

Sky Trackers

Education Resources



15 Curriculum Activities

based on the

***Sky Trackers* TV Series**



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Summary of *Sky Trackers* Curriculum Activities

1. **Dead Ducks** (P.9)

Students explore some narrative devices used to tell stories on film. They identify how information is provided for the viewer, analyse the plotline, and discuss inductive and deductive reasoning.

Resource Description

Students explore some narrative devices used to tell stories on film. They identify how information is provided for the viewer, analyse the plotline, and discuss inductive and deductive reasoning.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

2. **Dead Ducks B** (P.12)

With these activities, students explore issues surrounding water pollution and the ownership of found objects.

Resource Description

With these activities, students explore issues surrounding water pollution and the ownership of found objects.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

3. **Is There Life On Earth?** (P.13)

With these activities, students analyse how the development of character, conflict, and relationships is managed through the visual medium of film.

Resource Description

With these activities, students analyse how the development of character, conflict, and relationships is managed through the visual medium of film.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [war and conflict](#)

4. **Is There Life On Earth B?** (P.15)

This episode is stimulus for students to undertake research in preparation for a debate about public funding of scientific research and a presentation about the impact of people on other cultures



Resource Description

This episode is stimulus for students to undertake research in preparation for a debate about public funding of scientific research and a presentation about the impact of people on other cultures.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

5. Letting Go (P. 17)

Students analyse the dialogue, discuss how the passage of time is conveyed to an audience and how sound is used in film, and they create a storyboard for a scene.

Resource Description

Students analyse the dialogue, discuss how the passage of time is conveyed to an audience and how sound is used in film, and they create a storyboard for a scene.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [family](#), [relationships](#), [self](#)

6. Long Distance Call (P.19)

Students explore narrative techniques including exposition and dramatic licence, write and present a scene to the class, research one of the episode's themes and write a role play or creative essay.

Resource Description

Students explore narrative techniques including exposition and dramatic licence, write and present a scene to the class, research one of the episode's themes and write a role play or creative essay.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [war and conflict](#)

7. Long Distance Call B (P.21)

With these activities students undertake an analysis and evaluation of funding spent on space exploration programs.

Resource Description

With these activities students undertake an analysis and evaluation of funding spent on space exploration programs.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Humanities and Social Sciences](#), [Science](#)



8. Meteor Rights (P.23)

Students analyse some film techniques and use of 'the conquest' as a narrative device. They explore conflict, learn about meteorites, write a scene, summarise written and visual information.

Resource Description

Students analyse some film techniques and use of 'the conquest' as a narrative device. They explore conflict, learn about meteorites, write a scene, summarise written and visual information.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

9. Meteor Rights B (P.25)

Students explore ownership rights to found objects e.g. meteorites and the mythology and science surrounding meteorites. Students discuss the value of meteorite discoveries and write a creative essay.

Resource Description

Students explore ownership rights to found objects e.g. meteorites and the mythology and science surrounding meteorites. Students discuss the value of meteorite discoveries and write a creative essay.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

10. Origins (P.27)

Students create a storyboard to illustrate some film techniques used to engage the audience; and analyse the role of music in film. They may also discuss issues about adoption and children's rights.

Resource Description

Students create a storyboard to illustrate some film techniques used to engage the audience; and analyse the role of music in film. They may also discuss issues about adoption and children's rights.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [family](#), [relationships](#), [self](#)



11. Penguin Point (P.29)

These activities encourage students, through discussion, to explore the purpose of multiple plot lines and ways of conveying a particular message through film.

Resource Description

These activities encourage students, through discussion, to explore the purpose of multiple plot lines and ways of conveying a particular message through film.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

12. Penguin Point B (P. 30)

Students explore the effect of oil spills on the environment and the responsibilities of those involved.

Resource Description

Students explore the effect of oil spills on the environment and the responsibilities of those involved.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

13. Rocket to Me (P. 33)

Students analyse the narrative devices used to tell a story about family conflict. They examine family relationships and discuss the apparent contradiction between family conflict and support.

Resource Description

Students analyse the narrative devices used to tell a story about family conflict. They examine family relationships and discuss the apparent contradiction between family conflict and support.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [family](#), [relationships](#), [self](#), [war and conflict](#)

14. The Beast (P. 35)

Resource Description

Students analyse multiple plots in a story, use of symbols to indicate Australianness, techniques used to create suspense. The story narrative provides stimulus to explore wildlife conservation.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)



15. The Beast B (P.37)

Students explore issues about introduced species. They discuss the issues raised, research a feral animal, participate in a debate about the topic and create solutions to the problem of feral animals.

Resource Description

Students explore issues about introduced species. They discuss the issues raised, research a feral animal, participate in a debate about the topic and create solutions to the problem of feral animals.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)





Dead Ducks

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Narrative Structure
Description:	Students explore some narrative devices used to tell stories on film. They identify how information is provided for the viewer, analyse the plotline, and discuss inductive and deductive reasoning.
Resources:	Dead Ducks <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

View Dead Ducks then analyse the narrative devices used

This episode features what is known as a back story - narrative which precedes the time frame of the episode and is reconstructed by the audience from clues in the text. In this episode the back story is of a bushranger called "**The Sundowner**". Ask students to make a complete a table listing everything they learn about **The Sundowner** and the source of the information. For example,

What I learned about The Sundowner	The source of my information
the life of the bushranger	Nikki
the location of the bushranger's cave	the antique dealer
the fact the cave is now underwater	remote sensing information and Mike's deductions
the exact location of the cave	the computer image of the pattern of algae growth/Nikki.



The information about **The Sundowner** could have been given in different ways. Ask students to suggest other narrative devices which could have been used for the same effect eg:

- a story in a social studies book,
- a discovered treasure map,
- an old timer who told the children the legend,
- a flashback in which the audience saw **The Sundowner**.

The most visual device would have been a flashback although flashbacks usually seem a little contrived. Discuss the places in the narrative where a flashback could have been inserted and the ways that it might be approached.

This episode uses a search as its central motif. This is a common plot device because it creates a forward movement in the plot development. In this episode the motif is highly structured and moves in a linear fashion. Students could map the search motif/process for themselves or using the outline below as a guide they could fill in the appropriate events in the right hand column.

evidence of a mystery	gold in the duck's intestines
gathering the clues	historical sources - antique dealer scientific sources - remote sensing devices
reasoning	Mike reasons the cave is underwater Nikki reasons the location from the computer data
the search	diving to find the cave
the blockage	Bruce and his gang attack
the reward	children sell the antique bottles for cash

Discuss the cause and effect links between each event that moves the plot forward and towards its resolution.

Explore reasoning techniques

Explain the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning.

Inductive reasoning is based on experience. For example: I know the dog will bite me if I hit him because every time in the past when I have hit him he has bitten me.



Deductive reasoning is based on a logical outcome from the premise. For example:
If all Rottweilers bite then this dog will bite me because it is a Rottweiler.

Discuss these and other examples of deductive and inductive reasoning and then apply the categories to the reasoning used in **Dead Ducks**.



Dead Ducks B

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Humanities and Social Sciences; Science; Literacy (English)
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Argument/discussion writing
Description:	With these activities, students explore issues surrounding water pollution and the ownership of found objects.
Resources:	Dead Ducks <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

After viewing draw attention to the problem which is highlighted in the first part of the episode - the effects of the introduction of foreign substances into waterways. Discuss the ways in which people use water and the possible effects of the introduction of foreign substances. Draw a simple diagram of the water cycle and discuss how people are part of the water cycle.

Explore the claims of ownership

This episode also raises issues about the discovery, ownership and disposal of historic materials. The children assume that they will own the gold if they discover it. There have been quite bitter disputes and court cases about the ownership of material from Dutch shipwrecks off the West Australian coast between the discoverers and the government.

Ask students to put forward arguments which could be used to support the ownership claims of different groups: the government, the discoverers and the descendants of the original owners of historic material. At the end conduct a class vote or decide on a compromise arrangement.



Is There Life on Earth?

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Film Language; Narrative Structure; Conflict
Description:	With these activities, students analyse how the development of character, conflict, and relationships is managed through the visual medium of film.
Resources:	Is There Life on Earth? <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

In this episode Mike is the central figure in the story and it is his feelings and emotions which are explored in the story. Play the opening scenes up until the point when Shane arrives. Replay the scene in which Mike has an altercation with his father.

Analyse the narrative devices

Examine how the emotional conflict is communicated to the viewer. Look at:

- the physical space which is maintained between them,
- the avoidance of eye contact.

Now replay the scene in which Marie Colbert (Nikki's mother) is explaining her plans for the seeds. Contrast this with the previous scene. Look at:

- the physical contact between the family members
- the framing of Nikki and her mother
- the physical distance between Nikki and her mother.

Have students summarise the ways in which conflict can be expressed through the visuals as well as the dialogue.

Use the points above as a guide to examining how the growing relationship between Nikki and Shane is presented visually.



Analyse the narrative techniques

Replay, without sound, the climactic scene in which Mike gets the messages from outer space. Use this as an opportunity to test the extent to which the sound effects and music contribute to the atmosphere of tension and excitement.

Ask students to count the number of shots in this scene and measure the average length of each shot.

Discuss the contribution of the pace and editing to the establishment of the mood. Together fast editing and the sound track create an air of excitement. Compare this scene with a climactic scene from the X Files or a hospital drama to demonstrate the importance of editing in creating mood.

Explore characterisation

Shane is described by both Maggie and Mike as a 'dork.' What elements of his behaviour or appearance lead them to make this description? Why did the filmmakers make Shane a boy with glasses? Is the episode reproducing negative stereotypes of scientists? How are scientific types usually presented in films?



Is There Life on Earth B?

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Humanities and Social Sciences; Science
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Our Place in Space and Time; Persuasive writing and speaking
Description:	This episode is stimulus for students to undertake research in preparation for a debate about public funding of scientific research and a presentation about the impact of people on other cultures.
Resources:	Is There Life on Earth? <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

This episode raises issues in relation to the deployment of resources. Conduct a debate on the topic: "The search for extra-terrestrial life is a waste of resources which could be better spent elsewhere".

In preparing for the debate encourage students to use the episode to find arguments supporting either side of the case. Ask them to identify arguments which could be mounted for either side but which were not considered in the episode.

Make predictions

Another issue raised by this episode is the cultural impact of extra-terrestrial life. Divide students into groups and ask them to present a report on the likely impact of human culture if extra-terrestrial life conforming to specific scenarios was discovered, e.g.:

- life forms exactly the same as humans and at the same stage of development
- human-like life forms but at a stone age level of development
- human-like life forms at a higher stage of development.

Students could also be encouraged to generate their own scenarios. Students should consider the likely response of political leaders, scientists, religious groups, business, the media and so on.





Letting Go

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Narrative Structure; Film Language
Description:	Students analyse the dialogue, discuss how the passage of time is conveyed to an audience and how sound is used in film, and they create a storyboard for a scene.
Resources:	Letting Go <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

This episode raises issues about grief, dealing with loss and letting go of the past in order to get on with the future. Play the tape up to the point of the exchange between Nikki and Tony Masters. Write their dialogue on the board:

"Some things are best left alone" (Tony)

"Or worked out once and for all" (Nikki)

Have the class discuss the possible meanings of these two phrases and their own reactions to the points of view expressed in them.

- What sorts of things are best left alone?
- When is it advisable to confront an issue?

Encourage students to draw from and share their own experiences of comparable situations when they have decided to *'leave things alone.'* Watch the rest of the tape and then come back to these issues after viewing. Where did the students' sympathies lie? Do they accept the solution to grief adopted by Mike and his Dad?

Analyse a narrative device - passing of time

The sequences on the lake are useful for looking at how time is manipulated in film. Establish with the students the filmmaker's problem - how to show that the event took many hours although it lasts only a few minutes on film. Play the sequence and ask students to note the number of different locations and the order in which they are connected. They should be able to recognise that the sequence uses only three locations - underwater, in the boat, and the diver surfacing. Each sequence would have been shot



independently and then edited together. The grid map acts as a timer, as each square is filled in the viewer recognises that time has passed.

Analyse the importance of sound in film

The flight simulator sequence demonstrates the importance of sound in establishing mood.

Play the sequence with the sound turned off. Ask students to comment on the impact of the scene. Play it again with the sound up and compare their reactions.

Draw a storyboard

This episode has a classic plot structure - introduction, conflict, rising action, climax, denouement and conclusion. Write these plot elements on the board and ask students to identify the matching sequences in the episode. The flight simulator sequence performs the function of a flashback in that past events are recalled for the audience.

The filmmaker could have chosen to insert a visual flashback at this point but instead chose to suggest past events through the soundtrack. Ask students to explore other alternatives by having them draw a storyboard for a flashback sequence of the plane crash.



Long Distance Call

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure; War and Conflict
Description:	Students explore narrative techniques including exposition and dramatic licence, write and present a scene to the class, research one of the episode's themes and write a role play or creative essay.
Resources:	Long Distance Call <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

The relationship between Mike and his father, Tony Masters, is at crisis point in this episode but is resolved happily. The episode begins at the point at which Tony Masters is already at **NASA** in the United States but we learn about events before his departure through the exposition.

Explore the use of exposition in narrative

Exposition is the filling in of details which supposedly occurred before the narrative opens. After viewing have students describe the events that happened before the episode opens (eg. Mike's failure to say goodbye, his father forgetting his birthday). Have students create the scene (not depicted in the episode) in which Tony Masters leaves for the United States. They can form into pairs and workshop the dialogue for later presentation to the class.

Discuss themes and audiences

This episode explores a number of themes - the lure of space travel, father/son relationships and the importance of communication in the resolution of conflict and misunderstanding. Discuss with the class which of the themes had appeal for them. Are there discernible gender differences in their preferences? How might they account for the different preferences.

Research a theme

Ask the students to explore one of the themes in further depth. They may use role play, written responses, library research or extended creative writing.



Discuss dramatic licence/Poetic licence

Explain the concept of dramatic licence. The concept embraces a wide range of theatrical, literary and visual devices used to tell true stories within a fictional framework. Examples of dramatic licence are the use of composite characters. In this case the actions and motivations of several distinct people are merged into one character to simplify the narrative. This episode draws upon real life events (*Apollo 13*) but does not reproduce them. Play the space ship sequence and ask students to identify the use of dramatic licence.



Long Distance Call B

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Science; Humanities and Social Sciences
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Our Place in Space and Time
Description:	With these activities students undertake an analysis and evaluation of funding spent on space exploration programs.
Resources:	Long Distance Call <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

The issue of space junk raised by this episode suggests a need for people to broaden existing notions of care for the environment. ***The European Space Agency Space Debris Working Group*** suggested in 1988 that there may be as many as 60,000 objects orbiting the Earth. Even tiny debris can have a devastating effect when travelling at orbital speed. Provide students with this information and ask them to identify the problems of space debris shown by the episode.

Discuss the issues

Discuss:

- How can space debris be controlled?
- Who should be responsible?
- What rules should be put in place?

Evaluate the value of space exploration

This episode also raises issues about the value and dangers of space travel. Ask students to list the advantages and disadvantages of space exploration. They could also suggest other priorities which might have a higher claim to resources. To what extent is the possible, and real, loss of life associated with space exploration an issue which should be considered.



Research space exploration

Sample topics include:

- fatalities associated with space exploration
- attempts to contact extra-terrestrial life

spin-offs from space exploration e.g. development of teflon, dehydrated food, thermal clothing, communication technology etc



Meteor Rights

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure
Description:	Students analyse some film techniques and use of 'the conquest' as a narrative device. They explore conflict, learn about meteorites, write a scene, summarise written and visual information.
Resources:	Meteor Rights <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

This is the second episode in the series and therefore the characters are still being established. Pause the tape after the opening dramatic sequence featuring Mike and his horse. Ask students to identify the clues that tell them that this is a fantasy sequence, for example:

- the use of slow motion to emphasise pace
- the use of soft focus
- the colour toning.

Play the tape up to the point at which the teacher interrupts Mike's reverie. Discuss the purpose of the fantasy sequence. Prompt questions might be:

- What is Mike dreaming of?
- Does he already have what he dreams of?
- How might his inner thoughts have been shown in a written story?

Have students write a version of the introductory scene for this episode in such a way as to reveal Mike's hopes and dreams.

Analyse the conquest as a narrative device

The narrative in this episode could be described as "**Scientist as Detective**". This is a form of the heroic conquest story and a recurring motif in story telling. Explain that motif is a recurring element/shape, a distinctive idea (repeated). In brief the heroic conquest story is structured as follows:



the quest is established
a wiser or older person sends out the heroes on the quest
the heroes face difficult tasks and impediments to their quest
when the heroes meet difficulties magic intervenes to solve the problem
the heroes overcome all odds
the heroes return home
the story ends on a moral note.

Discuss the events in **Meteor Rights** in terms of the quest narrative outlined above. Consider such issues as the problems the children faced and the use of the magnet as a magical agent. This story telling form is a common one and forms the underlying structure of many myths and many contemporary stories including television narratives. Analyse other television narratives in terms of this structure. Some suggestions are: Batman, Lois and Clark, Merlin, Glee, Big Bang Theory

Explore the conflict

The story presents both external conflict and internal conflict. Explain the difference between these types of conflict and ask students to identify examples of each sort in the episode. How does Mike's conflict relate to the opening scene of the episode.

In her address to the class Susie gives some important information about the nature and value of meteorites.

Supplement this with this information:

There are two basic types of meteorites - iron meteorites and stony meteorites. Iron meteorites are made up of mainly nickel and iron. Stony meteorites contain mostly silicates such as olivine and pyroxene. The most ancient meteorites are stony ones called chondrites. They are named after the rounded droplets of silicates they contain and the word comes from the Greek word khondros which means 'grain'. A very small percentage of the carbon in some of these meteorites has survived from before the solar system existed.

Two large meteorites have hit the earth this century. In each case it has been estimated that at least a thousand tonnes of rock and metal travelling at 50 kilometres per second hit the earth with an explosive force similar to that of an atomic bomb. Australia has at least 15 meteor craters that are clearly visible from the ground. Wolf Creek in the Northern Territory is probably the most famous of these. The Nullarbor Plain is one of the world's largest source of meteorites.

Ask students to summarise what they have learnt from Susie's brief lesson and the boxed information above.



Meteor Rights B

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Humanities and Social Sciences; Science
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Our Place in Space and Time; Argument/Discussion (Expository); Historical Recount
Description:	Students explore ownership rights to found objects eg meteorites and the mythology and science surrounding meteorites. Students discuss the value of meteorite discoveries and write a creative essay.
Resources:	Meteor Rights Sky Trackers

Lesson plan:

One of the issues raised by this episode is the rights of ownership and sale of natural phenomena such as meteorites. After viewing, list on the board the people or groups who might have a claim to the ownership and sale of a meteorite which lands on Earth - the person on whose property it lands, the person who discovers it, the government etc. Ask students to copy the list and construct a table which shows the arguments for and against seeing each person or group as the rightful owners.

Explore the concept of ownership

Discuss the fact that meteorites provide valuable scientific knowledge, as shown in the episode. Ask students to consider to what extent this should be taken into account in determining ownership and sales rights.

Explore myth v science

In modern society meteorites are viewed through the perspective of scientific knowledge. In other societies they are interpreted through mythology and religion. Have students write an account of a meteorite fall from the point of view of a member of a pre-scientific society.



Origins
Student Worksheet
Film language

Some techniques for encouraging audience involvement

Examples used in the episode Origins

A character-centred story.

The storytelling is primarily carried out through the actions of characters.

Narrative motivation.

Irrelevant and unrelated content is not included and the narrative follows a strict cause and effect sequence.

Goal-oriented plots.

The characters pursue a goal and overcome difficulties placed in the way of this goal.

Eye-line match cutting.

The characters' glances link the shots and the audience apparently sees what the character sees.

Point-of-view cutting.

The camera is placed in the position of the character for the second shot giving the impression that the audience sees not only what the character sees but from exactly the same position as the character sees it.

Shot-reverse-shot.

The camera is placed behind the shoulder of each character while cutting back and forth to their faces during an exchange of dialogue. In this way the audience is in the best possible position to see the face of each character while they are speaking.

Author: Robyn Quin



Origins

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Narrative Structure
Description:	Students create a storyboard to illustrate some film techniques used to engage the audience; and analyse the role of music in film. They may also discuss issues about adoption and children's rights.
Resources:	Origins <i>Sky Trackers</i> ACTF

Lesson plan:

This episode can be used to teach the way in which the classic narrative text operates because it depends heavily on audience involvement with the characters. This audience involvement is encouraged by particular textual features. Give students the [worksheet](#) and ask them to fill in the ways audience involvement is encouraged in **Origins**. Play the tape through pausing to identify and explain each of the examples in the worksheet.

Create a storyboard

Have students draw in storyboard form an example from the screen of an eye-line match, a point of view sequence and a shot-reverse shot sequence. Draw their notice to the way these techniques force the audience's attention on characters' faces and facial expressions and reactions.

A sample storyboard can be found in the Learn About section of our website. Follow these links: [LearnAbout/Film_Production/LiveAction/Storyboard/Storyboard.htm](#)

Analyse the role of music in film

In some sections the music reinforces the audience's identification with the characters. Play the scene in which Maggie asks her mother about flying to France. Listen carefully to the music. What associations and connotations does the music have?

Thematically the episode deals with adoption and children's right to know their real parents. This theme recurs in a number of the **Australian Children's Television Foundation programs**. Compare the treatment of the issue of adoption with its treatment in **Princess Kate** in our **Touch the Sun** series or **On Loan** from the **Winners** series.



Discussion prompts are:

- Does it matter whose one's birth parents are? Why? Why not? (eg. genetic defects, ethnicity etc)
- Do children have a right to know details about their natural parents? Why? Why not?

What rights do natural parents have to privacy?



Penguin Point

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Environment
Description:	These activities encourage students, through discussion, to explore the purpose of multiple plot lines and ways of conveying a particular message through film.
Resources:	Penguin Point <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

Like many episodes of ***Sky Trackers*** this one maintains audience interest by having a number of plot lines: those related to the personal lives of the characters and that related to a particular social issue.

Through discussion identify the different plot lines and the questions which viewers want to know the answers to. For example:

- The parents: will the romance develop?
- Nikki and Mike: Will they overcome their fighting?
- The issue: What is the problem at Pelican Point? What is wrong with the penguins? How will it be solved?

Analyse the message of the film

This episode leaves open the question of responsibility for the oil slick. Ask students to suggest why the oil slick occurred. Was it deliberate? Was it thoughtlessness? Was it an accident? Does it matter what the reason was in terms of the message of this episode?

Discuss the concept of theme: the ideas which a text asks us to consider. This episode is superficially about the damage which an oil slick causes to penguins and the way in which people working together can overcome this problem. What other situations/sub-themes could the message of the program be applied to?



Penguin Point B

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Humanities and Social Sciences
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Persuasive writing
Description:	Students explore the effect of oil spills on the environment and the responsibilities of those involved.
Resources:	Penguin Point B <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

Students view the episode, list some consequences of oil spills, discuss where the responsibility should lay, research the relevant regulations, discuss ways of encouraging social responsibility among the community, and design an advertising poster to persuade people to support a community or environmental cause.

View Penguin Point

Ask students to focus on:

- the cause of the oil spill shown in the episode
- the damage done by the oil spill and ramifications (jobs, beauty of place etc)
- how the spill was dealt with

Explore the issue of oil spills

After viewing ask students to form groups and list some other possible consequences of oil spills in addition to those shown in this episode.

Ask students to make a list of precautions which could be put in place to minimise the types of problems highlighted by this episode.

Discuss who should be held responsible: the captain of the ship? the owners?

Research oil spill regulations

Ask students to conduct research which compares the list of precautions they have developed with those actually in place by contacting organisations such as the departments responsible for the environment and marine transport.



Explore the concept of social responsibility

The antisocial trio in the car in this episode have little respect for the concerns of others or the environment. One of them, however, has a change of heart. Ask students to suggest reasons for this. Discuss the methods of persuasion which would work best for people who do not see themselves as committed to community or environmental causes.

Design a poster

Ask students in groups to design an advertising poster for an environmental cause which is designed to sway the uncommitted.





Rocket to Me

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Narrative Structure; Film Language; Conflict
Description:	Students analyse the narrative devices used to tell a story about family conflict. They examine family relationships and discuss the apparent contradiction between family conflict and support.
Resources:	Rocket to Me <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

View Rocket to Me

This episode is about family conflict and models for solving family conflict. Watch the opening scenes which contrast the family lives of Brad and Mike.

Examine the family relationships

Examine the ways in which the boys' relationships with their fathers are established as similar yet different.

Mike
 - verbal conflict
 - boy annoys father

Brad
 - physical conflict
 - father angers boy

Analyse the set design

Look in detail at the way the set, sound effects and costumes construct each household as different.

- Mike's father is dressed in white
- Brad's father is dressed in dark blue
- Clean dishes are stacked in Mike's kitchen
- A stubby bottle is in frame in Brad's kitchen
- Mike makes his father an orange juice



- Brad's father gets himself a glass of water
- Music plays in the background in Mike's household
- Brad's house is silent except for the abuse

What do these scenes suggest about the occupant's habits, personalities, interests etc?

Analyse the family conflicts

The conflict between fathers and sons is mirrored in the conflict between Nikki and her mother. What is the source of the conflict in each case? In what ways might the conflict be resolved?

Explore the characterisation

Play the dinner party conference sequence a couple of times. Establish with the students the different points of view each character has on the situation. With whom do the students' sympathies lie? Ask the students to place each character on a continuum from least reasonable position to most reasonable and then share their responses. Encourage students to give reasons for the way they placed the characters.

In the closing sequence each parent comes to the aid of their child. Discuss the way in which this sequence relates to the earlier statement that "*Families are about looking after each other*".



The Beast

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Science
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Narrative Structure; Persuasive writing and speaking
Description:	Students analyse multiple plots in a story, use of symbols to indicate Australianness, techniques used to create suspense. The story narrative provides stimulus to explore wildlife conservation
Resources:	The Beast <i>Sky Trackers</i>

Lesson plan:

View The Beast

Watch the complete episode. After viewing ask students to identify the three storylines in the episode. They are: Mike's search for a horse of his own; tracking the feral cat; the ongoing conflict between Mike and his father.

Analyse the multiple plots

Have students design a line graph representing each story from the beginning to the end. Ask them to make a special note of where the stories intersect with each other. On completion of the task set these questions:

- Which story does not have a resolution?
- Why is this story left unfinished? How might this story be resolved. (See episode Long Distance Call for the resolution)
- Why did the writers construct the story in such a way that the feral cat was found in Jack's barn?

Analyse the symbolism

In many ways this is a particularly Australian story. Ask students to identify the aspects of the visuals and the narrative that give it an Australian flavour. (Apart from the obvious iconography such as the wombat and the koala there are more subtle narrative hints. For example leaving Maggie on watch is only possible in the story because Australia has no



dangerous wild animals.) Look also at the character of Jack. She is constructed as the female version of the Australian bloke. Ask students to identify those aspects of her appearance and character that are typically seen as Australian. Ask the students to suggest some reasons why the producers made her a female instead of male.

Analyse the techniques used to create suspense

Replay the barn scene. This scene is one of suspense. Examine how the suspense is created through the:

- camera work - use of a hand held camera, point of view shots, use of wide angle close-ups (children's faces, horse's head), low angles of the horse rearing.
- lighting - dark, blue tinted lighting, strong shadows
- sound effects - music, horse whinnying.

Explore the issues

The episode raises issues about wildlife conservation. Discuss the issues raised about feral cats (domestic cats which have gone wild), and related issues such as domestic cats which kill birds, unsecured dogs and cats, introduced animals such as foxes and rabbits. Have the students write a "letter to the editor" expressing their opinion on one or more of the following issues:

- that all domestic cats should wear bells
- that the licensing and spaying of cats and dogs be mandatory
- that local councils should have the power to destroy unsecured animals
- that pets should/should not be kept in the metropolitan area.

Remind them that the letter to the editor should:

- state the issue briefly
- present their personal point of view
- give some supporting evidence for that point of view
- make a call for action.
- Reflect knowledge of persuasive devices and cohesion



The Beast B

Program:	Sky Trackers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Humanities and Social Sciences; Science; English
Themes/Topics:	Literacy; Environment
Description:	Students explore issues about introduced species. They discuss the issues raised, research a feral animal, participate in a debate about the topic and create solutions to the problem of feral animals.
Resources:	The Beast <i>Sky Trackers</i> ACTF

Lesson plan:

View *The Beast*

After viewing the episode ask students in small groups to discuss and list the issues it raises. Discuss as a class students' responses to these issues.

Discuss the issues

Discuss the problems associated with introducing alien species into an established ecosystem. Some effects may be direct, such as an introduced animal preying on a native species which hasn't developed any protective mechanisms appropriate to the new species. Other effects may be indirect such as the new species taking over the food supply of a native species.

Research an introduced animal

As a class list as many examples of feral animals in Australia as possible, e.g. goats, donkeys, camels, water buffalo, cats, foxes, pigs, deer and rabbits. Divide students into groups and allocate each group one animal to research and report on. Their research should cover:

- reasons for the introduction of the species
- its geographical spread
- its impact on the environment, other fauna and agriculture, human population, introduced diseases



- attempts to deal with the problem.

Encourage students to contact organisations such as government departments responsible for agriculture or the environment and the Australian Conservation Foundation, as well as using the library. Reports could be presented in the form of charts, written material, oral presentation or a combination of both.

Conduct a debate

Considering the issue of feral animals raises issues about how we view the actions of people in the past. Debate the proposition that early settlers were irresponsible in introducing new species to Australia.

Create solutions to the problem

Ask students in groups to develop suggestions for controlling domestic animals in such a way that they do not become an environmental problem, such as the feral cat in this episode is. Students could inquire about existing local government by-laws and study these critically. They might put forward their suggestions for improvement to the appropriate body.