

## Synopsis

Taha and his mum, a new Australian citizen, are travelling around Australia in their campervan, the Southern Cross. On this section of the trip, Mum and Taha leave Broken Hill in New South Wales and travel north to Longreach in central Queensland. Longreach is home to the Stockman's Hall of Fame and the Qantas Founders' Museum. There is a lot to learn about Australia's outback heritage. Taha records his travels with photographs and notes in the journal that he was given by his teacher, Mrs Zimmerman. He also writes letters to his neighbour back home, Mr Wilson, and emails his best friend, Joel.

## 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. Is this a fiction or non-fiction book?
- Citizenship and immigration – Review the citizenship ceremony (pp6-9) and read about Mei Liu, who came from China to settle in Australia. Locate China on a world map. Why does Mei Liu visit China regularly and why will she never forget her home town?
- Campervans – Refer to the checklist Mum has written (p13). Discuss each item, the reason why it was listed and what might happen if Mum didn't check off each item on the list. Can the students add to this list?
- Indigenous Australians – Do students know about the indigenous Australians or traditional owners of the land in their local area or in Longreach? Do they know about the role indigenous stockmen played in the development of farming in outback Australia? (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.

## 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. Read the section where Taha relates his feelings about exploring Longreach (pp22-23).

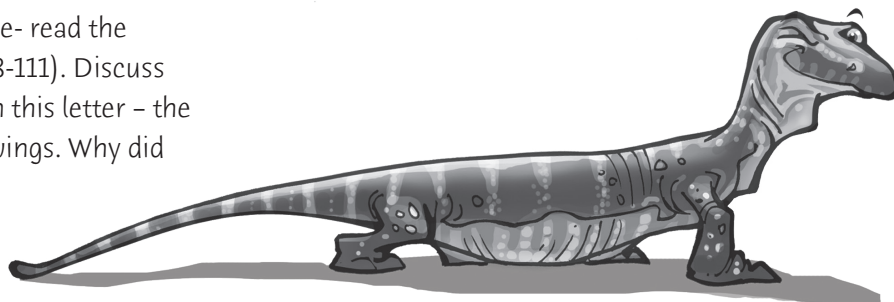
### *Journals:*

- Taha uses his journal to keep photographs and record written information about his trip. Ask the students if they think there are any differences between journals and diaries. Re-read Taha's journal entries (pp91-95). Discuss Taha's attempts to write the word 'memorabilia' (p91).

### *Emails and letters:*

- Talk about both formats in terms of language, forms of address, use of images, intended reader and reading/writing equipment required. Explore similarities and differences between the forms. Consider the email addresses for Taha and Joel and discuss what they reveal about the boys' characters (p75). Discuss the relevance of the information Taha writes about Qantas (p76). Do students think that Joel would have been interested in the museum? Why? What do the students already know about Qantas? (For example, its logo and advertising campaign.) Do students think the Qantas

advertising campaign is effective? Re-read the letter Taha wrote to Mr Wilson (pp98-111). Discuss the special features Taha included in this letter – the song, photographs and his own drawings. Why did he include these things? Look at the map (p110). Why did Taha include this in his letter? What is another way that he could have indicated the length of the fence? (He could have written the names of the towns where the fence begins and ends.)



### **Procedural text:**

- Review Mum's recipe for damper (p57). Discuss the history and features of making damper (for example, it was cooked by travelling stockmen because it needs few ingredients, is easy to prepare and is filling like bread). Model recipes from other books where there are sub-headings such as 'What you need', 'Ingredients', 'What to do' or 'Method'. As a class, re-write the damper recipe using another format and if possible, make your own damper. (It's really yummy!) Students can also re-visit the recipe for billy tea (p34) and re-write it in the same way.

### **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 and Taha give information to the reader. Students can use Blackline Master 3 to investigate and research topics referred to in the text.

### **Vocabulary:**

- The text offers many opportunities for working with words. Show the students examples of compound words (outback, township, lunchtime, sometime, campfire). How do the two words help you understand what the whole word means? Students can use the text to find and list as many compound words as possible for classroom display.
- Students can use Blackline Master 5 to re-tell the story of 'Waltzing Matilda'. Encourage students to discuss alternative words for 'swagman', 'jumbuck' and other terms in the song. They can use their own words in the captions for each drawing.

- Use a dictionary to find meanings for words and phrases such as 'multicultural', 'tip-top shape', 'stockman', 'whirl', 'commonly used', 'in the heart of Queensland', 'rations', 'remote areas' and so on.
- Read the heading for Chapter 4, 'Delicious Damper for Dinner' (p53). This is an example of alliteration – the repetition of consonant sounds at the start of a word. Can students find more examples of alliteration in the book? (Check the other chapter headings.) Students could also try making sentences with alliteration from their own names (for example, 'Sally sat on the sofa in the sun').
- The heading for Chapter 5 is 'The Early Bird Catches the Worm' (p63). This is an example of a proverb, meaning 'if you are quick enough, you may be the first to arrive somewhere or to attain something before others'. Use Taha's experiences to explain this proverb. Offer more proverbs (for example, 'Don't look a gift horse in the mouth') and discuss their meanings. Students can collect and list them, with an explanation for each one.
- 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 size or other physical features).
- Ask students to find descriptive phrases such as 'Mr Wilson is so old that he can remember when there were dinosaurs!' (p19). Discuss any other idioms the students find in the text.
- Explore the list of Australian slang (p122).

### **Comprehension:**

- Students can use Blackline Master 4 to demonstrate their understanding of the content throughout the text.

### Mathematical features:

- Students can use a map of Australia to estimate distances between townships. How was Taha able to find out how long it would take to travel 1,376 kilometres (pp16-17)? What information did he need to find the answer?
- Construct a timeline that is relevant to your location (for example, the construction of and changes to your school).
- Use the recipe for damper (p57) to demonstrate volume and measurement.

## Characters

Taha is learning more about the outback and the lifestyle of people who live in remote areas (pp114-117). He is highly motivated and affected by the places he visits such as the Qantas Founders Museum, and the Stockman's Hall of Fame. He keeps up his journal entries and contact with Mr Wilson and Joel. Discuss the interaction between Taha and Mum as they spend more time in the campervan. Mum distracts Taha when he wants to fill the whole trip with 'I spy' games but continues to allow him his independence. Mum is very resourceful, making damper and her own Greek foods.



## Research Topics

- citizenship and immigration
- the outback including towns such as Wilcannia, Charleville and Longreach
- the Cobb & Co Coach company
- animals such as monitor lizards or eagles
- the dingo and the Wild Dog (Dingo) Fence
- the history of Qantas
- the Stockman's Hall of Fame
- road trains

## Useful References

- *The Dingo Fence* by Jill Eggleton, Key Links series (orange level), Scholastic
- *Life Cycles of Australian Animals Series – Lace Monitor, Wedged-tail Eagle* by Greg Pyers, Pearson Heinemann Library, 2006
- 'Vintage Air' by Erica Harrison, *Australian Geographic* magazine, June 2009

### Websites:

- <http://www.welcome2australia.com.au/queensland/longreach/>
- <http://www.discoveraustralia.com.au/queensland/longreach.html>
- <http://www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/wedgie.htm> (student-friendly)
- <http://australian-animals.net/>
- <http://www.qfom.com.au/aircraft.html> (Qantas Founders Museum)
- <http://www.outbackheritage.com.au> (Stockman's Hall of Fame)
- <http://www.matildacentre.com.au>

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:

\_\_\_\_\_

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My opinion of this book:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did Mum have 'water containers full' on her checklist? (p13)

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2. Why was the town called Longreach? (p21)

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3. What was the cause of the rumbling sound? (p23)

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4. Why do you think the population of Wilcannia declined after 1880? (p24)

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5. What did Bluey teach Taha? (p32-34)

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6. Why would road trains be banned from busy roads near cities? (p38)

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7. Write the word that describes how the goanna moved off the road. (p46)

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8. List two interesting places in Charleville. (p49)

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9. What is the meaning of 'to get our bearings'? (p66)

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the song lyrics on pages 100 to 101.  
Use the boxes below to draw cartoons  
showing what happens in the song. Write  
a caption below each box to tell the story  
in your own words.

