

'Dr Stroogle' pops out of the pages

BY KIRSTY NOFFKE

ST Joseph's Primary School at South Murwillumbah was buzzing yesterday with "Stroogle-fever", due to a visit from Cameron Stelzer.

The author of the popular Stroogle series held workshops and book readings with students from kindergarten to Year 6.

Although some kids were expecting an actual Stroogle, a mythical animal, to visit, Dr Stelzer said they settled for him.

"They call me Dr Stroogle and the Pie Rat (a character from his most recent book)," Dr Stelzer said.

"It's nice to be able to visit schools and work with kids."

Dr Stelzer has written and illustrated six books in his Stroogle series.

But what exactly is a Stroogle?

"To some children, he looks like a strawberry, to others, a colourful chicken that hatched from a purple egg, and even a 'way cool superhero'," Dr Stelzer said.

Inspiration for the weird and wonderful creature came



to Dr Stelzer during the year he spent working at the Natural History Museum in London.

"They're picture books but kids of all ages can appreciate them."

Dr Stelzer yesterday worked with all classes at St Joseph's Primary School.

"With the junior kids we did a reading and colouring activity," he said.

"The middle years we looked at construction works and cut and paste exercises.

"And with the older years we made storyboards."

He said drawings can act as a catalyst for learning and development.

"Kids often draw out of their heads but if you give

them something to copy they learn more skills," Dr Stelzer said. "Drawings often start stories for kids, too."

Dr Stelzer has held workshops at other schools in the area, including Crystal Creek Public School.

St Joseph's Primary School librarian Melissa Fraser organised the author's visit.

"We'd heard about how wonderful his workshops are and how inspirational and motivational," she said.

"The whole school was buzzing."

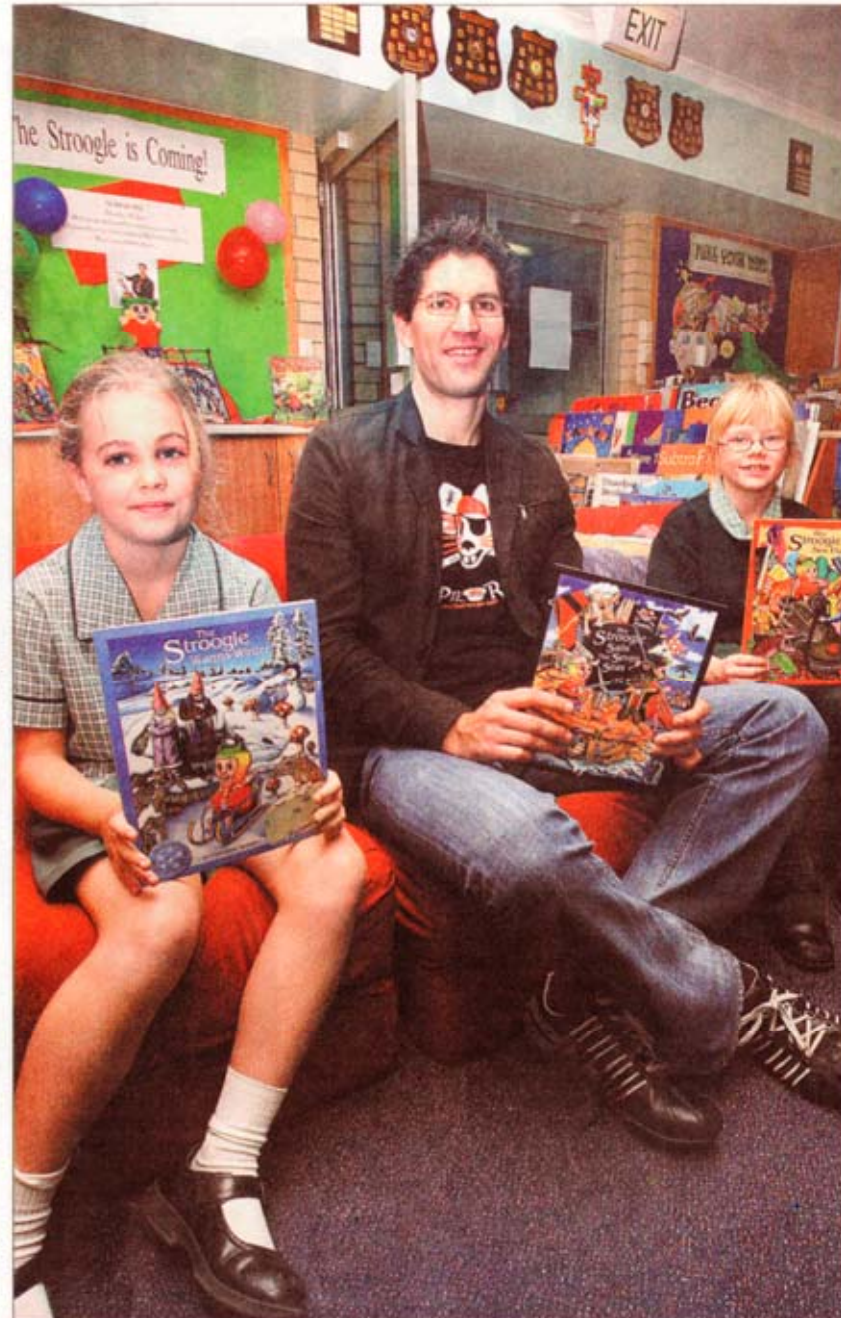
Ms Fraser said the students just love the Stroogle series.

"The books are great," she said.

The first book *The Stroogle*, published in 2004, is a modern twist to the classic ugly duckling story.

But unlike the traditional story where the swan grows beautiful and is subsequently accepted, the Stroogle is befriended by a rather drab looking mouse.

He then has the courage to show his 'true colours' when he leads the mouse on a daring rescue.



STUDENTS Charli Anderson and Sophie Cummins were excited to meet 'Dr Stroogle', also known as Cameron Stelzer, yesterday.

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