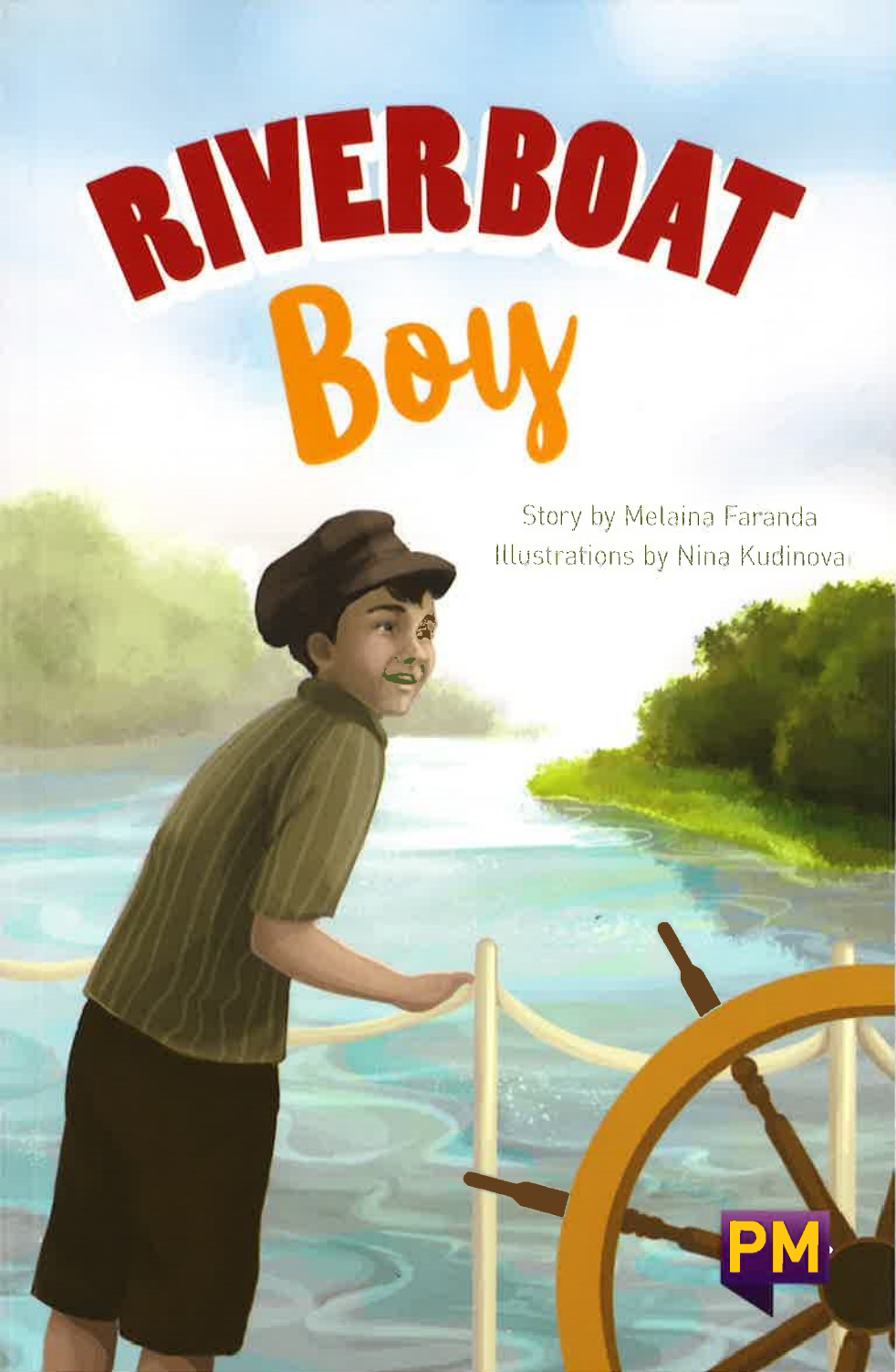
RIVERBOAT Boy

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Riverboat Boy

Level 30

Running Words 6397 **Text Type** Narrative (Imaginative)

Curriculum Areas Humanities – History; Literacy

Oral Literacy Focus for Students

Key issues from the text to encourage critical thinking and stimulate group discussions:

1 Discuss why the riverboat was called the *Prosperity*

2 Explain what Father meant when he said, "*School learning is important enough. But the river will be your best teacher.*"

3 Identify reasons why children who lived in orphanages had to work very hard

4 Justify Joe's reasons for not telling his parents about Sam.

5 Compare your life today with Joe's life at the same age over 100 years ago.

Written Literacy Focus for Students

Key issue from the text to present in visual and written form to an audience:

1 Research the topic 'River Paddle Steamers in the Late 1800s'.

2 Prepare a slide show and a commentary explaining the importance of these vessels during that era.

3 Edit and revise your text and slide show.

4 Present your text to an audience

5 Critically evaluate your presentation.

Links with other PM Guided Reading Books and Cards

Level 29	Book	Narrative	*Sarah's Story*
Level 30	Book	Narrative	*Beware of the Mist*

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Chapter 1

Baby Overboard!

"Joe," shrieked May, "Edie just fell overboard!"

Joe let the axe drop back to the chopping block and swung to look in the direction May was pointing.

Father was in the boiler room tinkering with the engine, and there was no time to fetch Mother from the kitchen.

Joe dashed to where, beneath the silvery beam that formed the gangplank to the riverbank, there were ever-widening ripples from something newly fallen in.

Only this time, it wasn't a dropped tool or a log of wood or a sack of grain – it was his baby sister!

Flattening his body against the plank, Joe peered into water the colour of milky tea and waited until a flurry of silver bubbles erupted on the surface.

He groped blindly through the water until his fingers hooked against the wet fabric of a pinafore and his baby sister's small, chubby shoulder underneath.

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He hauled Edie out in an explosion of indignant spluttering. Water streamed down her round cheeks and her mouth puckered, as if uncertain whether to cry or not.

"I just caught an Edie fish," Joe said, making it into a game as he hugged her tight. "I'll have to eat you all up!"

He pretended to gnash his teeth, and she squealed in happy protest.

Mother rushed from the cabin, her apron and hands floury from kneading dough for the daily bake. Polly, with a smudge on her nose, bustled close behind. Scooping Edie up, Mother ordered Polly to fetch a towel.

Joe stood watching for a moment or two longer, relieved. Mother had said that all of her children, including Joe, had taken a turn tumbling into the river at one stage or another, and that the most important thing had been to remain calm and watch for the bubbles.

But Joe was not deceived. He knew that Mother's heart would be beating fast right now, like his own was.

They had known another family, the Macleods, who had once owned a boat called the *Emerald*.

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The Macleods had not been so fortunate with their youngest child.

After the tragedy, the Macleods had sold their paddle steamer and moved inland to become farmers.



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Chapter 2

Life on the *Prosperity*

Joe had no memory of ever having fallen in. For as long as he could recall, he was fearless when it came to the river, jumping off the side of the boat at the slightest invitation.

He loved the sensation of twisting and turning in the water, especially during the summer months, when the stifling heat and the scent of baking bushland seared the nostrils, only to be soothed by the cool, muddy embrace of the river.

He loved life on the *Prosperity*, and the purposeful way the steamer steadily churned its way through the river, with its great paddle wheels turning on either side of the boat.

He didn't mind that the living cabin was small and cramped in order to leave more deck space to stack cargo.

Instead, he appreciated watching every twist and turn of the river, marking its seasons and observing its birds and fish, as well as learning to be respectful of its snags and snares and deceptions.

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Sometimes, when Joe's family had pulled up to a homestead to deliver an order of dry goods and seed, or collect bales of wool and stacks of felled timber to take back to town, he had met some other boys.

They had raced him across the river and dared each other to climb the long overhanging branches of the trees that fringed the steep banks. From there, they could drop far below the surface of the sluggish river into the still, icy depths that provided the only true relief from the punishing summer sun.

Those times happened rarely, however, and Joe often wished he had a friend his own age.

He liked his three sisters well enough, but Polly was Mother's little shadow, and too keen to help wash and cook and clean at the expense of games.

May liked to play tea parties with the dolls Father had carved from assorted bits of driftwood, games that Joe flatly refused to be part of, and Edie was still only a baby.

He missed the company of other boys. Sometimes, when they moored the boat outside a larger village or settlement, he would look wonderingly at the rough-hewn slabs that had been slapped together to form a schoolroom, and wonder

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Joe lives on a paddle steamer with his parents and younger sisters. He loves life on the boat, but he longs for a friend his own age. One night, while investigating a mysterious noise, he discovers a stowaway. Could this be the friend that Joe has always wanted?



Text Type:
Narrative (Imaginative)

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