The Red Tree by Shaun Tan
A review by Emily Green

After reading The Red Tree either the feeling of confusion or understanding comes to mind. The story line is simple yet effective and the artworks on each page bring every word to life. It is completely strange and brilliant.

The story line follows the incredibly depressing emotions that can overcome people at various times throughout life. The story ends with the sudden realisation that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Each page is filled with either dull, dreary or the complete opposite; bright colours, literally making the few words into something magnificent.

The Red tree is not spooky or draining, yet it is about emotions that relate to such things. In comparison to Eilean Mor, by Gary Crew, The Red Tree is actually a very happy, childish book. However, a child could not possibly interpret it’s true meaning. The illustrations in Eilean Mor are haunting and the text is long and boring. Where Shaun Tan’s work shows juxtaposition because the text is about terrible things that can ruin anyone’s day, but the illustrations are far more intriguing and fun than Gary Crew’s.

When comparing two books of the same mood, it is not difficult to see which is better. Pictures within picture books are everything. And the pictures seen in Eilean Mor are within no standard range of The Red Tree. Tan has interpreted everything that Eilean Mor does not. Where Shaun Tan has made his book relatable, Gary Crew has made his vague.

Eilean Mor is left in the dust when compared to The Red tree. Just as any book would be if it was to be put up against such a fantastic book. The Children’s Book Council of Australia has claimed it as an honour book. If you take a minute to read it, you will understand why.

“A children’s book is not a children’s book in the slightest if it can only be enjoyed by children” – C.S Lewis

Author of the Narnia Chronicles