

# Nowhere Boys

*Nowhere Boys* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, Australia) is a weekly series that combines action-adventure and comedy with drama (cf. illustration 1). In this first episode, four teenage boys get lost in a dense forest, face a terrifying storm, and find a different world when they return to home. The program opens with the boys in a forest and the sky is stormy. Suddenly, a huge whirlwind comes down upon the path and pursues them. The boys take off running from the tornado and there seems to be no escape (cf. illustration 2). There is a flashback to 24 hours earlier, with scenes of each boy in his own home getting ready for a school orienteering excursion. Goth Felix plays his guitar and shares a song he composed with his brother Oscar, who is in a wheelchair. Nerd Andy is trying to persuade his overprotective family that he should go on the bushwalk with his school, Jock Jake is living with his divorced mother who is having a hard time paying the rent. Skater Boy Sam has a supportive family, a pretty girlfriend and a kind of life that generates resentment among other students. Felix and another student pretend to vomit when they see Sam kiss his girlfriend (cf. illustration 3). After getting on the bus for a trip to a national park, the students are unhappy to learn that their teacher has assigned groups for the seven kilometer hike (cf. illustration 4). Arriving at the park, the boys see a mysterious figure in the forest, a “witch” (cf. illustration 5). They begin walking, decide to take a shortcut off the path, lose their map and orienteering equipment, and realize they are lost. Then they see a strange totem hanging in the trees (cf. illustration 6). Night falls and boys build a fire (cf. illustration 7). They are tired, cold and hungry. It starts to rain. In the morning, as they climb up to the path, we are at the beginning of the program. Running away from the tornado again, the boys meet a man in the woods, Roland, who offers them a ride to their hometown (cf. illustration 8). Once in town, the boys share their feelings and expectations about what happened, but depart for home alone, each discovering a parallel world in which they are not there.

*Nowhere Boys* won the International Youth Jury prize and was a second place finalist in the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014 12–15 fiction and non-fiction category.

## INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS’ OPINION

International experts shared their opinions about *Nowhere Boys* during discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014. Because the program was exciting and the ending of the story left questions unanswered, many expressed desire to see the next episode.

“I wanted to see the next episode. I liked *Nowhere Boys* the most. I felt the objective of the program was what happens when different kids have to be together. They took that idea to the extreme situation.” (female expert, Colombia)

“The real question this program raises is: How do the kids communicate? I saw many dark feelings and bullying with the small Asian boy (Andy). There was too much hate and I don’t think it is good for children to see those emotions....I would like to add that it is not good to ask questions about what if I weren’t born or if I didn’t exist.” (male expert, Kosovo)

“It’s interesting if your family doesn’t know you, how can you connect with them? This is especially true for adolescents because they are trying to figure



Ill. 1: An unlikely group: Sam, Felix, Jake, Andy



Ill. 2: Getting chased by a tornado in the forest

Screenshots from *Nowhere Boys* © Australian Broadcasting Corporation



III. 3: Felix watches Sam and pretends to vomit



III. 4: Students learn they are assigned to groups



III. 5: A mysterious witch in the forest



III. 6: A sign or a warning to the lost boys?



III. 7: Talking about cannibalism around the fire

out how to communicate to their family already.” (female expert, United States)

“It’s a very good concept. I don’t know how it is going to turn out but I think it could be very philosophical. It will be very interesting to follow episodes and I liked it a lot.” (male expert, Mexico)

Much of the conversation focused on program genres and stereotypes in the 12 to 15 fiction category. Acknowledging that stereotypes are old and that they sometimes mirror life situations, experts also expressed desire for the characters to develop from the archetypes presented in the opening episode.

“In the beginning I thought it was cliché, when they set up this group of four people not working together. In the end I became interested to see what will happen. They came into another world and they have to see what is going on. It’s a good first episode.” (male expert, Norway)

“They feel like types because they are types right now.” (male expert, Canada)

“We have different genres. If you make these characters complex in the beginning there will be no change. In this genre you have to have these kinds of characters.” (male expert, Norway)

### OPINIONS FROM TEENAGERS IN 7 COUNTRIES

PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014 included the votes of an international youth jury, which was organized in cooperation with broadcasters worldwide. Teens between 12 and 15 in 7 countries discussed and judged 16 programs in the 12 to 15 category. Here is a summary of their discussions about the program *Nowhere Boys*.

Most youth jury members enjoyed the action, suspense and unknown in *Nowhere Boys*. Almost everyone wanted to see more of this program.

“I love this story because it has adventure and it’s so mysterious.” (youth jury, **Jordan**)

“This was the most entertaining...I want to see more!” (youth jury, **Canada**)

“I thought this program was excellent....The mix of suspense and action was great and I loved how well it was planned....This one was incredible. There was hardly anything wrong with it. The storyline was well developed and structured. The program was full of suspense. The camera was extremely well placed. The performance was also very good and realistic. I loved this program. I would actually pay to watch this, it was that good.” (youth jury, **Malaysia**)

Many youth jury members commented on the characters. They liked the characters, even as stereotypes, because this approach worked well in the story. The majority of youth jury members liked the effects in the program.

“I liked the effects, and the tornado was so real.” (youth jury, **Colombia**)

“I have to congratulate them because they’ve done a good job with the visuals.” (youth jury, **Montenegro**)

“I think the sound effects were amazing....The camera work was really good

## PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014



III. 8: [Heading back into town](#)

quality and the tornado looked realistic and that's what I really liked." (youth jury, **Namibia**)

**Colombian** and **Namibian** youth juries suggested that the characters in *Nowhere Boys* relate to slightly older children, but most said the program is age appropriate for them. **The Colombian** youth jury appreciated the surprise dramatic turn when the disabled boy stood up and walked at the end of this episode.

*Elizabeth Spezia, PhD Student, Southern Illinois University, USA*

<a href="#">Target Audience 8.32</a>	<a href="#">Idea 7.57</a>	<a href="#">Script 7.43</a>	<a href="#">Realization 8.06</a>
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014			