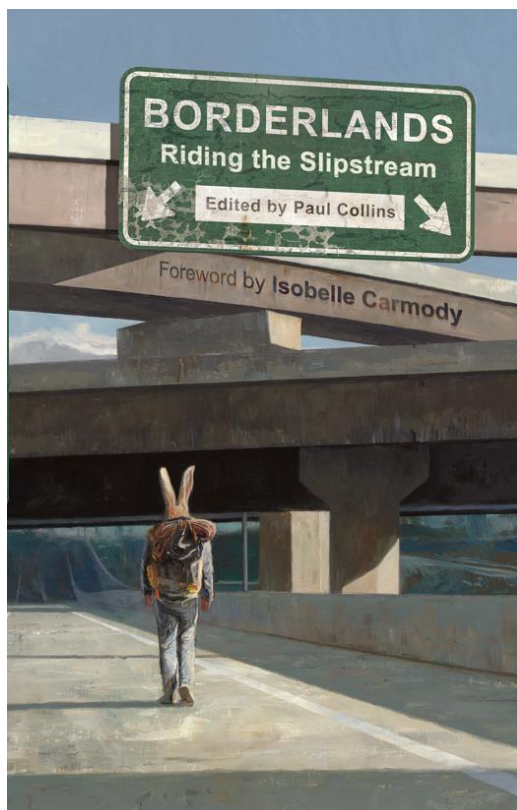# BORDERLANDS – RIDING THE SLIPSTREAM

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Teacher Notes

These notes were written to provide teachers with Australian Curriculum linked lesson plans that are related to the text, Borderlands – Riding the Slipstream.

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SUMMARY

Borderlands – Riding the Slipstream is an anthology for readers young and old. Featuring over forty short stories and poems by some of Australia's best-loved authors – including Ursula Dubosarsky, Steven Herrick, Leigh Hobbs, Barry Jonsberg, Sophie Masson and Shaun Tan, and illustrated by quirky artist Anne Ryan – this unique collection spans a kaleidoscope of genres and themes.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Paul Collins has edited numerous anthologies – including Australia's first fantasy collection, Dream Weavers – along with Fantastic Worlds, Rich & Rare and Trust Me Too, and together with Meredith Costain, 60 short anthologies in the Spinouts and Thrillogies series. During his career, he has received the A Bertram Chandler, Peter McNamara and Aurealis awards for his writing and editing work. In 2021 he was awarded the Leila St John citation and medal by the Children's Book Council of Australia for services to children's literature. Paul is also a small press publisher of books for young readers and the author of over 250 books and short stories.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The lessons outlined below each focus on one skill from the English strand of the Australian Curriculum. Each lesson will begin with a modelled example using passages from either Shifting Edges by Dianne Wolfer or Safety Second by Scot Gardner. The remaining portion of the lesson allows students to independently apply the modelled skill to another story of their choice within the anthology.

Learning Intention: We are learning to analyse why stories may have been chosen to be included in an anthology.

Success Criteria:

- I can identify similarities in the short stories that may explain why they were chosen to be in an anthology
- I can analyse characters, settings and events in order to compare them to another text

Curriculum Link: AC9E7LE05 identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives

Tune In: Ask students what their favourite genre of book is. Why do they like it? Start a conversation about how authors create a text in a particular genre. Is it the setting they use, the characters they create, the pacing of the storyline, or twists in the plot?

Modelled Example: Introduce the text and discuss that it is an anthology. Meaning that it is a collection of short stories chosen by the editor. These texts are not connected, so why include them in an anthology together? Do they have the same genre? Do they have the same target audience? Look at the examples 'Shifting Edges' by Dianne Wolfer and 'Safety Second' by Scot Gardner and scaffold a discussion as to why they would be chosen to be in an anthology together. They both include main characters who are in their early teenage years, battling with their place within their family and trying to find peace in their circumstances.

Independent Activity: Students are to choose another story and analyse why it was chosen to be a part of the anthology. Students are to analyse the characters, setting and events to compare to the modelled examples.

Reflection: Look at the place of each story that was chosen in the text. Do you think it was put in that order for a particular reason? Would the book you are currently reading fit well in the anthology? Why/Why not?

Learning Intention: We are learning to analyse how the author uses setting to engage the reader.

Success Criteria:

- I can compare two author's use of descriptive language when creating the setting
- I can analyse why the author chose to direct a certain amount of attention to the setting of the text

Curriculum Link: AC9E7LE05 identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives

Tune In: What language devices do we use in order to create a vivid setting in a reader's mind? Eg. Metaphor, simile, noun groups, engaging vocabulary, perspective. As a class come up with an example of each.

Modelled Example: Read the below excerpts from the modelled texts. Lead a discussion that focusses on how the author introduces the setting. Which paints a more vivid picture in our minds. Why? Is there a reason that Scot Gardner chose to not spend as much time on describing the setting in detail. Discuss how Dianne Wolfer may have discussed the setting more in depth to help the reader sympathise with the change that Aiko was experiencing when she stepped off the plane, where are the character Sam was in a place that he was already familiar with. Scot instead focusses on the reader on the relationship between each character.

> *Sweat trickles down Aiko's back as they drive into a barren landscape. The earth is the deep red of maguro, dotted with tall misshapen mounds.*

Aiko remembers the vivid blue sky around Perth airport and the bizarre screeching birds. The sky was impossibly wide. Too wide. There was nowhere to hide.

Dad bought pipis at the servo. There were a few people on the jetty. Old couples strolling, a mum with a sobbing kid in a pram and out near the end where we fish there was a group of teenagers with rods. They were quiet and serious, though one kid in a hoodie said hello when Dad put the bucket down right at the base of the lamppost.

Independent Activity: Students use the modelled example to apply to a text of their choosing within the anthology. Student will analyse how the author has described the setting and the importance of it within the storyline.

Reflection: Students choose a partner who chose a different story to discuss their analysis.

LESSON 3: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Learning Intention: We are learning how an author uses characters' dialogue to reveal a character's identity.

Success Criteria:

- I can infer Sam and Aiko's character identities through analysing their dialogue
- I can analyse the author's choice to include dialogue in a particular way
- I can analyse a character from a story of my choosing by inferring meaning from their dialogue

Curriculum Links: AC9E7LA01 understand how language expresses and creates personal and social identities

Tune In: Discuss the two characters, Sam and Aiko, which do the students like better? Why? Which do we know more about?

Modelled Example: Analyse dialogue excerpts from each character. What kind of language does each character use? What can we infer about their identity from the way they talk? Lead a discussion to model an effective analysis.

Excerpt from Shifting Edges. Note that the lack of dialogue from Aiko may be more powerful than if the author had included verbal language.

> *'Aiko!' Cho hugs her niece. So casual after two years in Australia! 'How's your mum?'*
>
> *'The same,' Aiko holds back for a moment, used to bowing, 'still tired.'*
>
> *'And you?'*
>
> *Aiko shrugs then relaxes into the warmth of her favourite aunt.*
>
> *'I hope you can rest here.' Cho doesn't mention Aiko's rash. 'Caring for someone is hard.'*
>
> *Aiko nods.*
>
> *'Long Covid must be terrible, especially for someone like your mum.'*
>
> *She nods again, remembering her mother's parting words, asking Aiko to decide what she wants to do with her life. Aiko's skin prickles. The question feels too big.*

Excerpt from Safety Second.

> *'This has been hard on you, hey Sammy?'*

'What?'

'Your mum and me. All the changes. The uncertainty.'

'I'm used to it.'

He seemed to deflate a little. 'Suppose you are.'

He was quiet again for a few steps and I felt like I'd had a little victory. Just a kick to his shins, but he felt it.

'This year's going to be different. I'll be home more, and we'll get to do more things together.'

I'd heard that before, too. 'That'll be great,' I sighed.

'Don't be like that, mate. It's hard for all of us.'

'What? I'm not complaining. I said it would be great.'

'It was your tone.'

Independent Activity: Students use the modelled example to apply to a text of their choosing within the anthology. They need to find a piece of dialogue from the character that reveals something about that character's identity.

Reflection: Share with a group that have chosen a different texts.

LESSON 4: TITLE ANALYSIS

Learning Intention: We are learning to evaluate why a title is chosen to represent a text.

Success Criteria:

- I can identify where the title has been derived from within the text
- I can explain why I think the author chose that particular title
- I can evaluate the efficacy of a title and creatively provide alternatives

Curriculum Link: AC9E7LE05 identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives

Tune In: Class discussion; When you are creating a text, how do you choose the title?

Modelled Example: Read the below excerpts that mention the title. Lead a discussion with the class exploring the meaning and relevance of the titles that the author chose.

Shifting Edges

> *By the second week the salt water is drying her eczema. It's less angry and red. Or perhaps she is. Aiko's mother calls, sounding stronger, and Tokyo feels like forever away. As she scans the horizon for the tourist boat's return Aiko wonders where her edges end. If she folds herself again, and again, like a new origami shape, using the same worn piece of paper, could she fit into this strange land, like Cho?*

Safety Second

> *I warned her my family were strange. Mum and Dad were both giggling and rocking in the hammock in the backyard. Hayley and Billy were making lunch for everybody like nothing had ever happened. Nick was on his back on the couch, reading my copy of The Lab for the tenth time.*
>
> *'It's madness in here,' Sam whispered, after we'd made our introductions.*

'Yeah, we live life dangerously.'

'Safety second?'

'At least.'

Independent Activity: Students choose one of the texts they have previously analysed so they are familiar with the characters and storyline. Students need to evaluate why the author may have chosen this title and what relevance it has to the storyline.

Reflection: Students are to come up with an alternate title for Safety Second and Shifting Edges. Students must justify their new title with specific references to the text. You may like to have a class vote on the new title from the submissions written by students.

LESSON 5: INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

Learning Intention: We are learning to express our opinion on a text in a detailed and informed way.

Success Criteria:

- I can form an opinion about a text
- I can identify clear and detailed reasoning to support my opinion
- I can respond to a peer's opinion of a text in a meaningful and informed manner

Curriculum Link: AC9E7LE02 form an opinion about characters, settings and events in texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others' opinions and justifying a response

Tune In: Ask students to stand on the side of the room to represent which text they preferred out of Shifting Edges and Safety Second. Within their like-minded group, ask students to discuss why they chose this text over the other.

Modelled Example: Ask students what information they included when giving their reasoning. Write these categories on the board as they come up in conversation. Some headings might be; characters, setting, plot, pacing, relatability, genre, authorial style. Explain to students that in order to give a justified opinion it is important to cover reasoning in detail, rather than glancing over the whole text with one 'rating'. Provide an example of your own opinion on the text. Ensuring to give points that you particularly didn't enjoy, or wished were different, as well as the things you enjoyed as a whole. Ask students to give their opinion again, but using more detailed justifications and specific vocabulary to identify their preferences.

Independent Activity: Ask students to choose two texts they feel quite familiar with. Students are to write a paragraph that details which book is their preference and why, detailing their opinion about characters, the setting, events, the plot and literary devices used.

Reflection: Students read their paragraph to a partner and see if they agree or disagree with the evaluation.

Whilst these lessons focus on Year 7 curriculum links, the text is also suitable for Year 8 and Year 9 curriculum content. Similarly, this anthology can be used across a variety of English and cross curricular outcomes. Here are some additional ways you may like to utilise Borderlands – Riding the Slipstream in your curriculum planning.

- **Exploring Visual Features in Anthology Design**
  - o Analyse the cover design, layout of chapters and typography design for each story. Students will design a front cover for a text of their choosing from the anthology, or students can choose 5 texts from the anthology to design a creative typographical title that is aesthetically relevant to the content and theme of the story.
- **Creative Writing**
  - o Students write a short story that an editor would find suitable to place in this anthology. Talk to the class about the characters, settings, language and tone that would appeal to the editor when choosing stories for this anthology based on your knowledge from the existing stories.
- **Map It Out**
  - o Place the locations from each story on a large map, including a text excerpt of how that place is described by each author. Then, look at Google Satellite view and ask students to write their own paragraph describing that location.
- **Before Reading**
  - o Before reading any of the texts, put the titles on the board and ask students to guess what each story is about based on the titles alone. Then, ask the students to guess why these stories are placed together in an anthology. Revisit students' answers at the end of the unit to see how accurate their guesses were.
- **Backpack**
  - o Ask students to choose a text from the anthology. The students will then create a drawing of what the characters' backpack/handbag/purse/wallet would look like based on what they know about each character.
- **Critical Review**
  - o Read critic reviews for a range of books online and analyse the language that critics use to review texts. In contrast, look at user reviews of those same texts. How is the language different/similar? How is the content different/similar? Task students with writing a user and a critic review for Borderlands – Riding the Slipstream.
- **Rollercoaster of Engagement**
  - o Students choose a text from the anthology and analyse what is engaging about that text. This will be represented as a 'rollercoaster' showing the highly engaging parts of the book (in the student's subjective perspective) and the less engaging moments. The x axis will show the timeline of the story that is chosen, and the y axis will be an 'engagement-meter' showing how engaging the student found that part of the storyline. Students who chose the same text can then compare and contrast their rollercoasters.