

Learning to read English is hardest - brain expert

IT'S official. Research has confirmed that English is "the worst" language to learn to read, with students taking at least two years to grasp it, as opposed to three or four months for students learning to read a "transparent" language like Italian.

"The spelling is impossible," a French brain expert, Stanislas Dehaene, said yesterday. "If you learn Italian, you learn the sounds for each of the letters and then you can read Italian. The letter-to-sound correspondence is transparent." But it's not the case for English - or for Professor Dehaene's native tongue, French, which he admits is the "second worst" language to learn to read. Professor Dehaene, author of more than 150 scientific papers, is considered a world leader in the science behind reading. He is in Melbourne as a guest of the Mental Health Research Institute and University of Melbourne.

His research has shown that the complexity and irregular spelling of the English language resulted in significant delays for native speakers learning to read.

"Comparisons in European countries have shown that this has a huge impact of several years of delay in reading for children learning English," he said.

His research using brain imaging has shown that once eyes land on a printed word, a specific point of the brain lights up. He said this area of the brain does not function well among children with reading difficulties such as dyslexia.

2009 Panhellenic Games to be held in Melbourne

The Pan Hellenic Games aims to see about 600 budding sporting champions of Greek descent from all over Australia and New Zealand compete against each other for the three-day event in Melbourne from November 27-29. The athletes will test their sporting talents in an exciting range of events from basketball to judo, soccer, swimming, tae kwon do, tennis, track and field, water polo and wrestling, for the ultimate prize of securing a place in the World Pan Hellenic Games in Greece. SAE Oceania and Far East coordinator George Angelopoulos said Greeks from all eight Australian states and territories were looking forward to seeing the games hosted in Melbourne. Mr Angelopoulos named Dimitri Kanellakos as Games co-ordinator, Emanuel Starakis as event manager as well as the all States and NZ 55-member organising committee responsible for putting the games together.

The Games are the brain-child of the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) and is sponsored by the Greek government, with the aim of uniting Hellenes the world over through cultural and sporting events. Registrations for the three -day games have now closed.

For more info:
(02) 9558 3744 or
www.saeocenia.org.au



The ABC TV family drama *My Place* premieres December 4th, at 8pm

The ABC TV family drama *My Place* will premiere on Friday, December 4 at 8pm on ABC3 (this is the first night of the new ABC kids channel - ABC3.) Produced by filmmaker Penny Chapman, *My Place* is based on the award winning children's book by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins. The series also covers three different generations of Greek immigrants in episodes (Ep 4: 1978 - Mike, Ep 5: 1968 - Sofia and Ep 6: 1958 - Michaelis.) (see episode descriptions below)

1978 - Mike

Episode 4: Wednesday, December 9 at 8pm on ABC3

Mike knows a lot about Australian muscle cars from 1968 to 1978 but the other kids think he's odd and he thinks he's only got one friend, Ben. But is Ben a real friend? It's 1978. Will Cottle (Mike) is 10 years old. *My Place* is his first acting experience.

Writer: Nicholas Parsons: *Dead Heart, Heartland*.

Director: Michael James Rowland: *Lucky Miles, Bloodsports*.

1968 - Sofia

Episode 5: Thursday, December 10 at 8pm on ABC3

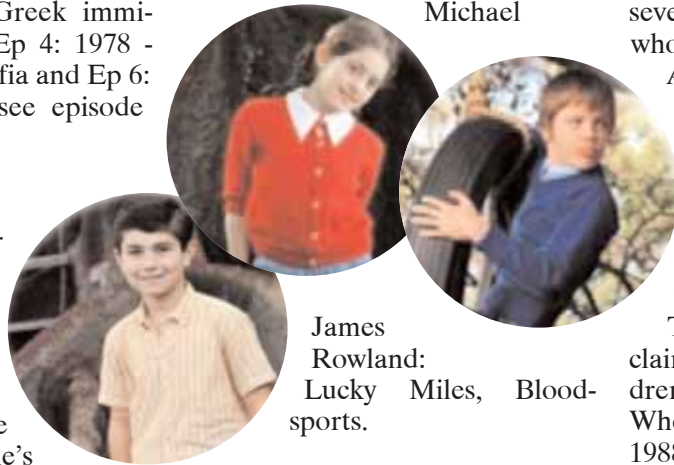
Sofia is 10. She's a spy for the

yayas and she's determined to get rid of her brother Michaelis' Anglo-girlfriend before he leaves for Vietnam. It's 1968.

Anastasia Feneri (Sofia) is 10 years old. *My Place* is her first television acting experience.

Writer: Nicholas Parsons: *Dead Heart, Heartland*.

Director: Michael



James Rowland: *Lucky Miles, Bloodsports*.

1958 - Michaelis

Episode 6: Friday, December 11 at 8pm on ABC3

Michaelis is 10 and his family is from Kalymnos. He wants to be Australian not Greek but even more he wants a television so he can watch *Robin Hood* and be accepted into the gang at the milk bar. It's 1958.

Jonathan Kollias (Michaelis) At 10 years of age, this is Jonathan's first television acting experience. He has appeared in leading roles

in school plays.

Writer: Tim Pye: *Wildside, Sea Change, Fallen Angels*.

Director: Michael James Rowland: *Lucky Miles, Bloodsports*.

The rest of the series will then screen each weeknight at 8pm on ABC3 starting on Monday, December 7. The new ABC TV drama series *My Place* is the story of several generations of children who live in the very same spot in Australia over the course of 130 years. Opening in 2008 and taking us back to 1888, the series introduces us to 13 kids, all with a talent for some kind of trouble, each hiding up the same old fig tree, each with a story to tell.

The series is based on the acclaimed, multi-award winning children's book written by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins in 1988. It is also accompanied by a rich website in which kids and their families can explore the world of the *My Place* kids and have fun with the history of each decade.

My Place - the series, the website and the book - is a rare kids' story of Australia.

My Place: 13 part drama series by Penny Chapman

Based on the award winning book by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins.

Premiere Episode, Friday, December 4 at 8pm on ABC3

Escaped convict Rizaj nabbed

Police early Monday recaptured twice-escaped convict Alket Rizaj, who became one of Greece's two most wanted fugitives in February after escaping with fellow convicted felon Vassilis Paleokostas in a carbon copy prison break by helicopter from Korydallos prison near Piraeus.

Rizaj was arrested at 7:10 a.m. in a coordinated operation by Security Police and EKAM special forces police in the town of Ano Souli in Marathon, northeast of Athens.

The fugitive's hideout was pinpointed by Security Police a few days earlier and was placed under discrete surveillance. Rizaj, an Albanian national, was arrested together with his female companion and another couple, who were all living together in the hideout.

Police were searching the premises to collect clues and evidence, while

the four detainees were due to be taken to security police headquarters later in the day.

Paleokostas and Rizaj became Greece's most wanted fugitives for a second time on February 23 after escaping again by helicopter, in an unprecedented repeat of their Hollywood-style escape from the same prison on June 4, 2006 during which they were spirited away from the courtyard of Korydallos prison near Piraeus, in a spectacular operation masterminded by Paleokostas' brother

Nikos, then a fugitive from justice.

Vassilis Paleokostas was re-captured on August 2 in Thessaloniki, northern Greece, and was named by police as the mastermind of the abduction two months earlier of Federation of Industries of Northern Greece (SBBE) president and Alumil aluminum industry CEO George Mylonas outside Thessaloniki, who was later released after his family paid a hefty ransom. Rizaj was captured three months after the

escape in the coastal village of Prodromos in Viotia prefecture, while fugitive Nikos Paleokostas was arrested a few weeks afterwards near Livadia, also in Viotia prefecture, after years of eluding police capture.

Attica security police investigating the case believe that this second escape was organized by Rizaj, with money supplied by Vassilis Paleokostas. They also said that a key role was played by a 35-year-old woman who chartered the helicopter from the private Interjet air charter company. The woman, and her male accomplice, are both believed to be foreign nationals, possibly Albanian.

The woman, posing as a businesswoman, had approached Interject twice, chartering a helicopter twice on February 13 and 15, with which she flew to Itea.

