



## The Beauty is in the Walking by James Moloney

### Book Summary:

'Sometimes you've got to show some mongrel. There's mongrel in you, little brother, more than you realise.'

Everyone thinks they know what Jacob O'Leary can and can't do – and they're not shy about telling him either.

But no one – not even Jacob – knows what he's truly capable of. And he's desperate for the chance to work it out for himself.

When a shocking and mystifying crime sends his small country town reeling, and fingers start pointing at the newcomer, Jacob grabs the chance to get out in front of the pack and keep mob rule at bay. He's convinced that the police have accused the wrong guy; that the real villain is still out there. And he's determined to prove it – and himself – to everyone.

ISBN: 9780732299941 (pbk)

E-ISBN: 9781460704042 (ebook)

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### CURRICULUM OUTCOMES AND KEY LEARNING AREAS

ACELA1550;ACELA1561;ACELA1563;ACELA1564;

ACELA1564;ACELT1633;ACELT1635;ACELT1639;

ACELT1641;ACELT1812;ACELT1774;ACELT1815;

ACELT1644;ACELY1811;ACELY1746; ACELY1813;

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[ACELY1746](#); [ACELY1813](#); [ACELY1752](#)

These teachers' notes have been prepared for English students in Years 9 and 10. While the novel deals with characters in Year 12, it may be read and enjoyed by mature students across the high school years.

The Beauty is in the Walking is also suitable for senior students, particularly those in Standard English (NSW) or equivalent courses.

### Bibliography

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Beauty is in the Walking* is set in a fictional Queensland country town, Palmerston, and is narrated by 17-year-old Jacob O'Leary. Jacob is Palmerston born and bred, but is nevertheless something of an outsider, thanks to his cerebral palsy (CP). He has a strong circle of friends, but is still sometimes the victim of bullying, and he's never had a girlfriend. When a series of animal mutilation murders begin in the district, Jacob is well-placed to feel empathy for the person accused of the crimes — the teenage son of a newly arrived Muslim family.

*The Beauty is in the Walking* is a novel about finding one's own place, even in the most familiar environments. Set in a recognisably Australian milieu, rich in language and fully drawn characters, and bursting with contemporary issues around race, identity, truthfulness, social and mainstream media, and what they mean to a young man — and woman — in today's Australia.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Moloney is the author of more than 40 books for children and teenagers. He has in the past won the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award for *Swashbuckler* (1996), *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* (1997) and has otherwise been shortlisted and received Honour Book awards for multiple titles. *Touch Me* won the 2001 *Herald Sun* prize for Young Adult fiction and the Victorian Premier's Literary Prize.

From James Moloney's website: <http://www.jamesmoloney.com.au/>

My friends and family call me Jim, but I was born James Moloney in Sydney, Australia, in 1954. When I was seven years old, my family moved to Brisbane and, except for the odd year or two, I have lived in Brisbane ever since. At school, I was into every sport going — cricket, footy, swimming, you name it. It's hard to believe now, but in high school I was a champion long jumper!

After university I became a teacher and then a teacher librarian. I moved around from school to school and in 1977–8 found myself in Cunnamulla, a

little outback town where many Indigenous Australians live. These turned out to be important years for my writing.

In 1980, I took a year's leave, stuffed a backpack full of clothes and went off to see the world. Got to do it, guys! There's so much out there, from things to uplift your spirit to things that make you question the humanity of your fellow man. I stepped over rotting dog carcasses in Mexico City, got all weepy in a roomful of Impressionist paintings and met some fascinating people. Hope you'll do the same one day.

1983 was another big year. I got married and started work at Marist College, Ashgrove, an all-boys school in Brisbane, where I stayed for fifteen years. During this time, I became interested in writing for young people, at first using the ideas and experiences gained from my time in Cunnamulla, mixed in with the thinking and wondering I'd done overseas. After my early attempts were rejected, the first of my novels, *Crossfire*, was published in 1992.

In 1997, my fifth novel for young adults, *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, won the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award. At the end of that year, I decided to leave teaching and become a full-time writer.

In the meantime, my wife and I have produced three great children, all of them grown up now. Along with my wonderful wife, Kate, they have encouraged me along every step of the way. They still read my manuscripts and give me useful advice.

Now that I have turned my hobby into my job, I have had to develop some other interests. For exercise, I go cycling along the bike paths around Brisbane and in recent years we have done a little riding in France, Vietnam and the USA. I'm also into great books, great food, movies and travelling, especially in France, which Kate and I enjoy more than any other country.

## STUDY AREAS

### THEMES

Some key themes in *The Beauty is in the Walking* include:

#### **Identity: Otherness and conformity**

Like many young adult novels, identity and agency are at the heart of the protagonist Jacob's story. Jacob has CP — cerebral palsy. Thanks to his mother's oft-mentioned determination, Jacob is not confined to a wheelchair, nor does he require crutches. His mobility is, nevertheless, restricted to a degree, and he has some muscle weakness on one side of his mouth, which leads to some 'spit' issues. Jacob has a strong, long-standing circle of friends who support him against the occasional bully, but he nevertheless remains something of an outsider thanks to his condition.

Other outsiders the novel considers are characters like Chloe, recently moved to Palmerston from Brisbane, and Mr Svenson, outspoken English teacher, and the Muslim families who come to work at the local meatpackers. Soraya and Mahmoud, the teenage children of one of the families, attract both fascination and suspicion from their peers at school and the wider community.

Questions of conformity and inclusion and exclusion are directly addressed in Chapter 4, first during a playground discussion about 'old townies' versus 'new townies', and then later in a class discussion about *The Crucible* (one of many intertexts to the novel).

#### **Race and Racism\***

The novel is set in Palmerston, a fictional country Queensland town. The town relies on the local meatworks for its survival, and has recently welcomed 'our first Muslims', as Jacob describes them — two families whose fathers oversee halal practices at the meatworks. When a spate of animal mutilations occur in the town and district, Mahmoud, the teenage son of one of the Muslim families, becomes the focus of suspicion. Moloney provides range and nuance in the attitudes displayed towards the Muslim characters from their predominantly white Australian peers, and in the various discussions Jacob and his friends and family have about Mahmoud's presumed guilt or innocence:

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'You don't think it's all a bit PC?' asked Mitch, sounding skeptical.

The initials caught me off guard. CP backwards. I thought he was on about my cerebral palsy and the confusion must have shown in my face.

'Politically correct,' Mitch explained. 'You know, standing up for the ethnics out of guilt because naughty white guys like us are always slagging them off.'

He was having a dig, but he had a point. Was that the reason I was so fired up, because of some trendy cause? (p. 96)

\*Note that while many people argue that anti-Islamic sentiment is not racism, Muslims are nevertheless often simultaneously marked for their racial heritage alongside their religious affiliations. Note that several characters call Mahmoud 'The Leb' and the Muslim families 'The Lebs'. Some articles presenting both sides of the argument can be found at the following links:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/10/islamophobia-racism-dresden-protests-germany-islamisation>

<http://sheilas.org.au/2014/10/yes-islamophobia-is-racism/>

<http://freethoughtblogs.com/crommunist/2013/05/29/is-criticism-of-islam-racist/>

## Disability

Jacob's CP is central to his story and experiences. It colours many of his relationships, and while he is both unsentimental and lacking in bitterness about his condition, the frustrations and limitations it brings are deeply interwoven into his story and relationships. His CP provides him with empathy

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for the other 'others' in the novel — Chloe and Mahmoud in particular — and is in part responsible for his determination to advocate for Mahmoud's innocence in the animal-mutilation case. His CP also brings him into conflict with others — his over-protective mother; his English teacher, who accuses him of using it as an excuse to 'coast' through school; and ultimately with his love interest, Amy. A scene in Chapter 4 and a conversation between Jacob and Chloe on page 58, where Jacob says *You can't say 'cripple', but I can*, introduces the reader to the novel's larger interest in power relationships and language, and inside-group/outside-group dynamics. Jacob's CP and how it has made him a 'connoisseur of walks' also gives the novel its title. Jacob's CP also brings in a secondary theme around bullying, which also intersects with the explorations of bigotry and exclusion.

### **Masculinity and gender roles**

The novel's first scene shows Jacob exercising with his football player brother, Tyke. Like many of Moloney's previous novels, *The Beauty is in the Walking* interrogates conventional masculinity, reinscribing it in some characters, and challenging it through others. The Muslim characters also widens the discussion to encompass different cultural attitudes towards masculinity and gender roles more broadly.

Specifically, Jacob makes an observation about Amy and Bec that introduces the idea, developed by gender studies theorists such as Judith Butler, that gender is a performance rather than an innate set of traits:

Girls can be hard to read. What seems genuine can be an act no different from what Dan and Mitch were doing up there in the darkness. You just don't know how much to take seriously, and if you get taken in you end up the loser. (p. 23)

### **Romance**

Jacob has been attracted to his friend Amy for a long time, and their romance begins to develop during the course of the novel. The novel discusses the

nature of romance ('Do girls get prettier the more you like them?' p. 61), 'what do women want' (pp. 81–82) and the nature of romantic love (pp. 152–153). Jacob and Amy's romance eventually founders, with Jacob finding a more equal relationship with Chloe at the very end of the novel.

## **Family**

The novel opens, after the prologue, with a scene between Jacob and his much-admired older brother, Tyke. Later in the novel, Jacob compares the vilified Mahmoud to his brother, who has provided him with moral and practical guidance and support his whole life. However, the key focus on family in the novel is explored through the relationship between Jacob and his mother. Jacob's mother — from a family so significant in the district that the main street of the fictional Palmerston is named after them — is depicted as a relentless warrior in her determination not to allow Jacob to be physically restricted by his CP. Ironically, her over-protective attitude to him has the effect of restricting him in other ways — she is adamant that he stay in Palmerston and not pursue going to university. Family also intersects strongly with other themes in the novel: Jacob's parents have strong views on Jacob's involvement in Mahmoud's 'case'; and Jacob's mother's attitudes towards him leaving Palmerston connect strongly to the 'city versus country' theme.

Note that Jacob is initially critical of the idea that Soraya's life is 'mapped out by her parents' (p. 60) but later comes to realise that he is in a very similar predicament (p. 163).

## **City Versus Country**

There are numerous scenes and discussions in the novel addressing the 'city versus country' dichotomy that has been a part of Australian discourse almost since the beginning of white settlement. The first mention is made when Jacob speculates that the perpetrator of the mutilation death of the horse that opens the novel is 'Prob'ly some psycho from the city, out of his skull on crystal meth' (p. 11). In Chapter 4, the friends discuss 'new townies and old townies', the latter including both the new Muslim families ('Our first Muslims.' p. 34) and Chloe, who came to Palmerston from Brisbane. The novel

addresses the positive and negatives associated with the closeness of a community such as Palmerston, not just in terms of exclusion and 'otherness', but in terms of the limited opportunities it provides for its young residents (pp. 50, 155–156), and the expectations placed on residents — Chloe attracts criticism for choosing to be a vegetarian in a town that relies on its meatworks for its economic survival (p. 41). Students may like to consider the city versus country theme as a metaphor for Jacob's journey from dependence to agency.

See: Les Murray's 'Sydney and the Bush', Henry Lawson's 'Up the Country' and Banjo Paterson's response 'In Defence of the Bush'.

## CHARACTERISATION

*There's mongrel in you, little brother, more than you realise.* (p. 9)

In *The Beauty is in the Walking*, James Moloney has created a cast of nuanced and believable characters, with their share of flaws and strengths.

*In building an image of a consistent character, readers can pay attention to several sources of information in the text: what characters say or imply about themselves, what other characters say about them, what the narrator says about characters, and what characters do. Sometimes the information derived from one of these sources contradicts information from another source, so that readers must hold a number of possibilities in mind until they can decide which information is reliable.*

Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, *The Pleasures of Children's Literature, Third Edition*, Allyn and Bacon, 2003, p.60

## Discussion

Using your understanding of what Nodelman and Reimer state about how authors create characters, and the above resources, have a grand conversation with your students about what makes for a good character in fiction. Consider the ideas of consistency — characters behaving in believable ways — and acceptable inconsistency — characters doing something unexpected, but that we can still believe they *might* do, even if we don't yet understand *why*.

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**Activity:**

Allocate a character from the novel to students — this can be done individually, in pairs or in small groups, depending on what will work best for your students' ability with language and drawing. Based on the information about the characters in the cast list, ask them to write a short biography of their character, including the following detail:

- Age
- Place of birth
- Family members
- What languages might they speak?
- Hobbies
- Who is their best friend? (Does not have to be a character in the book.)
- Favourite book or story
- Favourite movie and TV show
- Favourite colour
- Favourite food
- Where do they live? (Place and building type.)
- An object or possession you would associate with them
- A short description of their personality.

The students should make informed decisions based on what they know of the character from the novel. After writing the character's biography, they should choose a scene from the book in which their character appears, and re-write it from their character's point of view. They should consider the language their character would use, what kinds of figurative language they would use (including metaphor and similes which should reflect their 'world view'), their character's attitudes towards others and their opinions on the events of the book.

**Analysing Character**

*... readers might pay attention to the four principles (of characterisation). The first two are repetition — the recurrent mention of relevant traits, probably from a variety of sources — and accumulation — the piling up of characteristics that complement one another or together explain unusual behaviour... Third... readers might also ask what the character's relations to other characters are... The fourth principle is transformation, the extent to which characters change in the course of the story.*

Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, *The Pleasures of Children's Literature, Third Edition*, Allyn and Bacon, 2003, p.60-61

Again, allocate a character from the book to students in pairs or small groups. This should be a different character from the one they did in the 'biographies' activity above.

Using the table provided as a model (Appendix X), have the students analyse the techniques Moloney has used in creating the character. This activity asks students to explicitly identify grammatical features (use of verbs, adverbs and adjectives); vocabulary choices, including speech markers; physical characteristics, including how they move; objects associated with them, including food; and their actions and relationships to other characters.

Have the groups report back to the class on their findings. Compare the different techniques and language Moloney uses to create each distinct character. Then post the character analysis tables with the drawings and character biographies from the previous exercise.

## LANGUAGE

*Find a clarity of meaning...* (p. 40)

According to some commentators, the classic Australian vernacular is disappearing, replaced by Americanisms. Its association with a succession of politicians' 'try-hard' efforts at using old-fashioned Aussie slang was its death knell for many. Yet vestiges of our unique and inventive vernacular remain, and Susan Butler from the *Macquarie Dictionary* says that 'rumours of the death of Australian slang are grossly exaggerated'. Australian slang seems to be particularly robust in rural areas, and there are many examples of it in *The Beauty is in the Walking*.

### Discussion topic

Talk about Australian English and slang: what Australian words and expressions are your students familiar with? Include usages such as shortening of words, and adding 'ie' and 'o' on the ends of words (cossie, smoko, etc.), as well as classic words and phrases they may be familiar with.

Create a class list. Include students for whom English is an additional language: what experiences may they have had with Australian English and slang while they were learning English? How commonly are some of these classic words and phrases used these days? Where do we still hear them? e.g. E.g. politicians (Tony Abbott's 'fair dinkum', Kevin Rudd's 'fair suck of the sauce bottle'), Alf from *Home and Away*, commercial radio announcers, sports commentators and comedians. What do students think of people who use this form of Australian English?

Consider in the discussion how language changes in response to cultural, social and historical influences. You might like to consider Aboriginal English as well:

Understand that Standard Australian English is a living language within which the creation and loss of words and the evolution of usage is ongoing (ACELA1550)

Understand that Standard Australian English in its spoken and written forms has a history of evolution and change and continues to evolve (ACELA1563)

You might like to show students some classic Australian films and advertisements that feature Australian English, including Aboriginal English.

Paul Hogan Australian tourism ads:

[https://youtu.be/Xn\\_CPrCS8gs](https://youtu.be/Xn_CPrCS8gs)

Pub scene from *They're a Weird Mob*

<https://youtu.be/65qdMttVaEo>

Ricky Martin learns Australian slang

<https://youtu.be/HtrZYGjRlqo>

Films: *Gallipoli*, *The Castle*, *Muriel's Wedding*

TV: *Kath and Kim*, *Summer Heights High*, *Black Comedy* (ratings permitting)

**Activity:**

Identify some examples of Australian expressions and vernacular in *The Beauty is in the Walking*. Note that the book doesn't use archaic, well-worn or stereotypical phrases, but rather fresh and inventive ones that are nevertheless identifiably Australian. E.g.:

*You can't fatten a thoroughbred* (p. 13)

*Like a dingo parting sheep* (p. 17)

*Like a kelpie kicked by a bull* (p. 17)

*Bunging it on* (p. 27)

*Dingbat* (p. 51)

Identify which figures of speech or identify which language feature each example is: aphorism, metaphor, simile, noun, etc.

Ask students to collect more examples as they read the novel.

Then have students create their own original Australian expressions. Note that while the novel is set in the country, and the vernacular reflects the setting and experiences of the characters, that there are also examples of urban Australian slang to consider. While students should be as free to be as inventive as possible, it would also be a good exercise to ask them to create slang and expression specific to your town or suburb. Note also that some Australian slang draws on Aboriginal languages.

Add them to the class list, creating a poster identifying examples from the students' prior knowledge, examples from the text, and then examples that the student will create themselves.

You might like to do a separate activity looking at the language of insult. On page 51, the English teacher Mr Svenson says to a student:

'Kieran, you're a dingbat,' said Svenson. He preferred old fashioned slap-downs in place of genuine abuse, which had made it all the more galling when he'd simply called me lazy.

Being mindful of student welfare and wellbeing issues, look at examples of great insults from literature and history. There are multiple sites where Shakespeare's insults are listed, including a BuzzFeed list, posters and a Shakespeare Insult Generator and Insult Kit:

<http://www.pangloss.com/seidel/Shaker/>

Other great insulters include Winston Churchill and Dorothy Parker:

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/donnad/21-scathingly-witty-insults-by-famous-people#.khVYvM9V4>

Depending on class dynamics and maturity of your students, you may wish to have them create their own inventive insults. This can be part of a larger creative writing/narrative writing project. Remind students that the most effective and witty insults often reveal something about the person making the insult as well as the victim. When they are developing a character for a story, put the character in conflict with another character and write insults each would use against the other. There should be an existing source of conflict between the two characters, and remind your students, if necessary, about policies and ethics around non-bullying, sexism, racism and homophobia. Alternatively, students can create insults for characters in *The Beauty is in the Walking*, e.g. Dan to Jacob, Jacob to Mr Svenson.

### Resources:

'The Aussie Vernacular? Yeah, It's Not Bad'

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-aussie-vernacular-yeah-its-not-bad-20140620-zsale>

'The Rise and Fall of Australian Slang'

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-27805070>

'Here's to those Beaut Geezers who Keep our Slang Alive'

<http://www.theage.com.au/it-pro/heres-to-those-beaut-geezers-who-keep-our-slang-alive-20110210-1aok6.html>

Susan Butler from *Macquarie Dictionary* on Australian slang on *The Drum*

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-16/is-australian-slang-on-the-way-out/5527790>

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'PM's slang "a throwback to Bazza McKenzie": Abbott'

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/pms-slang-a-throwback-to-bazza-mckenzie-abbott-20090610-c36k.html>

'Strewth! Aussie Workers Told to Cut the Slang'

<http://www.news.com.au/national/strewth-aussie-workers-told-to-cut-the-slang/story-fncynjr2-1226694726246>

*Stop Laughing... This is Serious: Australian Language* (ABC Series, M rated — language warning)

<https://youtu.be/cxcnkT8984c>

## THE LANGUAGE OF POWER

*You can't say 'cripple', but I can.* (p. 58)

### Discussion

Words and names are powerful, and words intended as terms of abuse are often eventually taken back and owned by minority and disempowered groups. In Australia, famously, the word 'wog', an abusive name for non-Anglo Australians common in the 1960s and '70s, was reclaimed in the 1980s and '90s by a group of Greek comedians and actors in shows such as *Wogs out of Work*. Mild terms of abuse such as 'geek' and 'nerd' have similarly been reclaimed and even to an extent glamorised by the success of celebrity scientists and TV shows such as *The Big Bang Theory*. The word 'gay' began in the LGBTQ community before becoming an insult and a word used to express derision. Meanwhile, while the reclamation of the 'n' word in American urban culture continues to be controversial.

### Viewing

Begin by showing the video of Tim Minchin's song 'Prejudice' (language warning):

[https://youtu.be/KVN\\_0qvuhhw](https://youtu.be/KVN_0qvuhhw)

Steady Eddy, Australian comedian with Cerebral Palsy, in a routine about the language of disability:

<https://youtu.be/UbGOjmNAsb8>

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You might like to also interrogate the concept of 'political correctness':

<http://www.wikihow.com/Be-Politically-Correct>

### Discussion

**NB: Remind students to be sensitive with their own use of language during these activities.**

What examples do the students know of words that have been 'reclaimed with pride' — words that are OK for a person within a cultural or other minority group to call themselves, but others outside cannot without causing offence. Why is this the case? Note that people within dominant/privileged cultures often mount the argument that if it's OK for (for example) African Americans to use the 'n' word, then it should be OK for everyone. Encourage the students to interrogate their own relative position of privilege during the course of the discussion.

### Debate

Topic: If they say it, everyone should be allowed to say it.

### Resources

**NB: Some of these resources include explicit or offensive language. The following resource on exploring racially-charged language in *Huckleberry Finn* has some excellent tips for managing difficult conversations in the secondary English classroom:**

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/section1\\_2.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/section1_2.html)

*Stop Laughing... This is Serious: Acropolis Now* (ABC)

<https://youtu.be/3DpXX4x9uOE>

Acropolis Now promotional video

<https://youtu.be/VbsE5Cafy4I>

'Straight Talk about the N-Word'

<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-40-fall-2011/feature/straight-talk-about-n-word>

'Why the N-Word doesn't Go Away'

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/23/opinions/holmes-n-word/>

*This Book is Gay* by James Dawson: book review

<http://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2014/oct/07/review-james-dawson-this-book-is-gay>

Fear of a Brown Planet: Reverse Racism

[https://youtu.be/dw\\_mRaIHb-M](https://youtu.be/dw_mRaIHb-M)

### Relationships, power and language

Young adult fiction often interrogates questions of power in the context of the protagonist's experiences and story. In *The Beauty is in the Walking*, we see this in a number of different relationships Jacob has with his peers; his family; the local community, particularly as represented by the police; and his English teacher. For Jacob, having CP adds a layer of complexity to these relationships: his mother is over-protective; his English teacher accuses him of using his condition to coast through school; he attracts the attention of bullies. Ultimately, one of his best friends uses the symbol of his disability and, ironically, his freedom from it — the wolf's head walking stick given to him by Chloe — to challenge Jacob in a head-to-head power play.

### Discussion

In groups, have students look at some of the key relationships in the novel, making notes regarding the power balance within those relationships and any particularly striking examples that demonstrates the power dynamic. The students should then identify or describe the language technique being used to portray power e.g. intimidation, persuasion, aggression, manipulation, personalisation, contempt, arrogance, confidence. In some instances, an action will express or reinforce the power dynamic at play; this should be noted as well.

Who holds the power in these relationships may not be immediately obvious, e.g. while Chloe and Soraya are peers and friends, Chloe has the advantage of being from inside the dominant culture, and she exercises the power of that privilege when she speaks on Soraya's behalf — benign power is still power. A sample table for this activity is provided in Appendix X.

Some suggestions of relationships students could look at:

- Jacob and Dan
- Jacob and Amy
- Jacob and his mother
- Jacob and Mr Svenson
- Jacob and Mahmoud

- Jacob and Tyke
- Jacob and the bully in Year 10
- Jacob's parents
- Dan and Mitch
- Chloe and Soraya

These resources on the language of power may be useful:

<http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/lang/power.htm>

### Debate Topic:

Being right doesn't matter. (*'I don't care about being right.'* Jacob, p. 212)

### Symbolism and Figurative Language

The language of *The Beauty is in the Walking* is rich in metaphors, similes and symbols, the use of which are all closely linked to character, setting and theme. The narrator-protagonist, Jacob, frequently uses metaphors and particularly similes to express himself.

Have your students keep a running list of examples of figurative language as they read the novel.

- simile e.g. *the talk seemed to escape through the open side like the luck out of a horseshoe* (p. 12)
- metaphor e.g. *Now he was digging deeper, using the class as his soil.* (p. 40)
- hyperbole e.g. *'I can't think of anything worse than having your whole life mapped out by your parents.'* (p. 60)
- understatement e.g. Jacob often brushes things off, including physical abuse, by saying it could have been worse (in comparison to hyperbole example above)
- metonymy e.g. meatworks representing the town, the town representing the people and *vice versa*, individuals representing an entire religion
- symbol e.g. Jacob's wolf's head cane

Discuss how the author uses these techniques to:

- reveal character
- establish tone
- evoke emotion

- create mental images
- make connections

## **NARRATIVE/CREATIVE WRITING**

The following writing tasks tie are all based on plot points or characters in *The Beauty is in the Walking*. Students should always be encouraged to look to the original text for support for their own creative interpretations of the novel, including using language appropriate to the character, genre or style (where relevant), and to justify decisions they make about alternative versions, endings and points of view.

### **Horrors!**

Chapter 3, 'Kibble's Paddock', contains a scene that draws heavily on the tropes and conventions of urban myth/tall tales and teen-exploitation horror movies. Driving out to the scene of the first animal mutilation murder, Dan and Mitch play a practical joke on Amy, Bec and Jacob. Read the scene together as a class, and ask the students to consider any similar scenarios they may know from movies, TV, oral stories (campfire tales) or other books. If the students haven't already read the chapter, stop reading at the end of page 26 and ask them to predict what they think will happen next.

Students then complete the scene, picking up from the end of page 26. They should be free to make whatever conclusion they like about what happens next. Alternatively, if they have already read the whole chapter, rewrite the ending of the practical joke scene to make it an actual horror story.

### **Resources:**

Urban Legends:

<http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/horrors/tp/top10scariest.htm>

Common horror tropes:

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/HorrorTropes>

## Alternative Points of View

*The Beauty is in the Walking* is told in the first-person grammatical voice, from the point of view of narrator-protagonist Jacob. As we've seen earlier, the book relies heavily on Jacob's various relationships to explore its themes of identity, outsiders versus insiders, and attitudes towards Muslims, family, city versus country, disability and gender roles.

Choose a scene and re-write it from a different character's point of view. Some sample scenes to consider:

- Chapter 3 'Kibble's Paddock'. Rewrite from Dan's point of view.
- Chapter 4 'Two Good Legs'. Rewrite the scene in the toilets from the bully's point of view.
- Chapter 5 'Charlotte'. Rewrite the scene between Jacob, Chloe and Soraya from Soraya's point of view.
- Chapter 11 'Protest: Part 2'. Rewrite the scene from Chloe's point of view. Alternatively, rewrite from the journalist or one of the police officer's point of view.
- Chapter 21 'Last Day'. Rewrite the scene with Mitch and the others offering Jacob a ride from Amy's point of view.

## New scenes

Some scenes which don't appear in the book but are significant to the plot, or that may reveal character, may provide inspiration for creative writing responses. This can also provide an opportunity for writing in different modes. Some suggestions:

- Mrs Bagnold's statement to the police.
- Imagine Mahmoud eventually writes a post on the Facebook page 'Mahmoud Rais is Innocent'. Write Mahmoud's post after he is proven innocent of the suspicions against him.
- Chloe writes a letter back to a friend in Brisbane to describe her experiences in Palmerston.

- Mr Svenson writes a personal journal entry the night after his final confrontation with Jacob. Or write a series of journal entries by Mr Svenson that cover the entire time period of the novel.

### Open Endings

*The Beauty is in the Walking* has an open ending. While many of the plot's major points are concluded, we do not know what decision our narrator-protagonist, Jacob, has decided about his future. Lead a class discussion about what Jacob's options are, and what decision he might make about his future. They should be encouraged to support their ideas from the text: e.g. his mother's preferences, his brother's decision to rent a larger flat, his new romance with Chloe.

**Activity:** Write a final chapter, or epilogue, for Jacob's story, set 3 months after the end of the novel.

### Original Works

Have students write their own original story, not using any characters or plot points from *The Beauty is in the Walking*, but using for inspiration one of the novel's key themes. They should choose a theme that interests or resonates with them. Some quotes for inspiration:

*Memory is a strange thing.* (p. 194)

*'All happened before she was born, but the stories are part of her family, like an extra child sitting around the dinner table.'* (p. 125)

*'You can't fatten a thoroughbred.'* (p. 13)

### MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

*What's printed in the paper is what people believe.* p.123

*The Beauty is in the Walking* confronts media manipulation and the dangers and advantages of social media through the story of the persecution of the

innocent Muslim boy, Mahmoud. As an outsider, marked racially as 'other', suspicion easily falls onto Mahmoud, the teenage son of a newly arrived Muslim family, when a spate of animal mutilation crimes begins in the Palmerston district. Jacob analyses the local paper's reporting of the crime and believes it to be manipulated by the police and journalists to influence public opinion about Mahmoud's guilt. In response, he leads an ill-advised protest action at the local police station, and once again finds the media manipulates the story to take a particular view of the event.

Jacob sets up a Facebook page arguing for Mahmoud's innocence, and is seen to be doing his best to manage the discussion on the page with calm, dignity and clarity. His English teacher, Mr Svenson — already clearly portrayed as both an outsider and a stirrer — incites anger when he posts an inflammatory comment regarding the unwillingness of the Palmerston community to accept that the perpetrator may be 'one of their own'.

Much mention is made of the nature of the comments left on the page and, eventually, when Mahmoud's innocence is proven beyond doubt, Jacob takes the page down. Chloe then tells him that Mahmoud had been reading Jacob's arguments in favour of his innocence, with the implication that Jacob's 'careful demolitions of every false assumption, exaggeration, every lie' had meant a lot to him. Ultimately, both the positive and negative sides of social media are presented in the novel, while the mainstream print media is portrayed as biased and unethical.

### **Debate topic**

Social media is no platform for social justice.

### **Media Studies**

Individuals, cultures and communities may believe themselves to be misrepresented by the media, in news reports, radio commentary, long-form journalism and film and television documentaries.

In groups, ask students to select a group generally acknowledged to be with less power and privilege in mainstream Australian society. This may be specific cultural or religious groups, Aboriginal Australians, LGBTQ Australians, women, teenagers, or any other group they can reasonably argue are lacking power and/or are marginalised.

Prior to undertaking the following media report presentation task, it would be useful to introduce your students to the concept of fallacies. Wikipedia defines fallacies as *an incorrect argument in logic and rhetoric which undermines an argument's logical validity or more generally an argument's logical soundness*.

*The Book of Bad Arguments* is an excellent introduction to the topic:

<https://bookofbadarguments.com/>

This US educator's blog post, 'A Powerful Lesson: Dismantling Hate Rhetoric', has some excellent resources for the secondary classroom:

<http://shaelynnfarnsworth.com/2015/05/11/a-powerful-lesson-dismantling-hate-rhetoric/>

And this visual guide to rhetorical fallacies can be a helpful checklist for students, or the basis for an activity where students develop an argument contrary to their own belief, using one or more of these fallacies to justify their position.

<http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/rhetological-fallacies/>

### **Presentation**

Over two weeks, have them monitor media across different forms in terms of reporting on their chosen group: TV news (commercial and the ABC), current affairs programs, newspapers and magazines, online news sources, social media and blogs. They should collect and record as many examples of current reports, as well as archived examples from the last 5 years. Using this material, the students will prepare their own multi-media presentation to the rest of the class, analysing and reporting on how the group has been represented, both positive and negative, and making some assessment of the likely impact on the group from these media representations. In assessing the material, they should pay attention to:

- Language used: emotive, persuasive, hyperbole etc.
- Devices such as rhetorical questions
- Visual representations: facial expression, body language, salient images, vectors, position on page etc.
- Authority of person telling the story
- Selection of quotes — from who? What authority do they have to

comment? Do they have an agenda?

More ideas here:

<http://lessonbucket.com/vce-media/unit-1/representation/ideas-for-teaching-representation/>

### Resources

Dr Susanne Gannon of the University of Western Sydney has a long-standing interest in media representation of communities from western Sydney. Most recently, she has written on the SBS documentary *Struggle Street*, arguing that the community of Mount Druitt 'has long been the go-to place for media stereotyping of the western suburbs'. Associate Professor Gannon's work on this topic may provide useful resources for students to consider how already disenfranchised communities can suffer from media attention, in context of the portrayal of unethical journalistic behaviour in the novel:

'Watching *Struggle Street*'

<https://learning21c.wordpress.com/2015/05/15/watching-struggle-street/>

'Rewriting the Road to Nowhere'

[http://www.academia.edu/191401/Rewriting\\_the\\_Road\\_to\\_nowhere\\_Place\\_p\\_edagogies\\_in\\_western\\_Sydney](http://www.academia.edu/191401/Rewriting_the_Road_to_nowhere_Place_p_edagogies_in_western_Sydney)

'Road to Nowhere'

[http://elisabethwynhausen.com/EW19\\_Road\\_to\\_Nowhere.html](http://elisabethwynhausen.com/EW19_Road_to_Nowhere.html)

### DISCUSSION TOPICS

On the dangers of social media: *You never know who was looking at your stuff.* (p. 246)

On the power and influence of the media: *It's like they're telling us what to believe.* (p. 92)

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## ESSAY TOPICS

### Comparative Study

*The Beauty is in the Walking* cites many other (inter-) texts, listed as follows:

*The Truman Show* (film)

*The Crucible* (play)

*To Kill a Mockingbird* (novel)

*The Valiant Little Tailor* (Grimm's Brothers fairy tale)

Horror films

*Charlotte's Web* (children's novel)

Select one or two of these texts and have the students read or view. Then ask them to write an essay comparing how *The Beauty is in the Walking* and the intertext deals with a particular theme (e.g. *To Kill a Mockingbird*: race and justice; *The Truman Show*: identity and freedom).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER RESOURCES

### Related Texts

#### Films and documentaries:

*Go Back to Where You Came From* (Rated M)

<http://aso.gov.au/titles/tv/go-back-to-where-you-came-from/>

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*Letters to Ali* (Rated M)

<http://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/letters-ali/>

*Molly and Mobarak* (Rated M)

<http://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/molly-mobarak/>

### **Newspaper and magazine articles and news reports**

'Call for Action to Keep Refugees in Country Towns'

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-02/call-for-action-to-keep-refugees-in-regional-towns/4793910>

'Country Cousins Defy Redneck Label in Treatment of Refugees'

<http://www.theage.com.au/it-pro/country-cousins-defy-redneck-label-in-treatment-of-refugees-20100709-103xn.html>

'Settled Refugees Contribute'

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/archive/agriculture-today-stories/ag-today-archives/may-2010/sudanese-refugees>

'Study Finds Refugees are Good for Business in Australian Country Towns'

<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/study-finds-refugees-are-good-for-business-in-australian-country-towns-2015-4>

### Novels, graphic novels and short stories

Abdel-Fattah *Ten Things I Hate About Me* Pan Macmillan 2006

Aldridge, James *Ride a Wild Pony* Puffin 1973

Carmody, Isobelle, *The Gathering* Penguin 1993

Grant, Neil *The Ink Bridge* Allen and Unwin 2012

Howell, Simone *Everything Beautiful* Pan Macmillan 2008

Metzenthien, David *Finn and the Big Guy* Penguin 1997

Orr, Wendy *Peeling the Onion* Allen and Unwin 1997

Ritchie, Brendan *Carousel* Fremantle Press, 2015

Roy, James *Town* University of Queensland Press, 2007

Satrapi, Marjane *Persepolis* Jonathan Cape 2003

Tan, Shaun *The Arrival* Hachette 2006

Thamm, Shane *My Private Pectus* Ford Street Publishing 2009

### Non-fiction

Jamal, Nadia and Chandab-Adasi, Taghred *The Glory Garage growing up Lebanese Muslim in Australia* Allen and Unwin 2005

Lunn, Hugh *Lost for Words* ABC Books 2006

Lunn, Hugh *Words Fail Me* ABC Books 2011

Pajalic, Amra and Divaroren, Demet *Coming of Age: Growing up Muslim in Australia* Allen and Unwin 2014

### About the author of the notes

Judith Ridge is a children's and youth literature specialist from Sydney. Originally a secondary English and History teacher, Judith has worked as a children's book editor, critic, teacher of creative writing and children's literature at universities and private colleges. She spent a total of 8 years as an editor at the *NSW School Magazine* and for 7 years was program director for WestWords — the Western Sydney Young People's Literature Development Project. She has also worked on programs such as the Nestlé 'Write Around Australia' children's creative writing program and has curated the School Days program for Sydney Writers' Festival. She teaches at the Australian Catholic University in Children's Literature, Early Childhood and Primary and Secondary Education subjects. Judith is a Churchill Fellow and an Honorary Associate of the School of Education and Social Science at the University of Sydney. Judith operates **Misrule** freelance editorial, writing and educational consultancy services and she has a Masters in Children's Literature from Macquarie University.

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