speak two languages, Oromiffa and English. I have a family in New Zealand, a sister called Anni, a brother called Tesho, a father called Abraham and a grandmother called Scro. Anyway I want to tell you a little bit about Oromo.



There are about 30 000 000 Oromo people. Although there used to be a country called Oromia, it is now, since the early 1900s, part of the larger country of Ethiopia. In spite of a good deal of oppression by governments over many years, Oromo people still keep much of their language and culture alive.

It hasn't been easy to do this, though, because the Oromo people have been persecuted for four hundred years. While Haile Silasse ruled Ethiopia, from 1930, he tried to ban my language and stopped Oromo people from having good jobs, so quite a few learned Amharic and changed their names so they could fit in, especially in the cities. The Silasse government charged our people huge taxes and mocked our culture.

Although things are a little better for the Oromo people at present, there is still fighting and distress. It seems it has always been like this for us, and a great many of us are now living in other countries. Even so, we care a lot for our language and culture!

Now I am learning English, because I desperately need to communicate and to keep on with my education. My dad was educated in Ethiopia, and so I want to be educated too. I go to Avondale College, and I'm learning fast because I have very good teachers.

## Teachers' Day in Kabul

by Kushboo Osman Afghanistan      Lynfield College

A special day for students in Kabul is Teachers' Day. All the children buy gifts for the teachers. Some buy a flower, others a pen and some bring drink or food for a party.

When the teachers give the children a party the children throw special small, shiny flowers over them. The teacher looks beautiful with sparkling flowers glittering in her hair and in her clothes. Everybody takes photographs so they have a special memory of the day.

School in Afghanistan is different from school in New Zealand. School begins at half past eight and finishes at half past twelve. There is school for six days, from Saturday to Thursday. There is no school on Friday because it is a holy day and the men and boys go to the mosque to pray.



# The Festival of Eid

by Issa Masoud Afghanistan Mt Albert Grammar School

In my country, Afghanistan, we celebrate a festival called Eid. Eid comes after Ramadan, when all Muslims fast for about thirty days. We fast during the hours of sunlight. When the sun sets, or we hear the Azan, we break our fast and eat and drink. Azan is when the Mullah stands at the top of the mosque and chants a prayer which can be heard all around the area. Then we can eat and drink in the hours of the night.

After the thirty days of Ramadan we have the first Eid, one of the main festivals for all Muslims. People get ready by buying new clothes and shoes, and collecting food for the feast.

On the first day of Eid people wake up early in the morning and we say, "Eid Mubarak", to our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters and all the family. This is a special Muslim greeting for this special day. On the first day of Eid all the Muslims go to prayer at eight in the morning. There is a special prayer for this day as everyone comes hurrying for the Eid. After prayers we come home and eat lots of food, like rice, chicken and meat, and the parents or guardians give money to the little children, and the children light fireworks. In Pakistan you are allowed big fireworks that make a noise like gunfire, though some, like the "coloured fountain," are pretty. Eid lasts for three days, and is lots of fun, with music, dancing and food.

A month later, in January, we celebrate the second Eid, called the Eid Isaha. All the people go to the mosque to pray, and then come home and celebrate Korbani, which is a ritual sacrifice based on the story of Abraham. The man in the family kills the animal. In our family it was a grandfather.

If some people don't know how to kill an animal they hire a "genius man". He may ask for the head or other parts of the animal for payment. We eat some of the animal, perhaps cooked as kebabs on steel skewers, and give some of it away to the poor. After we come back from more prayers in the mosque, all the children let off fireworks. It is a great and important day in our religion.



# The Girl and the Bread

by Nawal Radi Kuwait      Lynfield College

## A Story My Grandmother Told Me

My grandmother told me a story about a girl who was hungry. The girl, called Arerha, was fifteen years old, and her brother, Alie, who was ten years old, were rich people. She spent lots of money on things for herself.

One day they moved to a new house in Jahara. It was like a castle, it was so big. Later Arerha wanted to go for a walk with her brother, so she asked her mother if she could go out. Her mother said, "Yes you may go out, but you don't know this place. Take this bread with you and break the bread into pieces and throw it onto the ground."

Arerha asked why, and her mother replied, "So you won't lose your way back to this house."

As the children walked they threw the bread on the ground so they wouldn't get lost. They walked and they walked until they felt hungry. The girl said to her brother, "I'm hungry, let's go back home." They turned to walk home.

The children then looked at the ground, but there was no bread. The birds had eaten it and Arerha could see their footprints clearly in the sand. The birds were called asfoor. They are small birds, grey and black, with small eyes, small wings and a peaked tail. Because of them the children were lost and frightened. Little Alie started to cry, and Arerha prayed to God to help them find their way back home.

Arerha and Alie walked around and finally found their way back to their new home. Their mother had been worried because the children were late. When she saw the children she hugged them. They were all happy.

When my grandmother told me this story I was ten. My grandmother still lives in Kuwait. I miss her.

# A Festival of Dance

by Lamiya Ajum      Lynfield College

It was festival day. All the people were coming to our party. Our dance team was prepared to perform an awesome group dance. It was an ethnic dance, and it was wonderful. I was in the dance group. I was excited and a little nervous.

The performance had started and we were up on stage ... three, two, one ... ready. We started to dance. It was a Bengali festival dance. I was dancing on the stage and looking out at the crowd. They were really enjoying the look of us. We were wearing our colourful saris, which can be any colour as long as it's bright and beautiful!

We were competing with other groups. Next on stage were the Arabian dancers, who danced to Arabian music. It was nice anyway. Next we sang a song together. It was a Bengali song. We sang it after the Arabian group. It was a really exciting night.

Now it was time to give the awards. Four groups had danced and sung.

Who was going to be the winner?


The man announced the second-prize winner. "The winner is the Bengali dance group." We had won the second award! I was very happy. "That was the best performance ever," I thought.

# The People of Oromo

by Anni Deddefo Ethiopia      Avondale College

I come from Ethiopia, but I never forget that I am an Omoriffa, one of a large tribe in this even larger country. Our language and culture is our own, and different from other parts of the country.

Many of the Oromo people in New Zealand come from the countryside, where people don't get much chance of an education, but many people from the cities are very well-educated, and used to work as nurses, teachers and other professionals in their own country. Although things have changed a lot for us in New Zealand, we still work to keep our unique culture and language alive as we build a community here.



Singing, geerarsa and story-telling, mirisa help us to do this. We sing, tell stories and poems and proverbs to praise good behaviour and to stop people from behaving badly. It is important in our culture to respect elders and be responsible for the people in the community by helping others. We also believe in being brave and working hard. For us it is important to know the history and culture of our people, and, like the Maori, we know our whakapapa back through ten generations or more.

We express all these important cultural values through different kinds of singing, dancing and story-telling, which are called weedu. For instance, a marriage song is called a weedu fuudha, and a war song is a weedu lola. Our women celebrate their children, their husbands and other things. Young boys sing to call the girls at marriage ceremonies by singing hurismo. Men do dhichisa and girls do shago-yee at weddings, and we Oromo have prayers called shubisu and deedisu. Now we are in New Zealand we are learning the language and culture of this country, but we want to keep our own culture alive!

## **The Sad Story of an Old Friend**

by Pinar Ozucargil Turkey Mt Albert Grammar School

I had a very wonderful friend in Turkey. Hazal was twenty-one years old. She was nice with everybody and she was my beautiful best friend.

One day her father fell sick. My friend loved her father, but she didn't have any money to pay for his treatment.

She met a man who was much older than she was and she said to me, "I am going to marry him so I can get some money to pay for my father." She married him, but it was too late to save her father because he died of a sickness. I don't know what it is called.

Hazal had moved to another village with her husband, so she didn't know that her father had died. She called me on the phone and said to me, "Pinar, I am very unhappy because my husband is very old and I don't like him. I only married him to save my father's life."

I couldn't tell her that her father had died, because when he was sick she said to me, "Pinar, you are my best friend, and you know my family. Please tell my father I love him and kiss him for me."

My family wanted me to call her and tell her and say her father had died, but when she called me again I couldn't tell her. I cried for her father. Hazel was my best friend in the world, and her father had been a very good man, but I just couldn't tell her he was dead. I saw Hazel again after she learned the bad news from someone else, and she said, "Why didn't you tell me?"

I said, "I'm sorry, I just couldn't tell you." And she hugged me and we were crying so much because she was my best friend.

She died soon after that, much too early. She had tried to save her father, but she had already caught the sickness from him. She died soon after he did.

We have a special day for her every year. I arrange flowers for her and I will do flowers for her, every anniversary. I am with you for every second, Hazel, my friend. My heart is with you and I will always love you.


## A Story My Grandmother Told Me

by Feyine Henbento Ethiopia  
Mt Albert Grammar School

My grandmother, who we call Mother, though her name is Arakash, always told me to be a nice girl. She said she didn't like bad girls. If an Ethiopian girl doesn't know how to cook she won't get married, so she showed me how to cook special food, and now I am a good cook.

Arakash was a lawyer and a police officer and she wanted me to work as a lawyer and a police officer too. She always promised to make a big party for my wedding, but now she is dead. She was fifty-seven when she died.





Her father died a long time ago. The American soldiers thought he had done something wrong. They said, "We need to ask you some things," and they took him to a mountain and they just shot him.

After that my grandmother decided to become a lawyer in the police because she loved her father. She wanted to find these Americans and kill them. She told me this and other stories about her life.

Arakash's mother mourned for her father, and died soon afterwards. My grandmother didn't stay in touch with all her family. If I marry I will have to ask very carefully where they come from to make sure we are not related.

## What My Mother Told Me

by Anni Deddefo

Avondale College

My mother died when I was young, but this is what she always told me; I should learn proper forms of respect and greetings. She told me all these things, and I remember them still.

Obb is the Oromiffa for Mister. For a married woman you say Ayo and for a young woman Addee. Older people are usually respected in the community. There is a formal word for You which is used when speaking to respected people. Older people are called Mother and Father.

The traditional greeting used by both men and women is called Salamatta They grasp each others' hands and then kiss them on the top. If they are related or close friends they kiss each other. The people who live in the United States often shake hands in the western way. When they meet in the street people say, "Did you have a peaceful night?" People often hug children when they meet them. You should not say Galla because it is a word used in the past by the rulers to put down the Oromo people.

Here are some more greetings:

Akkam bultan means good morning

Akkam ooltan means good afternoon

Nagayaatti us goodbye

Ul'finnaa means greetings

In Oromo women are greeted as Aaddee. If you say good morning to a woman it might sound like Akkam bulte aaddee! If the woman has children she may be called Hadna plus her oldest child's name, so she might be called Hadna Rooba.

Civilian men in Oromo are greeted as Obbo, and army men are called Jaille. If a man has a child he will be called Abba with the name of the child, so he could be called Abba Bunna.

I am fourteen years old and the last time I spoke with my mother was five, but I still remember all the important things that she taught me.

## War in Somalia

by Hodan Botan Somalia Lynfield College


When I lived in Somalia there was a war between the two tribes, the Hawia, the indigenous people, and the supporters of the Darot government, which wanted the good land where the Hawia lived. They chased out the Hawia people. The Darot were richer than the Hawia people and had all the good jobs.

I remember the day when I ran away from the bombs. It was sad. I wished I had died. Although we lived with the Darot, we didn't belong to them, because our ancestor was an Asian who had come to Somalia long before. We were attacked along with the Darot people with guns and bombs. It was a terrible day. Many of my tribe died and many ran away to Kenya.

On our way to Kenya we walked for seventeen days. It was very hot and there was no food or water. Many people died. Also we were attacked by soldiers, who killed even more people.

We finally arrived at a refugee camp in Kenya. We had lost our father, and didn't see him for two years. We were in that camp for four or five years until some New Zealand people came to take some of us to New Zealand.

In the camp there were many different tribes, including the Masai and the Turkana. There was often fighting among the refugees because we were so different from each other. One of my friends was killed by a boy with a catapult. He was eight years old.



The aid people gave us food like rice and oil and tomatoes and potatoes. We had no money except the money that was sometimes sent to us by relatives in America.

I am glad to be in New Zealand now, though I have lost so many friends. Many have died, and others are still in Kenya.

## **A Wedding in Kabul**

by Khushboo Osman Afghanistan Lynfield College

In Afghanistan I remember when everybody used to go to a neighbour's wedding. First there was a pre-wedding bridal night. Women went to the bride's home to celebrate. The bride was given a ring by the groom's mother. It was put in her open hand before the henna circle was made. Next the bride would hold her special green shawl out like a basket and the older women put money into it. We danced, then a special dish of henna was circulated as we sang a special song. The dish had bright, shiny paper, with the henna and a candle in the middle. Seven girls would take some henna and make a circle in the palm of the bride's hand, then we all put henna on our own hands. The young children liked the henna, so they had a happy day.

After we had finished putting henna on our hands, we had some food. The bride's family put milk in a big bowl, added sugar and put the drink in separate cups, then poured cream on top. We ate baghlava, a small sweet cake.

The next day was the wedding party. First the women sang and danced in a big room like a hall, while the men were celebrating in the next room. Professional men singers sang to the men while the women sang as they danced. The older women hit a wooden tambourine covered with cow skin while we danced. I was eleven years old and I danced too. I enjoyed it! The bride and groom sat on a special sofa and watched the dancing.

Later the food, which the men had prepared, was served. Young boys brought it to the door of the women's party and then the young girls, including me, took it to the bride and groom and the guests. We ate kebabs, salad, lots of cooked rice with beef and spinach, which is my favourite, and we drank Pepsi and Coke. Everyone had a wonderful time.



# Church in Ethiopia

by Yalefale Tesfaleul Ethiopia Avondale College

In Ethiopia, Christian people go to church every morning. All the girls wear white habishak amiz (dresses) and big white scarves and have their hair covered in white headscarves. Everybody goes, even small children, and the priest explains the Bible.

There were churches everywhere and you can hear the singing, clapping, drumming (kabero) and choirs wherever you go. To sing in a choir you have to be an unmarried virgin. Girls marry boys from the choir or Bible teachers – others from the same religion.

I liked going to church. It made me feel strong inside, and that the future was bright. In Ethiopia, in the time before Fasika (Easter), one of the most important festivals, we fasted during the day for two months. We couldn't eat until three or three-thirty in the afternoon. In the morning we showered and dressed in nice white clothes. We went to church at ten o'clock, and then some people went to school or work, and some people rested. Later in the day we went back to church, but most of the people stood in the church all day. Old people, who couldn't stand for so long, held sticks.

I especially remember Fasika, which was a very special celebration. The priest carried the Tsalat, the holy book, into the fields in the evening and everybody went with them. They all sang and drummed and praised God. We spent a long time praying and singing. When the priests reached the fields they put the Tsalal in the talbut, a special little house, for one or two days. The priest didn't eat anything until he put the Tsalat in the tabut, but the rest of the people could eat while they were waiting. They jumped and sang in their own language and were very happy.



Later the priest ate, drank and rested. A cow was brought in and killed in front of him, then prepared and cooked. After eating the priest gave a sermon while all the people lounged around him on the grass, then everyone sang to loud drum music. There was lots of jumping and dancing. Because there were so many churches celebrating at once it was very loud!

After dark people brought mattresses and pillows and slept next to the talbut. They brought big lights out, and because they were all dressed in white they looked like white gold in the night. They looked wonderful. When you saw them – Oh my God – every year was new for me and I was surprised at the beauty.

After midnight the women made buena coffee, which takes more than three or four hours to prepare, and brought out very big loaves of bread called dabo, which is more than a metre long. We made plates from grass and string. When they brought the bread it was time for the priests to come. People bowed their heads and the priest prayed and gave thanks to God. He cut the bread in a cross to signify Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



A church member cut the bread into small pieces and everyone ate it with their coffee. No-one was sleeping, because they were talking about the future. We made resolutions to be better people, and gave promises like to give up smoking, or to make a more generous offering next year - if we gave a sheep this year we would promise to bring a cow next year.

In the early morning everyone went home to change into clean white clothes, or if they had come from far away, to the clean clothes they had brought with them.

They gave charity to the many beggars who sit on the road.

At three in the morning the priests and others began a kind of singing called kadaze, which in English might be called ululating. People brought a giant pot of water and the priest blessed it. Two young boys held a gold umbrella over the priest, and other boys brought an incense burner. Another boy held an armful of reeds called zambeba. They all wore white clothes and stood around the water in a circle. Beyond the pot of water there were boys with drums. They started to beat the drums slowly at six o'clock, while the priest chanted and everyone began to clap slowly in time. The priest used a cup to throw water over us in blessing, and then moved inside. People rushed with jars to get some of the blessed water to take home.

At about eleven in the morning the priest picked up the holy book and placed it on his head. A choir of boys and girls started singing and people started moving very, very slowly, back to the church, surrounding the priests in the middle carrying the holy book. The priests had a police guard because the book is very precious.

When I lived there it never rained on this day, and people said it had always been sunny! Unmarried people carried umbrellas over the priests to shade them, and there were people singing and dancing all around them as they went. There was a babble of languages as everyone praised God in their own way. Some people did their traditional dances, called uskusta.

The procession reached the church about six at night, when it was dark. The priest put the holy book back in the church again, and then came out and preached from the Bible. Then the ceremony was over, and people went home and ate special food and drink coffee for celebration. We would have a carpet of green grass through the whole house, which could be left for three or four days.

When I was small I remember running through the huge crowd to see the choir when people began to squash me and I fell and hurt my leg. A lady picked me up and took me home. I was scared and crying.

I will remember these wonderful festivals for my whole life. They were a great celebration of my culture, and will be part of me forever.



# Country Mouse and City Mouse

by Halibut Shah

Mt Albert Grammar School

Country Mouse and City Mouse were cousins. They both were very nice mice. Country Mouse loved living in the country, and City Mouse loved living in the city.

One day Country Mouse wrote a letter to City Mouse, saying, "Come to visit me, you will love it here in the country." City Mouse came to the country. They both went under a tree and picked up food and went back home. Country Mouse was very good at cooking. He made an acorn dish and a pot of tea. They sat down to eat, though City Mouse did not eat much. He didn't like acorns. He didn't sleep well either. Country Mouse slept very well.

The next morning City Mouse was tired. "Is something wrong?" asked Country Mouse. "Country life is not for me," said City Mouse. "Come with me to the city. You will love it there."

They both arrived in the city. City Mouse was happy to be home. "Listen to the buses and the cars," said City Mouse. "You must look both ways before you cross the road! This is where I live. I live in this building," said City Mouse.

They both entered the building. Everything was huge. "Here the people live, and animals too," said City Mouse. "Come and I will show you my room."

City Mouse's room was beautiful. "Let's go and eat something," said City Mouse.

They both went to the dining table. "There is so much food, and I didn't have to cook it," said City Mouse.

Suddenly they heard a voice. A cat with hungry eyes was looking for mice. They both hid in the bowl of fruit. When the cat had gone they both went back to City Mouse's room. Country Mouse packed his things. "Is something wrong?" asked City Mouse. "City life is not for me," said Country Mouse. He was happy to be going home. City Mouse was happy to be home too.

I tell you this story because it reminds me of when my uncle came to Lahore. He had been living in a village where there were just a hundred people. When he came to stay with us he said, "Everything is different here. There are so many people and so much traffic, and so many refugees from Afghanistan."

He was right. Though they were very poor, they sold tiny, cheap things like yoghurt and milk, but they were good at business. As an example, someone bought a pen for two dollars then tried to sell it for three dollars to someone else.

In my street in Pakistan there was a man who was very good at the business of selling milk. He had sixteen animals in all in his shed, which he milked twice a day. He gave his cows hay to eat. He worked every day. He was a nice man and everybody liked him because he was full of jokes.

My uncle liked the story of the country mouse and the city mouse, because he was from the country, but he could see how people could change when they came to the city.


## Eid in Pakistan

by Rafia Kalsum Pakistan Mt Albert Grammar School

As you know all Muslim people in the whole world celebrate two Eids, Eid-ul-Fiter and Eid el Azha, every year. Both are very happy and holy days. Both are days of prayer to God. Eid-ul-Fiter comes after the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. Sometimes Ramadan lasts twenty days and sometimes thirty days.

In Pakistan we say Eid-el-Fiter which means small Eid or sweet Eid. This is the celebration I will write about. On this day we cook sweet dishes and eat with the whole family. The evening, when the moon is expected to appear, is wonderful. When the sun goes down that is the last of Ramadan, and we break our fast and offer the Nimaz-i-Magrib (prayer). Then we all go up on the roofs of our houses and look for the moon. On the rooftops we talk to our neighbours and children play and shout to each-other. At that moment everyone looks very excited and searches for the moon in the West.

Then suddenly someone shouts, "The moon is here!" I cannot write about this moment, for I have no words to express it. Everyone hugs each-other and raises their hands in prayer. No-one can sleep that night.



Girls wear bangles and necklaces and make designs in henna on their hands. The national dress is shakwar kameez, and on Eid day we wear this with bright colours. In Islamic religion we are not allowed to enjoy our happiness without thinking of our poor Muslim brothers and sisters. We go to their homes and give them gifts.

On that day everyone looks happy and excited. People who couldn't meet with each other for the whole year meet with their friends and relations on Eid day. People who are angry with each other forget their anger and go as friends in happiness. Eid-el-Fiter is busy, happy and memorable.

## Escape on the Tampa

by Jawad Akbari Afghanistan Avondale College

Hello, my name is Jawad and I came from Afghanistan in February 2004. I left most of my family of ten people behind in Kabul, and now my brother, Wahidullah, and I live with uncle's family in Avondale. In Kabul I could only go to school for two years because of the fighting. After that I studied at home with my uncle. I didn't speak any English when I came to this country, but now I am happy and it is my home.

I want to tell you the story of my brother's journey. Wahidullah has been in New Zealand for three years. He was seventeen when he left our country because of the war. He had to leave secretly because at that time the Pashtan Taliban ruled our area. Because they didn't like our Hazara religion they tried to kill our people whenever they saw us, and we were very frightened. We were scared of the American soldiers too. They fought in the streets of Kabul, near our house, and lots of people died. One day a bomb exploded in a house near us, and pieces of the bomb hit my sister, Yasmin, and broke her back. Now she is crippled. The only injury I ever had was from playing marbles!

One day my father told my brother that he had to leave Afghanistan. When he left home everybody cried because he was the oldest of the family, and we loved him, but he left bravely because he knew how important it was for us.

First he went to Pakistan. He phoned us and said he was leaving for Indonesia in three days. After that we didn't hear from him for eight months, and we were worried about where he was. Eight months later he gave us a call and said he was going to Australia by ship.

He left Indonesia by ship three times, but three times they had to turn back because of trouble with the engine. A month later he left for a fourth time, and this time they lost their way and were at sea for seven days and eight nights. There were four hundred and thirty four people on the small ship. I think half of them were families and half of them were young boys. The ship sank off the coast of Australia, and many of the passengers were saved by a container ship called the Tampa. The Australian government didn't want the refugees to settle in Australia, so they eventually came to New Zealand.

When the boys came here they received a very special welcome. The Prime Minister, Helen Clark, had a special meeting with some of the boys. Wahidullah is happy to be living here, and we hope more of the family can come and join us soon.

## Escaping Sudan


by Ramaz Ali Sudan/Ethiopia Avondale College

My name is Ramaz. I come from Sudan and I am fourteen years old.

My journey from Sudan was full of hardship, but there were many reasons why we had to try to get away from where we were living. Our people had a political problem with the Sudanese government and the police were always harassing us in our house. They would come and take money and belongings and anything valuable.

They tried to get my uncle to work for them so that they could use him to get my father, but my uncle refused co-operate with them and to betray his brother.

The police were treating us so badly, and we were so afraid, that we didn't want to stay in Sudan any more. We decided to go through the border to Ethiopia, but the first time we tried we were sent back by the Sudanese army, who told us we couldn't cross the border without passports. We tried again four days



later, and this time we succeeded. The sad part is that our mother couldn't come with us because she couldn't walk well enough, so she is still in Sudan.

We stayed for two years in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, before we got interviewed by the United Nations. After another year we were interviewed again, and the New Zealand Immigration Service came to bring us to New Zealand. End of story!

## Food in Turkey

by Aziz Ozucargil Turkey Mt Albert Grammar School

When I was living in my village of Camurlu, near the city of Gaziantep, the food was very good. We could get everything in the village or in the town. My mother went to Gaziantap every weekend. She would buy things like tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers, peppers, eggplants, pumpkins, fruit and drinks.

We cooked the food at home. My mother cooked very well, and she cooked nice food for us. Sometimes I would help her cook dolmas, meat and rice.

Like other countries we have special food for special occasions. At the end of Ramadan we had a big meal with special foods like dolmas, suslu fasulye and many others I can't remember. We cooked special foods for special days. In one month we had two special days.

If somebody visited from another village, another city or another country we cooked very nice food for them because they were our guests.

Some of the children in the city didn't have parents. They were street kids. Street kids didn't have enough food. They worked all day for five or ten dollars because they don't have parents to look after them. If they earn five dollars they buy a packet of bread with some cheese, or maybe something else that is cheap, and they eat their meal under a tree or on the side of the road. When they finish eating they sleep in the street.

They would like to go to school, but they can't because they have to pay 5 000 000 lira to sit the entrance exam. This sounds like an enormous amount, but for 1 000 000 lira you can only buy a bar of chocolate, but they still haven't got enough money. If students in Turkey pass the exams the government pays for them to go to school.



The street children work washing windows, in factories or as car mechanics. They even beg to make enough money to eat.

Sometimes I think about them. They are very good, but they wanted their parents.

## Ethiopian Ways

by Nazret Ethiopia Avondale College

Ethiopia is a land where people love to sing and dance. The people often dance to traditional music, in restaurants, in the villages and streets, and at festivals. They wear beautiful, colourful clothes, and dance mainly with their arms and shoulders. You can tell where someone comes from by their dance, as different areas have different dance traditions.

If the audience likes the dance, they stick money on the dancers' foreheads or in their belts, just like many Pacific Islanders do!

In Ethiopia it is important to know how to greet people properly. You have to be polite to old people, and shake both their hands slowly and then kiss them on the cheek three times. You can hug young people any time you feel like it, or you can shake their hands. You can be much more informal with them.

Spring in my home country is a time to celebrate. For us the New Year is on September 11th, at the end of the rainy season. It's the perfect time to celebrate life, when everything is growing and the weather is good. People light fires in their homes on enkutatash, which means both gift-giving, and give presents to each other. It is a great time for the Ethiopian people.

Maskal is the day when you celebrate demera in church. The night before maskal chosen men set up a large pole called a demera and build a long bonfire around it. At the other end of the bonfire they put a big cross. They decorate the demera with maskal flowers, and when the sun goes down the people light the bonfire with torches. People dance and sing maskal songs and feed the flames with wood.

It's cool to be in Ethiopia at maskal time, because the singing, the dancing and the bonfire are a lot of fun.



# Missing My Father

Trina Bakhshi    Afghanistan    Lynfield College

When I lived in Afghanistan and I was six years old I always went everywhere with my father. My father took me to the beach and to a river, or we went to visit friends. Sometimes we traveled to other towns and cities.

When we visited my grandmother and my grandfather in Pakistan I loved it because my uncles and their families were in Pakistan. When we returned to Afghanistan my mother got angry. She said, "Don't take my girl away."

I didn't want to stay at home and my mother got even angrier at me.

When the war came to Afghanistan it hurt to leave my country because I would miss my friends, but my heart said, "Go back to Pakistan where your uncles and their families are." I went to Pakistan, with my mother and my four sisters and three brothers, but this time without my father.

When I got there I went to a Pakistani school. It was a good school, but it was hard to find new friends. After a while I was happy there, but I missed my father a lot. Later my mother had a new baby. It was a boy called Tawab Bakhshi. He was cute and lovely and very sweet.

When I heard that the war had started we called my father to come to Pakistan, but he said his parents were sick and anyway he must run his business and look after his staff.

My mother was angry, "Come here and look after us. I am a stranger here!" she said over the telephone. My father's brother also urged him to come so he came a month later. His journey was long and dangerous.

He was so happy to see Tawab for the first time. "He looks like me!" he said. "His hair is curly like my father's but a little lighter and quite beautiful." Tawab was one year old then.

My father's brother was going to New Zealand with his family and suggested we should go too. My father went back to Afghanistan and sold all his assets, though he had to leave a lot behind.

Three years later we began our journey to New Zealand. On the way we stayed in Tehran for two nights and visited my cousin. She was so happy to see us safe. We hugged and cried. It was an emotional time.

My father had to go back to Afghanistan again, so we left him behind when we flew to New Zealand. He promised to join us soon. I believed his promise because he loved us.

It was raining the morning we arrived in Auckland. We saw many shops at the airport, and there were nice smells. On the way to my uncle's house we saw beaches, nice houses, and many trees and flowers. It was cold, windy spring weather and I was freezing.

Two months later, when my father arrived, we showed him the beaches and all the things which had been so amazing to us when we had arrived.


## My Life

by Shehzad Askari Afghanistan/  
Pakistan Avondale College

I like living in New Zealand. Here I feel safe, and I'm pleased that there is no fighting like there was in my village. I also like to be able to study without worrying that my school would be closed by the fighting. I have only been here since March 2004, but already I have learned a lot of English.

Although I have many bad memories of life in Afghanistan, I have good memories as well. I had a lot of friends in my old country. I especially remember one friend, who was a very good boy, and honest as well. His name was Rahim and we lived in the same street and were in the same class at school. We played together at school and also after school. Sometimes we played soccer, which is my favourite game. In my village I often played it after school with my friends and other boys in the neighbourhood. We played it on the grassy part





of the park. We didn't have goalposts so we would mark the goal with piles of stones.

When I told Rahim that I was going to New Zealand he cried and said, "Don't go. If you go I will be alone, nobody will be with me." I miss him very much.

Now all my family is living in New Zealand. I have four sisters, who all go to either school or Unitec. My father is also studying at Unitec. He is learning English.

I also have two brothers, aged eleven and nineteen. I am fourteen.

The reason my family are here is because my older brother left Afghanistan to go to Australia. The boat he was on sank at sea and all the passengers were picked up by the Tampa, which is a container ship. The Australian government wouldn't let the people stay, so the New Zealand government said we could come here.

My family and I are very happy with my brother because he was the one who was able to bring my family to New Zealand.

## **Journey From Afganistan**

Afganistan Avondale College

My family and I left Afghanistan because of the fighting and the rule of the Teleban. There were many others leaving too, and if we went back we would have nowhere to live because so much has been destroyed.

There was only my family on the truck that drove us away from our home. Later went on in a more crowded truck to Kubule in Afghanistan, then another bus, just as crowded, took us to Pishavar in Pakistan.

Then we went on a plane to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and on to Indonesia, where we got on a small ferry heading for Christmas Island, which was the nearest part of Australia, and where we hoped to find refuge.

The boat was packed and we were very seasick. The captain had said we would only be on the water for thirty-six hours, but we were on the water for five days before the captain realized that we had missed Christmas Island, and so we went back to Indonesia.

After a month in Jakarta in Indonesia we got on a boat again. After a day the ship's engine stopped in the middle of the sea. An hour later another boat came over to us, but after they had shone torches and seen how many of us they were they just went away. A day later the captain saw an Australian plane fly over through his binoculars. Everyone was very relieved and happy, but the plane just went away too. It came back again, but still just watched us.

At three o'clock at night the captain saw a red light through his binoculars. He said there was a big red ship coming. Half an hour later the Norwegian ship, the Tampa came near to help us. The captain said, "I'm going to Singapore and all four hundred and thirty-eight of you are going too". But two of the Afghans spoke English, and told the captain, "Not Singapore, we want to go to Christmas Island."

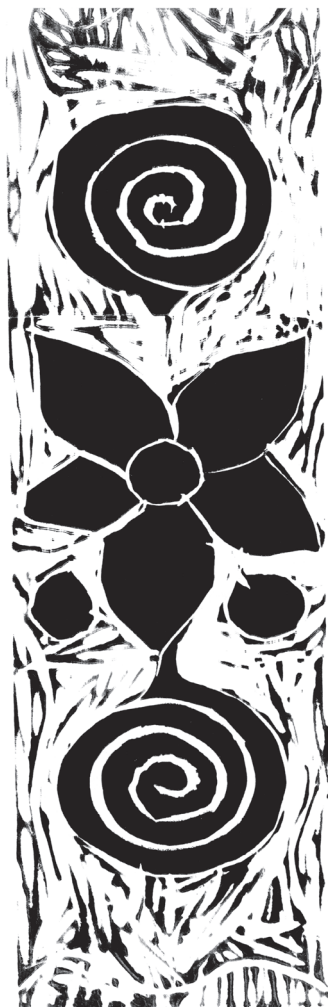
The Tampa captain said, "If you guys stay in this rotten boat tonight you will be in the water. There is no doubt that you will sink."


At two on the afternoon the captain and crew of the Tampa helped us onto the ship. We tried to carry our small bags with us, but they were taken from us and put back on the boat. This was in case people had dangerous things like cigarette lighters that could start fires. Some people got their bags back later, but some didn't. At eleven that night we started to go to Christmas Island.

The Tampa captain, Captain Rinnan, called Christmas Island by radio. "We have four hundred and thirty eight Afghans aboard. Can we come into Australian waters?"

"No!" said Australia.

In Captain Rinnan's opinion, that wooden boat should never have carried more than seven people, yet for four days we had all sat hunched up with our arms





around our knees on that wooden boat. If we moved too much the water came over the sides. Water would splash up our backs. The water was warm, but the wind was very cold. We couldn't go back to that boat, so we stayed on the Tampa.

We circled Christmas Island for six days before the captain said to the English-speakers, "Tell the people I'm not telling Christmas Island. We will just go into Australian waters." Five minutes later a big commando ship came up to the Tampa and saw all the people sleeping on the ship. We were very hungry because we had had very little to eat for days. For two days the commandos watched and helped the people. They gave the children chocolate. I only got a little because I was eleven years old.

Two days later the HMAS Manoora came from Australia. The captain told the Afghani people, "Some families and children under eighteen go to New Zealand. The rest, and all those eighteen years and older go to Nauru."

About twenty-one families went to the Mangere Resettlement Centre and eleven families went to Christchurch. There were also thirty-six boys under eighteen without families who came to New Zealand. People were sad because they didn't know what was going to happen in the future.

I was in the group that had to go to Nauru. To get onto the Manoora we had to climb down a ladder to a very small boat. We wore life jackets, and the water was calm, so it was not too bad.

We slept on bunks right down the bottom of the ship, below the water-line, and we didn't see the sun for fifteen days. We were very seasick, but it was good that there were bathrooms and toilets and a doctor. We were only allowed to use the bathroom once a day but we could use the toilet any time. On the Tampa there were only two rubbish bins, one for women and one for men, which we just emptied over the side.

On the Manoora everyone was given clothes. They were second-hand but warm and dry. We had all left our shoes in the small boat because they made it too hard to climb the ladder. We were also given toothpaste, a toothbrush, shampoo, soap, and a towel between two people.

The children were not allowed to play on the ship and there was very little to eat. My sister was five years old, and couldn't even eat what little we were

given. I was getting angrier and angrier. After fifteen days we boys were given a ball and a toy car to play with, and the girls were given a doll.

After fifteen days we were occasionally allowed on deck. It was good to see the sun. Two months later we could see Nauru.

## My Last Day at Primary School

by Sunny Rachasombat Thailand Lynfield College

I remember the day when I finished Primary School. Everybody was wet and cold that day because the weather was very rainy.

I was eleven years old, and I was living in Bangkok in Thailand. My house was not too far from my school. I woke in the morning and got ready for school for the last time. My parents cooked breakfast for me that morning. My brother waited for me to get ready to go to school with him. That last day was very important to me. I got to wear a nice dress and a new necklace my mother bought me as a present for the special day.


When I was ready I came out of my bedroom and ate breakfast with my lovely brother before we left for school together.

At half past seven I arrived at school. All my friends were waiting for me. We were going to have a party for the last day of Primary School. I went to the hall with my friends to get my report and then we went to the hall to the party. The party finished at six o'clock. It was a lovely time. After the party my friends and I ran out of the hall to the playground. We played in the rain. We got soaked but it was wonderful fun. I had enjoyed the day so much, but it wasn't finished yet.

I didn't go back home after the party, but I went to the shopping mall with my friends. We had dinner and had a photo taken together, then we walked around and bought a few things. Then we all danced in the Karaoke bar in the mall.

I went back home at eleven o'clock, but my family was not asleep. They were watching TV and eating. When they saw me they smiled and said, "Welcome back home!"

I went and had a shower, and got ready for bed, but before I got to sleep suddenly my brother came into my bedroom and wanted to play computer



games, so I got up and played with him. I went to bed at nearly two o'clock that night. I was very tired, but I will remember it forever.

## Life in Afghanistan

by Shafe Rostami Afghaistan Mt Albert Grammar School

In Afghanistan, in Ghani province, I lived in a big house on a farm, some distance from the nearest city. We had a big farm and a big garden, and some animals like cows, sheep and some birds. It was very peaceful and quiet. Our nearest neighbours were more than a kilometre away.

We had help from farmers and servants to look after the farm and the animals in the summer, spring and autumn. In the winter we had to look after the animals ourselves, but we didn't have to look after the farm in winter because it was so cold and snowy that we couldn't do anything. In the winter the animals lived in big barn or "gambazi" although we let them out on some sunny days.

The weather where I come from is very extreme. The summer is very hot, but the winter is extremely cold. People in my village buy their winter food and firewood two months before the season comes and store everything for the cold weather.

The winter lasts four months. In these four months the people who live far from a town or city, like us, used to find life very hard. It was snowy and very windy, and the temperature reached minus 10 degrees Celsius. Because it was so difficult to get to town to a doctor, people always tried to keep their children healthy in the winter.

But the summer was very different. In my home we didn't have to buy fruit, or dairy foods like milk, cream, butter and cheese, because we had cows for dairy food and a garden with fruit trees. We grew apples, oranges, apricots, plums, and many vegetables in the warm weather, and life was good.

Every morning when I woke up I prayed. After that I had to bring in the water for tea, drinking, cooking, cleaning and washing. I had to go about half a kilometre to get water early every morning. We had a well, but no water pump. In 2001 we got a water pump, but often it didn't work. In the winter we got water from the streams near the house. It was clean and nice in the winter, but in the summer people swam and washed in the streams, so the water wasn't



very clean, so I had to go further away, to the village well in Shamirr.

After that I had to go to the mosque to study the Koran for about half an hour, and then, in the summer, I went to Sanahee High School six days a week from eight-thirty to mid-day. It was three kilometres away, and I had to walk. After I got home I would have my lunch either at home or in our shop. I helped my dad in the shop from one o'clock until five. After five, I would go to play soccer every day for an hour or two with my team-mates.

I really miss my life in Afghanistan. There we had lots of friends and relations to play with, and there were many things to do that didn't cost any money. Life was peaceful and natural in our village. Our village before the war was a quiet, relaxed and friendly place, and I miss it. We grew our own food and made our own fun. Now I want to get an education and then go back to Afghanistan.

## **Journey to Lalebala**


by Zerfitu Negash Ethiopia    Mt Albert Grammar School

My name is Zerfitu Negash and I come from Ethiopia in the continent of Africa. In 2001, when I was living in Ethiopia, I went on a journey to Lalebala. It was the 25th December, Christmas time.

Lalebala is a wonderful church in the Lasta district of the Wollo province. It was hewn from a single rock during the Zagtuwe Dynasty. The people who live in the Lasta district are called Agaw. They are Christian and like to go to church every Sunday. I am from the Agaw tribe.

To get to Lalebala from where I was living you have to go by car or bus, or you can walk. The village people always walk because they don't have cars and buses. Sometimes they ride horses if they own one, but even if they do they think God will not listen to their prayers if they don't walk, so they choose to go on foot. They say, "God walked, so it's good that we walk too." Many Christians walk a long way to worship at the church at Lalebala. Sometimes they walk for several days, sometimes even for as long as a month.

The town of Lalebala not only has a very special church, it is also a most important historical place. We learn about it every year at school, so one day I thought I would go there myself. I told my mother, but she said that it was not



a good idea because the way was very difficult. "Don't think above your age," she said to me, but I couldn't stop thinking about it.

When I was in year 7 in Intermediate School, every day my history teacher told us about Lalebala. When I got to High School I again had a history teacher, who was very good, better than my Intermediate teacher. I was reminded of Halebala again. I talked with my history teacher about the town and he said it was a very special place. The weather, the people, the buildings and all the things were good. He said I shouldn't worry and I could go if I wanted to. I said, "Yes sir, thank you."

I asked my mother and again she said, "No". I said, "You'll see." My mother fought with me.

Then I told my best friend. She said, "Let's both go. I'll get my family to go so we can all go together." When she said this I was happy, because she had the same idea as I had. My friend talked to seven other friends, so now we were nine friends. And we started walking. My mother and my friend's mother didn't know we had gone to Lalebala. I didn't have any food or money because they didn't know we were gone and we were scared they would find out. My friend had \$50, food and other gear from her mother because her family knew we were going. So my friend and I had only \$50 for food.

We walked for three days, night time and day time. Daytime was very hot, and nighttime was dark and cold, so everything was bad. When we walked at nighttime we used the moonlight to see by. At nighttime the foxes shouted and we shouted with them and we cried because we were so scared.

My mother and my friend's mother told the police. The police didn't catch us because we were walking. If we had used a car or a bus they would have found us.

So after three days we reached Lalebala. Lalebala was a wonderful and amazing place. We didn't like the journey, but we liked Lalebala very much. Even the buildings were beautiful. You couldn't find anything like them in the world, honestly. Everything was different and wonderful.

We stayed and looked for a week because there were many beautiful buildings to see. We went everywhere around Lalebala church and visited other smaller buildings hewn from rock too.

I traveled home by car, which my friend's grandmother paid for. My mother, who had refused to let me go to Lalebala, said nothing to me when I arrived home.

I really recommend that people visit Lalebala whenever they go to Ethiopia. It is a wonderful place.

Thank you for reading my history.

## My Grandfather's Horse

by Pinar Ozucargil      Turkey      Mt Albert Grammar School

Hello, my name is Pinar and this is a story about my grandfather's horse.

When my grandfather was eighteen years old he fell in love with a girl. He married her, and she became my grandmother. He worked in the garden to make food for his family. He was happy. He has told me everything about himself, and he said that my life was harder than his had been.

I loved my grandfather because he always liked to work for his family and to make them happy. He lived and worked for us all the time. He and I went everywhere together, and I would work with him in the garden.

When I was small, about twelve years old, my grandfather had a horse. My grandmother kept looking at the horse as if she was wondering if it was alright. My grandfather and I were with the horse all the time. One day we worked with the horse in the garden. The horse was so tired that I said to my grandfather, "Enough, the horse is too tired," and he agreed. We tied the horse up to a tree to rest and went back home.

After a while he said, "Pinar, let's go back to the garden." We went to the tree where my grandfather's horse was. It was fighting with another horse. The other horse was much stronger than our horse, and after the fight my grandfather's horse died. My grandpa cried because he no longer had a horse. For a farmer in Turkey it is very important to have a horse to help with the work. Without the horse we would be poor and it would be difficult to feed the family, so we mourned the horse, not just because we loved it, but also because it was so important to us as a family.

# Injara

by Feyine Henbento Ethiopia Mt Albert Grammar School

In my country all the people love to eat injara. When we make it in New Zealand everyone likes it too. In Ethiopia it is a special food which we eat on big occasions. We had injara at my sister's wedding. You should try it. Here is the recipe:

## **Injara**

Enough for a large group.

8 cups flour

Water as needed. If the weather is hot, use cold water. If it is cold use warm water.

Mix flour and water into a soft dough and cover with a cloth

Keep the mixture in a warm place for 3 days.

After 3 days, mix with cold water until a little runny.

Take a little boiling water and mix with a spoonful of the mixture, then put this mixture back and stir well.

Stir thoroughly and leave in a warm place for 1 hour.

In a warm, dry frying pan dribble about ½ cup of the final mixture. Stir it a little and then wait for bubbles to form 1 or 2 minutes. Cook on one side only.

Remove and leave to cool on a cool surface.

## **Filling**

In a smaller pan gently fry a mixture of meat and vegetables, with herbs and spices such as mint, chilli, grated ginger, nuts, bay leaves, celery leaves and tumeric. Add a little salt if you wish.

Cut 1 onion and fry gently in oil.

Add the mixture of herbs and spices and stir until nearly cooked.

Lastly add chopped lamb or beef. Put a lid on and cook until done.

Eat this filling with injara. The taste is nice! Everyone will enjoy it.

# About Pepsi and Sprite

by Naimah Aroj Pakistan Mt Albert Grammar School

My name is Naimah and I am from Pakistan. I lived in Karachi with my family, but my father lived in New Zealand. In March my father was coming to Pakistan to see us. We were very excited. It was two years since we had seen him.


We welcomed him with flower petals. After a week we went to a park nearby called Sozowater Park. It is a big amusement park with gardens, a children's playground and a swimming pool. This park is very famous in many countries. We took some photographs in the park.

We went to many places in Pakistan. It was the season of summer and the sun was shining brightly. The weather was absolutely right. My uncles, aunts and cousins came to our home. We gave them some soft drink and cooked some food for them. We cooked special food of rice and meat dishes with many herbs and spices, and desserts like halva and fresh fruit from the garden. When they had gone I saw some Sprite soft drink in the kitchen. I wanted to drink it, so I did, and I put some water into the bottle so no-one would know.

Next morning, when I went into the kitchen for breakfast, my father was talking about something. I listened carefully. He said, "When I woke up this morning I put some Sprite into the milk. When I drank it the taste of the milk hadn't changed. I checked the Sprite and it was only water." Everybody was laughing. I laughed to myself quietly.

Next day my sister and I saw some Pepsi. I asked her if she wanted to drink it and she said, "OK, let's drink it." My sister and I shared it half and half. We went into the kitchen and made some black tea and put it in the bottle and put the bottle on the table. After a few minutes my brother came in and looked at the Pepsi bottle. He wanted to drink it. When he touched the bottle it was still hot, but he started to drink it anyway. When he found out it was tea he left it and went away.

Then my small brother came in and saw the Pepsi bottle and he wanted to drink it too. He looked around and nobody was there so he took it and drank it, so he, too, knew what was in the bottle. He went out to play. He didn't tell anyone what he had done.



Then my father came in and took the bottle and drank the rest. When he tasted it he knew it was black tea. He went into the garden and told everybody. At last they all knew what we had done. Everybody was laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing.

## Ice Baby

by Halbut Shah      Mt Albert Grammar School

Once upon a time there were so many animals in the jungle that some of them had to leave. One little furry animal was named Seid, and he could climb. All his friends were gone. Now he was alone. A big elephant came into the jungle. All the animals were disturbed by the elephant. Two rhinos were looking at a sunflower. Seid was moving away over the ground when suddenly he fell down and got dirty. Seid walked away, still dirty. The rhinos were disturbed by Seid, but Seid didn't see them. Now Seid saw the flower and he ate it. Then he noticed that the two rhinos were standing behind his back. The rhinos wanted to kill him, but he ran away.

Seid saw the big elephant, and he had an idea. He said to the elephant, "Please help me," but the elephant said, "No." The elephant turned around and saw the two rhinos. They said to him, "Give us that small animal, we want to kill him." Elephant said, "You know I don't like animals killing each other." So now the fight began. The elephant and Seid fought well and they beat the two rhinos. Then the elephant told Seid, "You can go. You are safe now," but the little animal didn't want to leave him.

Suddenly the elephant stopped. He saw a little human baby. The baby was cute. They wanted to return the baby to its mother. Then a pride of lions saw the baby and they were going to eat him. The lion saw the elephant and spoke to the other lions, saying, "I can get you that baby?" He said to the elephant, "Can we be friends?" The elephant said, "OK. I will carry the baby."

They all enjoyed traveling. They went to many places. The lion told the other lions that he would bring the human baby. Some of the lions traveled together, and the elephant and Seid and the baby were alone.

One day the lions had a big fight. The lion, who was a friend to the elephant, knew that the other lions had thought of a plan to get the baby, and he told the elephant. The plan was "The Ice Baby". The lions made a baby out of ice and hid it in a hole in a tree. "They can take this baby instead," said the lions. They ran off. Seid and the elephant found the beautiful ice baby, but they knew about the trick, so they ran off with the real baby and left the ice baby in the tree.

The elephant, Seid, the friendly lion and the baby went on until they found a group of humans. Now the lions came back and saw the humans. They had a fight. The humans won the fight. The humans were very pleased and gave a gift of a necklace to the friendly animals. That's the story. The humans were happy because the baby was one of them.

## Rain in Summer

by Rafia Kalsum Pakistan Mt Albert Grammar School

Before I came to New Zealand I was in Pakistan. The weather was very beautiful. Cool wind blew every day. Our flight was on Friday, but on Wednesday I woke up early in the morning. Light, cool air was blowing. Suddenly a black cloud came from the north of Pakistan. Cool air changed into a strong wind. I was afraid of what was going to happen. My hair and clothes were flying in the wind. Then the shower of rain came. I loved that rain. I was all wet. My sister and brother came with me to enjoy that last rain in Pakistan.

The rain fell faster and faster. We were happy. We were all in our garden. I will never forget that nice rainy day. At the end of the shower a rainbow came out and the sun came out. Our fun was only for two hours. The black clouds were gone. The wind had stopped. After five minutes the rainbow was gone too. Our garden was full of water. Our flowers were dancing in the air.

Summer was nice in Pakistan. When we put our first steps on New Zealand the rain came down fast to say welcome to us.



# My Mother's Story

by Lamiya Ajum Bengal Mt Albert Grammar School

My mother's name is Shahana Parveen. I am writing a story about when she was eleven or twelve years old. There was a war between Pakistan and Bangladesh. My mother had six brothers and sisters altogether. My mum was the third sister on the family, and they had a new-born brother.

That day was full of the noise of guns and bombs. The family was leaving their place in Dhaka in Mirpur. They were walking along a track. All around was the smell of smoke and fire. Suddenly a Pakistani soldier came and attacked the family. They fired from the truck and they jumped from the truck to the ground. The soldiers were trying to kill my grandma with acid, and they were taking things from my mum and my mum's sisters. They took ear-rings and food and killed my grandfather with a knife. They were stabbing my mother's big sister with a knife in the stomach. The family ran and ran, but death was coming closer to them.

Finally they hid in a place where nobody could find them, then they went to the hospital to get well. Luckily my grandmother and my mother's big sister were alive, but my mother's sister was unconscious. My grandpa was dead. Unexpectedly a man came and gave them a place to stay and food and everything they needed. They stayed happily, but were sad about my mother's father.

This was the sad part of my mother's life. The story ends here.



# My Home in Pakistan

by Naimah Aroj Pakistan Mt Albert Grammar School

When I lived in Pakistan I lived with my family. It was a big family; my grandfather, my mother, my brothers and sisters and my father's family and my mother's family. We all lived together in a big house. I especially liked my father's family. They all loved me and I loved them too. I was happy with my grandfather.

My home was large and beautiful, and had a big garden with many fruit trees. It was a very nice house. I remember one day two people came to our street and were looking at our house, admiring it because it was such a good, big, well-designed house.

In my house we had many, many cats. My grandfather liked cats. We would play with them. I was happy in my house. I would play with my grandfather and other people in the family. I especially miss him. He is a great man. I remember when my grandfather, my mother and all the members of my family sat together to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, and to watch TV, and I feel sad because I miss them all. I really had fun in my old house.

I was thirteen years old when I came to New Zealand. From when I had been here a month I have felt myself changing a bit. Day after day life is going well because I am reading and there is a good school to study in. I like reading, but I miss my old home; the fun, the love, and my grandfather. I love and miss all these things about my old home. I belong in Pakistan.


# Kosher, My Best Friend

by Naimah Aroj Pakistan Mt Albert Grammar School

My name is Naimah and I used to live in the beautiful country of Pakistan. I want to tell you about my best friend and our best day.

It was a day in summer, when I was younger. I had an old school friend, but although I wasn't very satisfied with her, I didn't say any bad words to her or tell her I didn't like her.

One night I had a dream. It was a good dream. I saw a girl coming up to me.



She came very close to me. It was wonderful, but when, but when she came up to me she didn't say anything, and then she was gone.

When I woke in the morning my mind was thinking of ordinary things when I suddenly remembered the dream I had the night before. I didn't tell anyone about it. It was the fifteenth of March 2002. My mum said to me, "Your friend has invited you today ", and she said to my auntie, "You must take her. You must go now." I said, "Yes, OK." I took a shower and changed my clothes. I was ready in a few moments. As I went I felt as if something was coming, something like a treasure for me.

Well I went to my friend's house and everyone was waiting for someone. I looked all around, because my heart was anxious. Soon I found myself looking at someone, and I looked and looked. I couldn't believe it. It was the girl I had seen in my dream the night before. She didn't know me, and I didn't know her either, but I said, "Hello". She was very friendly.

I shook hands with her. It was more than treasure for me. I decided that she would be my best friend. I was very happy.

I told my grandfather about Kosher, how she had asked me about myself and her voice was soft.

A week later I told my mother that I wanted to go to her mosque, (because Kosher was a teacher and she taught the Holy Koran to children). I was old enough to go to the Muslim girls' mosque, so my mother let me. One day I went to a special prayer day at the mosque. At the end of every month we read the Quoran and say special prayers for Mohammad. I met my friend and told her about how I saw her in a dream before I met her. As I was talking I thought she wasn't listening to me. She interrupted me and said, "That dream you told me about, it was in my mind too, and I keep thinking about how you trust me," she said. I was even happier than before.

Well day after day I thought about the girl, and I thanked God that he had given me a special friend. At the end of every month I met Kosher at the mosque. When I came back home I wrote everything I had done with her in my diary. I talked with her, read with her, ate with her and she joked with me. It was a nice and cool friendship. I was so happy.

On Tuesday 9th April 2002 I heard that my friend was going back to her own village, which was very far from my city. When I heard, my tears wouldn't


stop. She asked some of the other students if they knew where I was. They said, "She's over there, crying." She came to find me and asked me why I was crying. I said, "I'm crying because you're leaving." She took me to her room and said, "Try to understand, please. I know you're sad, but my mother is sick. Pray for my mother and I'll be back soon." I understood then that she was not going for ever.

After a month she came back from the village. Then she was often sick. I don't know what had happened to her. I thought maybe she was worried about her mother, but her mother was fine now. Well, September 5<sup>th</sup> was a bad day. We had a fight. She started to fight with me, and we fought for a whole week. We didn't talk or meet each-other after that. It was bad. I cried every night and every day. After a month she went back to the village, but nobody told me. This was even worse. My heart didn't want to do anything, so I just cried and cried. I have the diary I wrote when she went to the village again. It was about God.

A month later she was back again. I was happy, so happy, but she was angry with me. She came to my home to talk to my grandfather. I went close to her and said to her "Salaam". I was so happy I shook hands with her, but she wasn't happy with me. I said to myself, "Fine then," and went and sat in front of my grandfather. My grandfather said to me, "I can't do anything because she is your friend, not mine." My friend said to my grandfather, "I am a guest here, I can leave any time." Then I understood that she was going for ever. I just prayed and cried every day. Everything hurt my heart very badly. I thought, "Well, I have to try everything." On the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2003 I bought a gift for her birthday. I gave her the gift from all my family. I knew she had to go back to her own village, and anyway I was leaving for New Zealand soon.

In April, on the birthday of Mohammad, I went to the mosque. It was a happy day with the Muslim people. I spoke on the loudspeaker, and so did Koshar. She gave me a necklace of flowers, and I threw flower petals at her when she was speaking. I took some pictures of her with my mother. People called out, "Are you sisters?" and we laughed. After that day she went to her village to be with her mother.

A few months later we had a special day in my village. It was summer, but in the morning it was wet. By mid-day the sun was shining brightly. We went by bus to my grandfather's brother's village. At three o'clock in the afternoon the



sun was hot and we stopped for lunch and ate some vegetables and meat and rested a little. At four o'clock we went to the place where the festival was and looked around. Suddenly I saw a beautiful bracelet and said to my mother, "I want that!" Koshar said, "No, I will buy it for you." It was so beautiful. I bought one for her too. Her bracelet was black and green and mine was black and brown. We ate some festival food from the shops. It was so nice. My uncle bought us some bangle sets, green and yellow for me and purple for her. It was the greatest day in my life.

After July the days went very fast and October came. I was so sad and worried about her because I was leaving Pakistan and I didn't want to tell her.

I left Pakistan on 10th of October 2003. I didn't tell her I was going, but in September I met her and she hugged me and said, "Goodbye." I said, "Allah Afize."

I miss all the days I spent with her. When I called my grandfather in Pakistan I said, "Have you any news of her?" and he said my friend had been gone for a week and the mosque had a new teacher. I said to my grandfather, "That's good," but to myself I said it was bad. When I miss her I remember my dream, and it was true. I had left Pakistan and she had left for her village. I hope she is fine. I was so happy with her.

## Sweet Days in Turkey

by Pinar Ozucargil Turkey Mt Albert Grammar School

In New Zealand everybody knows that Turkish food is nice. In my old home we used many things from the garden because we loved fresh food from our own garden. We grew pumpkins, onions, turnips, zucchini, radishes, garlic, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, potatoes, cabbages, watercress and peppers, and fruit and nuts like melons, cherries, plums and almonds and peanuts.

We celebrated special days with special foods. We had sweets called baklava, kadayif and shamon. We all loved these special days. Everybody cooked these sweets. All the children loved them, and so did the grown-ups. I know that if we made these sweets in this country everybody would want them. In my country people say that if you like sweets you will talk sweetly to people.

The name of a special day when we ate sweets was Ramazan Payrami. All the children wore special clothes and kissed the hands of the old people for this special day. The old people had to give the children money and sweets they had made.

Everyone was happy on that special day. Everybody said, "Happy Ramazan Payrami" to each other.

## Getting Married in Oromo

by Hiko and Anni Deddefo Ethiopia Avondale College

Getting married in Oromo is a complicated business, which involves lots of rituals which begin a long time before a couple can get married. The boy can't even think about marrying until he has proved himself to be a responsible adult, able to look after himself and others. Then he can pick the girl he is interested in.

He tells his own family, first of all his father, and then talks to the girl's family. Usually the girl already knows what he is thinking, and she may have found ways to encourage him! Her family will give him presents, and her girlfriends will carry messages to the boy, letting him know what she is feeling.

The first time the boy actually visits the girl he goes with his whole family and some of the elders from his village, bringing presents. He wears special clothes and carries a stick called a "siingee", which he leaves at the left of her door to show her family that he is seriously interested in courting their daughter. He may bring the siingee for the second visit too, and maybe again and again for as long as two years. He may have to work for the girl's family, tilling the land, before he is accepted as a son-in-law, but by that time they should all be sure that the marriage will be a good one.

The families of the young couple exchange gifts.



# Halabja

Steven Eskerie Kurdistan

Long Bay College

This story is based on the chemical attacks in Halabja, Northern Iraq, against the Kurdish population. Approximately 5000 Kurdish people were killed in this attack against the residents of Halabja.

Gas, chemicals, bombardment. These words are always drifting through my head. The last thing I saw was the chemical clouds emerging over the unshielded city.

Halabja. The date was the 16th March, 1988. The shimmering sun was glittering over the ancient city. Every morning the birds would sing a peaceful tune over the houses of Halabja.

Look at the beauty of my wonderous city. Every morning we would awaken to the smell coming from the cafeteria next door. We would sit by the café as we gazed at the mammoth mountains surrounding the city. Often a zephyr passed through, bringing with it dust that had a sand-like texture. When this happened it felt as though we were living on an invincible island surrounded by a vast ocean. This was my land, this was my kingdom and here were my people.

However, this fairytale didn't last. I was sitting at the cafeteria trying to finish my brother's uneaten eggs while at the same time I was being entertained by a helicopter which arose from the mountains. "Dad, can I have that helicopter for my birthday?" As I said this, clouds of dark smog flew up into the cursed sky. It looked like the smoke from a colossal explosion. I was scared and full of fear. My heart was beating as fast as a Saviour Jet. Some of the people ran towards the explosion but I hid in my dad's shadow. The birds came crashing down the mountain as they passed through the clouds. "It's chemical clouds, run!" someone shouted.

I ran for my life as I cried in fear. I couldn't think of anything except what might happen to me. As I looked behind, I saw the chemical clouds chasing me through the city trying to entangle me. I heard screams. Children, women and men fell, defeated by the torturous chemical clouds. As I ran up the hills on the opposite side of Halabja, I saw my dad's best friend holding his departed baby in his once masculine, now helpless, arms. Then he faded into the poisonous mist.

I felt angry, I was afraid. I rushed up the rocky foreboding mountains. "It's coming, close your eyes, mouth and hold your nose", my dad said. I was shivering in a cold sweat. I didn't close my eyes in time. It stung like a wasp. I had been blinded - I knew that. As the city faded from my sight, I realised that it was just the beginning.

