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Introduction

Special Column: Translating Australian Children's Literature into Chinese

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Australian literature encapsulates immeasurable knowledge about our society and our unique view of the world, all conveyed through an authentically Australian voice. Sharing literature across cultures is a powerful tool in deepening mutual understanding. It can provide a window between worlds.

The Australian Embassy in Beijing has long supported the translation and exchange of Australian and Chinese literature. Key to this strategy has been the *Australian Writers Week*, through which we've welcomed more than 70 Australian authors to China since the first event in 2009.

Since then, the event has grown in both scale and reputation, providing a unique opportunity to share Australia's literary voices with Chinese audiences and for Australian writers to engage with Chinese authors they might otherwise not have the opportunity to meet. We have also developed the *Australia Writes* brand to promote literature year-round.

In 2020, we took things online with the *Australia Writes* online literature festival, reaching thousands of Chinese readers via the Australian Embassy's official WeChat account. Featured this year was children's author and illustrator Graeme Base, whose vibrant picture books and elegant fables are loved by children across China. Base first visited the country as part of *Australian Writers Week* in 2016, and has since written two books inspired by his travel within China: *Dragon Moon* and *The Tree*.

The Australian Embassy also supports the work of master translator Professor Li Yao and his colleagues at Australian Studies Centres (ASC) across China. Their work is the driving force behind the translation of Australian literature into Chinese.

The Australian Studies Centre of Inner Mongolia Normal University is particularly prolific and ambitious. In February this year, it released *The Australian Indigenous Children's Literature Chinese Translation Series*, published by Qingdao Publishing House. This is the first collection of children's books by and about Indigenous Australians to be translated into Chinese, a significant milestone.

The books in this series have been translated by young scholars including Hongyu Jiang, translator of Melissa Lucashenko's *Killing Darcy*, and Rina Su and Yajing Xu, translators of Bruce Pascoe's *Sea Horse*. The translation of *Deadly Unna?* by Phillip Gwynne, was translated by Wuyun Gaowa of the Inner Mongolia Normal University's Australian Studies Centre.

The experience of working with Australian books introduced these scholars not only to new words and expressions but also to the great diversity of Indigenous cultures. Their efforts to bring this knowledge to share with young readers across China is an invaluable contribution to our two countries' relationship and understanding.

With travel currently so curtailed, literature exchange has perhaps never been more important as a means to provide a bridge between cultures and to forge stronger understanding between Australia and China. We hope this column brings even greater awareness to the important work of translators in both countries.