



Synopsis:

Taha and his mum, a new Australian citizen, are travelling around Australia. They leave Hobart, in Tasmania, on the *Spirit of Tasmania*, disembarking in Melbourne. They travel north in their campervan, the Southern Cross, along the Hume Highway to Byron Bay on the north-east coast of New South Wales. Along the way, they stop at Holbrook and Gundagai. Taha is excited by 'the call of the surf' at Byron Bay. He 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. 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 Finland on a world map. Compare the differences in the seasons between the northern and southern hemispheres.
- Campervans – Taha and Mum take their campervan, the Southern Cross, on a ferry. Ask: What special features would the ferry need to secure cars and campervans? How would the cars come aboard and disembark? Discuss how Mum would need to maintain the campervan after travelling long distances.
- 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 the original inhabitants of Byron Bay (p49). (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. Taha's conversations with his mum 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 a high achiever such as a 'world champion surfer'.)





Journals:

- Taha uses his journal to keep photographs and record written information about his trip. Re-read Taha's journal entry (pp26-27). Ask: What do you think about the way Taha presents information? (For example, he includes photographs, notes on how he feels, details of places he sees, and so on.)

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. Re-read Taha's email to Joel (pp77-81) and Joel's response (p82). Ask: Do you think Joel would be interested in Taha's surfing slang? What did Joel mean by 'some of the other kids in the class – like me – will get a chance to talk'? Look at the picture of Joel (p83). Does it reflect how Joel was feeling?

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. 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 3 to investigate and research topics referred to in the text.

Vocabulary:

- Use a dictionary to find meanings for words and phrases such as 'hinterland', 'momentum', 'decommissioned', 'labyrinth', 'alternative lifestyle', 'hippy' and 'fully accredited'.

- Read the words of the poem/song 'Nine Miles from Gundagai'. Ask students if there are any unfamiliar words. If so, make a list and explain any words the students query. Ask students to re-tell the story in their own words.
- 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 'rumble' (p22), 'It's a submarine!' (p23), 'so funny' (p40) and 'fantastic' (p57).

Grammar:

- Find an example of an idiom ('hit the road' – p40). Ask students to suggest more examples and give both their literal and figurative meaning. (For example, 'it's raining cats and dogs' literally means that cats and dogs are falling from the sky and figuratively means that it's raining heavily.)

Dialogue:

- Re-read Taha's conversation with Danielle (pp107-109). Ask pairs of students to role-play the conversation and add more information that Taha could have asked Danielle. Explain that the format is similar to a play script. Ask students to take several lines from the conversation and re-write them in direct speech, with a new line for each speaker and the correct punctuation.

Illustrations:

- Students can use BLM 4 to explore the importance of illustrations to support a text or interpret/reflect a character.

Comprehension:

- To maintain an awareness of students' understanding throughout the text, use the chapter headings to ask questions about their content. (For example, ask what happens in 'Submerged in Holbrook' or 'Living the Good Life'.)
- Use BLM 5 to check that students can give appropriate explanations or answers for questions.

Maps and Markers

- Divide the class into groups to follow the Hume Highway from Melbourne to Byron Bay on a map. List the main towns that Taha and his mum stopped at for fuel or food and ask the students to suggest any alternatives.
- Estimate the number of days Taha and his mum took to reach Byron Bay.
- How far can the Cape Byron lighthouse be seen out to sea? (p88)
- Compare 'land' kilometres and nautical miles.
- Could Mum return to Melbourne via a different route? (For example, further inland or along the coast.)

Characters

Taha remains keen to travel and seek out new places and people. He is committed to staying in touch with his neighbour, his teacher and his best friend, Joel. Taha is very confident in his own abilities. He likes to think that Mum really enjoys his jokes (p40) and is unaware that his high self-esteem can bother others (p47). He is an inquisitive and social boy and mixes well with other children and adults (pp58, 68). Mum is committed to giving Taha as many opportunities for adventure as possible.

Research Topics

- citizenship and immigration
- floral emblems for the states and territories
- the history of Aboriginal people on the east coast of Australia and in northern New South Wales
- the history of Byron Bay
- types and habitats of animals in northern New South Wales

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

Our Australia **BYRON BAY**

- whale migration along the east coast of Australia
- the voyages and work of Hamilton Hume, William Hovell and Captain James Cook
- Australian folk songs and bush poetry

Useful References

- Tourism agencies
- Local councils, libraries, historical societies
- State automobile clubs – maps and trip planners
- www.visitbyronbay.com
- www.byronbayguide.com
- <http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/macblog/HolbrookNewSouthWalesSubm.htm>
- http://warrenfahey.com/bush_poetry-moses (interesting information about the Dog on the Tuckerbox)
- *Australian Geographic* articles relating to Byron Bay:
- Australia's iconic lighthouses (Jessie Schlossman), July 2010
- Mt Warning: Early warning (Quentin Chester), July 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 Byron Bay*. Use the Internet, books or other resources to research this topic. Record the information you find on the Oracle Pod below.



Name: _____ Date: _____

- Look at the illustrations on pages 113 to 119 of *Our Australia Byron Bay*. Write some of the activities that Taha enjoyed on his travels around Australia. The first one has been done for you.



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- What is the illustrator telling the reader about Taha in the illustrations on the following pages?

p14 _____

p25 _____

p43 _____

p81 _____

p90 _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Give explanations or reasons to answer each question below.
Use the page numbers to help you.

What is the importance of the Hume Highway? (p16)



Why did the people of Holbrook rescue the submarine HMAS Otway? (pp24-27)

What is the link between Captain James Cook and Byron Bay? (p49)

How do bottlenose dolphins work together? (p92)

How did Taha meet James? (pp58-62)

Why are people attracted to Nimbin? (p96)

Why did Mum say 'All good things must come to an end'? (p112)
