

Synopsis:

Taha and Joel thought they were homeward bound at the end of their trip to Canberra, but Mum had other plans. When she became an Australian citizen, she wanted to see as much of Australia as possible. So she announced that now they were going to travel north, along the east coast, to Cairns. Taha and Joel record their travels with photographs and notes in the journals that they were given by their teacher, Mrs Zimmerman. Taha also uses the Oracle Pod that was given to him by his neighbour, Mr Wilson, to find out interesting facts on their trip.

Before Reading

Discuss the following:

- The book format – Students can read the blurb, the table of contents and skim additional features such as the Aussie Jokes, Slang and Facts. Note the mix of photography and illustrations. Discuss design features.
- Citizenship and immigration – Review the citizenship ceremony (pp6-9) and discuss the importance placed on this ceremonial event. Talk about why, and from where, people migrate to Australia and then become Australian citizens. Locate Nigeria, in north-west Africa, on a world map. Discuss Fine's feelings about her new home compared with the one she left in Nigeria.
- Campervans – Taha, Mum and Joel travel in their campervan, the Southern Cross. Discuss the features, advantages and disadvantages of these 'homes on wheels'.
- Indigenous Australians – Do students know about the indigenous Australians or traditional owners of the land in their local area or on the east coast of Australia? Discuss the references to indigenous culture on pages 41 and 72. (It is important to acknowledge the role of indigenous Australians and explore Australia's indigenous history prior to European settlement.)

Build up a collection of resources such as books, travel magazines, maps, street directories and websites that include information about Cairns.

Language Features and Activities

First person narrative:

- The author engages the reader by using a character, Taha, to tell the story. This makes the narrative very personal. Taha's conversations with his mum, Joel and the people he meets give us an insight into their personalities and characters. (For example, Taha has great self-confidence and enthusiasm for life and often imagines himself as taking on an adult role such as a tilt-train driver or game fisherman.) Joel's character is a foil for the overtly confident Taha.

Journals:

- Taha and Joel use their journals to keep photographs and record written information about the trip. Ask students: What did Taha select to write in his journal? Why? Select one of the experiences in the text and ask the class to recount the event in journal format.

Letter writing:

- Taha writes to his neighbor, Mr Wilson. Taha often jokes about Mr Wilson's age in his letters and comments about past misdemeanours that have impacted on Mr Wilson. This provides additional

information (such as type of character, travel experiences, etc.) for the reader in a different format. Demonstrate the correct format for writing a letter. Ask your students to imagine what Joel or Mum would include in a letter. Write a letter that reflects their character.

Factual writing:

- Most of the factual information in the text is presented using the device of the Oracle Pod. However, there are other occasions when Mum, Taha and Joel give information to the reader. Use the shape of an oracle pod, cut out of card, to record research information about topics or places in this book that the students are interested in. Students can use Blackline Master 1, the map of Australia, to identify specific towns or locations referred to in the text.

Vocabulary:

- Use a dictionary to find meanings for words and phrases such as 'fidget', 'wafting', 'glistening', 'compartment', 'landmarks', 'charter boat', 'man-made lagoon' and 'reflecting'.
- Use the word 'fidget' to find other words where the 'dg' phoneme sounds like a 'j'. Make a list; for example, 'ridge', 'gadget', 'badge' and 'ledge'. Use the words from the list in sentences to show their meaning.
- Ask students to make a list of bold or coloured words and explain why these are used in the text (for example, as sound effects or to describe and emphasise feelings, reactions or other physical features). Refer to 'The railway station?' (p28), 'famous' (p30) and 'TOTALLY EXCITED' (p102).

Grammar and punctuation:

- Find examples of contractions such as 'they'd', 'don't', 'we're' and so on. Ask the students to make a list then draw up another column to write the contractions in full ('they had', 'do not', 'we are' and so on).
- Re-visit page 68. Discuss the change in tense from 'rise and shine' to 'rose and shone'. Find some more examples of text where the tense could be changed. For example, 'We're going to catch the train to Cairns' could be re-written in the past tense as 'We caught the train to Cairns'.

Comprehension:

- To maintain an awareness of students' understanding throughout the text, use the chapter headings to ask questions about their content. For example, ask students why the author chose the title 'Our Fishy Friends' for Chapter 7.
- Use Blackline Master 4 to check that students can give appropriate explanations or answers for questions.

Activities

- Use the recipe on pages 60 and 61 to make Mango-Banana Pie. Highlight how the 'Method' section in a procedural text is written in short sentences such as 'Remove from heat and allow to cool'.
- Have a 'Build a Sandwich Day'. Discuss healthy ingredients for a salad sandwich and encourage students to select the contents for their own salad sandwich (p23).
- Re-visit the interview with Ryan Lee (p116). Discuss the format and the questions Taha and Joel asked.
- Ask your students to think about other appropriate questions to write in an interview with Ryan. They can use the same format as in the text. (For example: **Jane:** Do you have any brothers or sisters?)
- Re-visit the map of Australia on page 32 and the list of towns on pages 38 and 39. Ask students: Should all the listed towns have been included on the map? Why did the author only select eight towns? What is the reason for the sketches on the map?
- Discuss the meaning of 'literal' and then use Blackline Master 5 to help students match popular sayings or descriptions with their literal meaning. For example, on page 27 'to hit the sack' really means 'to go to bed'. Students can illustrate the sayings with comical drawings. Find other examples and display them in the classroom.
- Re-visit the list of towns on pages 38 and 39. Try to put all the names into the song 'I've Been Everywhere!' (This can be downloaded from YouTube.) Refer to Lucky Starr singing the original Australian version in 1962. (Preview prior to playing to students.)

- Visit a local pet shop or aquarium to see a tropical fish display. If this is not possible, you may find a local club or a parent who would be willing to share their knowledge.
- Taha and Joel gave each other a 'high five' after Mum announced that they were continuing their trip. Discuss salutations and ask students how other people greet each other. List language such as 'Hello', 'Hi' and 'Bonjour', as well as actions such as shaking hands, kissing, doffing a hat, bowing, etc.
- Use Blackline Master 4 to assess answers given by your students to the various questions.

Characters

Taha and his best friend Joel continue to enjoy travelling together while Mum drives to Cairns in the Southern Cross. Taha is very confident, adventurous and often cheeky (especially in his letters to Mr Wilson). Joel is quieter, yet often demonstrates his keener knowledge and understandings about Australia.

In this book, Joel becomes more assertive and joins Taha in numerous escapades. Re-visit the boys' response to Mum's announcement that they are travelling on to Darwin (pp120-121) and Joel's response to Taha's wish to become a train driver (p35).

Maps and Maths

- Show how a train timetable is read. Collect some examples. Research, discuss and record the times and distances between stops on the tilt train line.
- Calculate the distances travelled between major towns and cities on the trip from Canberra to Cairns.
- Discuss how the tilt train operates. What is significant of tilting five degrees? How is this measured?
- Revise the units of measurement used in recipes.
- Find the Pacific Highway on a map, as well as the major river crossings on this highway.

Our Australia series by Phil Kettle
 Illustrations by David Dunstan
 Teacher notes by Judi Champion
 Edited by Emma Short
 Design by Goanna Graphics (Vic) Pty Ltd

Research Topics

- citizenship and immigration
- the history of Brisbane (including its bridge and river)
- the features of tourist destinations such as the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast (students could make a travel brochure or plan a trip using the internet to find information)
- the history and production of sugar
- the agricultural production of tropical fruits such as pineapple and banana
- tropical fish (students could present information about one species in the shape of that fish)
- the sport of game-fishing (students could discuss the methods used to catch game fish and why they are tagged and released)
- the cassowary (students could investigate why this is an endangered species)

Useful References

- Tourism agencies
- Local councils, libraries, historical societies
- State automobile clubs – maps and trip planners
- www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/casso.htm - the cassowary
- www.australiangamefishing.com
- www.cairnstoday.com.au
- www.cairnsattractions.com.au
- www.australian-trains.com/tilt-train/
- www.visitbrisbane.com.au
- www.bundysugar.com.au/education/process/growing
- www.oceanfree.com.au/green-island.htm
- *Australian Geographic* articles relating to Canberra:
 - Great Barrier Reef Protected (Campbell Phillips), 12 June 2011
 - Sweet Taste of Energy Production (Amanda Burdon), 16 June 2009

Name: _____ Date: _____

Draw a map of Taha's trip. Add pictures, captions or labels.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Write a review about this book.

Title:

Author:

What happens:

My opinion of this book:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Choose a topic or idea from *Our Australia Cairns*. Use the Internet, books or other resources to research this topic. Record the information you find on the Oracle Pod below.



BLM 4 Do You Know the Answers?

Name: _____ Date: _____

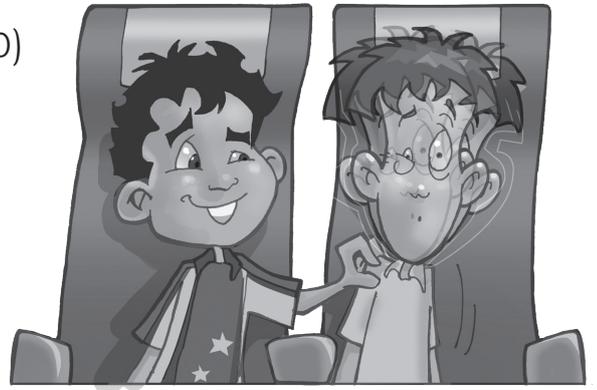
Give explanations or reasons to answer these questions. Use the page numbers to help you.

How did Taha and Joel feel about the distance they had to travel? (p22)

What was the surprise in Brisbane? (p29)

Why was 'WOW!' printed in such big letters on page 29?

Why would the tilt train be described as 'famous'? (p30)



Describe how the landscape changed as the train travelled north. (pp46-47)

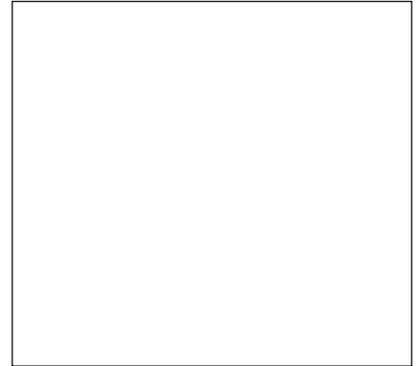
Why did the boys feel bad when the marlin was caught? (p111)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read the popular sayings below, and then write their meaning. Use the boxes to draw a picture of each one.

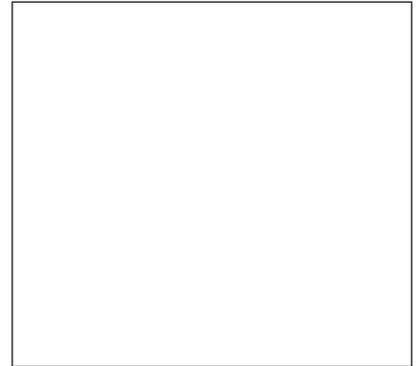
We gave each other a massive high five. (p14)

Meaning: _____



It's time to rise and shine. (p68)

Meaning: _____



It was time to hit the sack. (p27)

Meaning: _____



"That's exactly what I was going to say," I said, rolling my eyes.

Meaning: _____

