

# 2010 Year 7 — Literacy preparation

## Reading magazine

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### WHEN STARS GO KABOOM!

Imagine the surprise astronomers got on 9 January 2008, when they pointed the NASA Swift x-ray space telescope at an old supernova that had exploded the previous year. As they were looking at it, a star nearby exploded! It was the first time astronomers had seen a star explode — live!

"We caught the whole thing on tape, so to speak," said Dr Alicia Soderberg, the Princeton University astronomer who had been using the NASA telescope. "I truly won the astronomy lottery. A star in the galaxy exploded right in front of my eyes."

An exploding star, also called a supernova, occurs when a large star has used up all its fuel. The "fire" inside the star stops and the star begins to shrink. When it seems like it can't shrink any further, it explodes!

Seeing a star become a supernova isn't easy.

Astronomers can't watch every star, and these events happen quickly and without warning. They are usually spotted weeks after they occur, when the material from a final blast collides with the gas and dust that the star shed during the initial explosion.

Alicia quickly issued a worldwide alert, and in the following hours most of the big telescopes on Earth were pointed at the new supernova. Their combined observations have given Alicia and her colleagues new clues on how to look for these rare events and catch them while they are still in their most explosive stage.

### The Min Min Lights

50 Goldstone Road,  
Charters Towers,  
Qld. 4820.

Dear Matt,

I hope you are enjoying your school holidays. I am writing to tell you about my amazing experience.



and I made a trip out west to buy some cattle from a property near Cloncurry, Charters Towers on Monday morning taking two stockmen with us. It was a long trip. I passed through Julia Creek, the utility broke down. It was getting dark so we had camp there for the night.

was very exciting. As I was rolling out my sleeping bag, one of the stockmen called out to a nearby waterhole nearby. Coming towards it were two round lights, a little like headlights. The men threw sticks at the lights but they kept coming closer. They came up and down but glided along. It was eerie. I wanted to dive into my sleeping bag but stopped at the edge of the waterhole and stayed there silent and motionless. They were there for ages but it was only about five minutes. Then they quietly glided away.

at the lights could be the Min Min Lights. These are mysterious lights that people talk about Queensland. We didn't get there last night. Next morning, we looked at the waterhole where the lights had been. We saw the footprints of wild pigs.


Min Min Lights are still a mystery! I hope we can see them again. I have been digging in photophorescent mud. They were an effect of the atmosphere like a mirage at night-time.

at school after the holidays.



### The Governess

When Bonnie's parents decided to travel overseas, they asked Sylvia, her cousin, to come to keep her company while they are away. They also employed a distant relative, Miss Slighcarp, as a governess to look after the children. The first morning after Bonnie's parents left Willoughby Chase, the children hurried down to the school room to begin their lessons.



As the two girls entered the room, the governess who had been examining the books on the shelf swung around. She seemed astonished to see them. "Where have you been?" she asked angrily, after an instant's pause.

Sylvia faltered, "merely in the room, Miss Slighcarp."

Bonnie, with choking utterance, answered, "Why are you wearing that dress?"

She had observed that Miss Slighcarp had on a draped gown of old gold velvet with buttons, far grander than the grey tulle she had worn the day before.

"I speak to me in that way, miss!" retorted Miss Slighcarp in a rage. "You have spoiled all your life, but we shall see who is going to be mistress now. Go to your room and sit down. Do not speak until you are spoken to."

She paid not the slightest attention. "Who said you could wear my mother's best?" she repeated. Sylvia, alarmed, had slipped back into her place at the table but she, reckless with indignation, stood in front of the governess glaring at her.

Nothing in this house was left entirely to my personal disposition," Miss Slighcarp said boldly.

"Not her clothes! Not to wear! How dare you? Take it off at once! It's no better than pig!"

White dents had appeared on either side of Miss Slighcarp's nostrils.

"Her word and it's the dark cupboard and bread-and-water for you, miss," she said dryly.

"I care what you say!" Bonnie stamped her foot. "Take off my mother's dress!"

From *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* — Joan Aiken

A governess is a woman who is employed by a family to look after and teach children in their own home.



# WHEN STARS GO KABOOM!

Imagine the surprise astronomers got on 9 January 2008, when they pointed the NASA Swift x-ray space telescope at an old supernova that had exploded the previous year. As they were looking at it, a star nearby exploded! It was the first time astronomers had seen a star explode — live!

“We caught the whole thing on tape, so to speak,” said Dr Alicia Soderberg, the Princeton University astronomer who had been using the NASA telescope. “I truly won the astronomy lottery. A star in the galaxy exploded right in front of my eyes.”

An exploding star, also called a supernova, occurs when a large star has used up all its fuel. The “fire” inside the star stops and the star begins to shrink. When it seems like it can’t shrink any further, it explodes!

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## The Min Min Lights

50 Goldmine Road,  
Charters Towers,  
Qld. 4820.



Dear Matt,

I hope you are enjoying your school holidays. I am writing to tell you about my amazing experience.

Last week, Dad and I made a trip out west to buy some cattle from a property near Cloncurry. We left Charters Towers on Monday morning taking two stockmen with us. It was a long trip. After we had passed through Julia Creek, the utility broke down. It was getting dark so we decided to pitch camp there for the night.

That night was very exciting. As I was rolling out my sleeping bag, one of the stockmen called out and pointed to a muddy waterhole nearby. Coming towards it were two round lights, a little larger than car headlights. The men threw sticks at the lights but they kept coming closer. They did not dance up and down but glided along. It was eerie. I wanted to dive into my sleeping bag. The lights stopped at the edge of the waterhole and stayed there silent and motionless. They seemed to be there for ages but it was only about five minutes. Then they quietly glided away.

Dad said that the lights could be the Min Min Lights. These are mysterious lights that people have seen in outback Queensland. We didn't get much sleep that night. Next morning, we looked around the waterhole where the lights had been. All we could see were the footprints of wild pigs. So the Min Min Lights are still a mystery! I thought the lights we saw might have been caused by the pigs digging in phosphorescent mud. Dad thinks they were an effect of the atmosphere in the desert, like a mirage at night-time.

See you back at school after the holidays.

Ben





# The Governess

When Bonnie's parents decided to travel overseas, they asked Sylvia, her cousin, to come to keep her company while they are away. They also employed a distant relative, Miss Slighcarp, as a **governess** to look after the children. The first morning after Bonnie's parents left Willoughby Chase, the children hurried down to the school room to begin their lessons.



As the two girls entered the room, the governess who had been examining some books on the shelf swung around abruptly. She seemed astonished to see them.

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"Where have you been?" she demanded angrily, after an instant's pause.

"Why," Sylvia faltered, "merely in the next room, Miss Slighcarp."

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But Bonnie, with choking utterance, demanded, "Why are you wearing my mother's dress?"

Sylvia had observed that Miss Slighcarp had on a draped gown of old gold velvet with ruby buttons, far grander than the grey twill she had worn the day before.

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"Don't speak to me in that way, miss!" retorted Miss Slighcarp in a rage. "You have been spoiled all your life, but we shall see who is going to be mistress now. Go to your place and sit down. Do not speak until you are spoken to."

Bonnie paid not the slightest attention. "Who said you could wear my mother's best gown?" she repeated. Sylvia, alarmed, had slipped back into her place at the table but Bonnie, reckless with indignation, stood in front of the governess glaring at her.

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"Everything in this house was left entirely to my personal disposition," Miss Slighcarp said coldly.

"But not her clothes! Not to wear! How *dare* you? Take it off at once! It's no better than stealing!"

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Two white dents had appeared on either side of Miss Slighcarp's nostrils.

"Another word and it's the dark cupboard and bread-and-water for you, miss," she said fiercely.

"I don't care what you say!" Bonnie stamped her foot. "Take off my mother's dress!"

From *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* — Joan Aitken

Note: A **governess** is a woman who is employed by a family to look after and teach children in their own home.