



Touch The Sun Education Resources



7 Curriculum Activities

based on the

Touch The Sun
Telemovies



Table of Contents

	Page
Summary of the <i>Touch The Sun</i> Curriculum Activities	3
<i>Being Different</i>	5
<i>Captain Johnno</i>	11
<i>Captain Johnno B</i>	14
<i>Devil's Hill</i>	17
<i>The Gift</i>	21
<i>Peter and Pompey</i>	23
<i>Top Enders</i>	27



Summary of *Touch The Sun* Curriculum Activities

1. Touch The Sun – Being Different (P.5)

Resource Description: The video Captain Johnno is used to develop empathetic student responses to disability and cultural difference, and to develop their understanding and acceptance of diversity in their community.

Year Level: 5 - 9 Curriculum Study Areas: English; Ethical Understanding, Humanities and Social Sciences

2. Touch The Sun – Captain Johnno (P.11)

Resource Description: These activities focus on life for those who are seen as different because of their disability or culture. Students explore the issues through the film techniques used to tell the story.

Year Level: 5 – 9 Curriculum Study Areas: English

3. Touch The Sun – Captain Johnno B (P.14)

Resource Description: Students undertake film analysis and research to explore conflict in the family and in the community; immigration and multicultural society; and the Australian identity and masculinity.

Year Level: 5 - 9 Curriculum Study Areas: Humanities & Social Sciences

4. Touch The Sun – Devil's Hill (P.17)

Resource Description: Students analyse some of the techniques used to tell stories on film. They explore fear and handling fear, conflict and the film-makers apparent ambivalence towards the Australian landscape.

Year Level: 7 - 9 Curriculum Study Areas: English

5. Touch The Sun – The Gift (P.21)

Resource Description: Useful for teaching about television genre, this program shows the artificial and constructed nature of quiz shows. The activities also explore conflict and environmental issues.

Year Level: 5 - 9 Curriculum Study Areas: English



6. Touch The Sun – Peter and Pompey (P.23)

Resource Description: Students explore the relationships between the characters and the film language used to tell the story.

Year Level: 5 - 9 Curriculum Study Areas: English

7. Touch The Sun – Top Enders (P.27)

Resource Description: Students explore some film techniques, characterisation, stereotyping, juxtaposition, and storyboarding. They discuss these themes in the film: growing up, risk taking, adventure and independence.

Year Level: 5 - 9 Curriculum Study Areas: English, Ethical Understanding



Being Different

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Humanities and Social Sciences; Health and Physical Education; Civics and Citizenship
Themes/Topics:	Cultural Studies; Disabilities; Ethics, Values, Justice; Families; Multicultural Australia
Description:	The video Captain Johnno is used to develop empathetic student responses to disability and cultural difference, and to develop their understanding and acceptance of diversity in their community.
Resources:	Captain Johnno, Touch the Sun

Lesson plan:

It is recommended that the program be previewed prior to using with students. If students are going to be viewing the tape episodically then appropriate places for interrupting viewing should be noted.

Before Viewing

Discuss the question, 'Is anyone perfect?' Ask students to share their personal responses about ways that they think they could be better. Most of us feel somewhat 'disabled' at some level and yet we also have strengths. From this discussion it is possible to build a platform for empathic understanding of people like Johnno who suffer from some very obvious form of disability yet who also have strengths which are not always acknowledged.

Viewing Focus

Ask students to focus their viewing on how people treat one another in the video and, in particular, to consider how and why Johnno reacts the way he does.

View the program

After viewing the program go through the inquiry process with students.



The Inquiry Process

Students participate in a five stage process of ethical inquiry and discussion.

Stage 1: Identify and clarify the issues

As a class discuss and investigate the issues raised in **Captain Johnno** by deciding:

- What is the problem?
- Who is involved?
- Who is adversely affected?
- How?
- By whom?

Stage 2: Discussion and justification of initial responses

Class discussion about:

- Why is Johnno treated this way?
- Is this treatment fair? Give reasons.
- Why does Johnno react to people and events the way he does? Is Johnno's reaction entirely justified?
- How else can Johnno's parents, particularly his father, react to him?
- How should his father, in particular, treat Johnno?
- How else can Johnno's teachers treat him? Would these alternatives be better? Why?
- What did you think of Johnno's treatment by other school children?
- Are they fair to Johnno?
- How do you think Johnno wants to be treated?
- How do Johnno's sister, Julie, and his Italian friend, Tony, help Johnno?
- What is different about the way they treat to Johnno in comparison to the behaviour of the other children and Johnno's father?
- How is Tony treated by the townspeople? Is he treated fairly? Why is he treated like this? Give reasons.
- What similarities can you see in the way the men treat Tony and the way the children treat Johnno?





Stage 3: Reflection and creative exploration

Students undertake further investigation and reflection about the issues raised in the video through a range of activities selected from the following:

LEVEL A

Individual/small groups

A1. Examine the photo of Johnno and his sister, Julie.

What does this photo show about the kind of relationship that Johnno has with his sister, Julie?

Consider such features as:

- Facial expression
- Posture
- Eye-lines
- Composition of the shot
- Gestures



Click image for larger size

Class/small groups

A2. Think about the feelings of some of the main characters in **Captain Johnno**. Through paintings or drawings show how various characters might be feeling during particular incidents in the video.

A3. List Johnno's strengths. What can he do that his father for example can't do?

Individual work

A4. Make a list of your own strengths and weaknesses. Which strengths will you choose to build on?

Small groups

A5. Imagine you are disabled in some way. Discuss how would you like other people to treat you without compromising your independence/individuality.

A6. Imagine you cannot speak or understand English. Explain an event to a partner without using words, for example, something that happened on the way to school.

LEVEL B

Small group/individual work

B1. What do you think a disabled or culturally different student of your age would want most from his/her classmates? Discuss this with your group.

Individual work



B2.) Now write your ideas in an individual statement which begins:

'I think that a student who is disabled or culturally different would want the following from his/her classmates:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

because:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Small groups

B3.) Discuss why you think some people discriminate against disabled people or against immigrants. List the reasons suggested and present these to the class. Identify key threads and discuss. Perhaps you or your family has had real life experience – give examples.

LEVEL C

Class/small group work

C1.) List the problems Tony faces living in Streeton. Discuss the reasons why Tony may have chosen to leave his home country to live in Australia, despite these difficulties.

Individual/class work

C2.) Research some of Australia's history of immigration in the last 200 years by interviewing your parents to find out when your family first came to Australia, where they originally came from, and the reasons why, if they are known. Give an oral presentation to the class detailing your family's history in Australia.

Class work

C3.) Following these presentations draw up a graph showing where non-indigenous class members' families came from originally.

Individual work

C4.) Research, write and present a report on the life story of a famous person who was physically disabled such as **President Franklin Delano Roosevelt**, the renowned teacher of the Blind and Deaf, **Helen Keller**, or the painter, **Toulouse Lautrec**.

Small groups



C5.) How well does your community cater for the physically disabled? Make a list of all public major buildings and facilities in your community and rate their ease of access for people with a physical disability. Make recommendations which could be sent to your local councils, state and federal governments, and various other agencies such as banks and private companies.

C6.) Research how well your school and your local community cater for non-English speaking migrants. List the resources and support available and assess how well these services would assist a non-English speaking migrant. How well does your school do this? Make recommendations which could be sent to your local council, appropriate state and federal government departments and the school council.

Stage 4: Consultation and re-evaluation

What issues does **Captain Johnno** raise by linking the two characters Johnno and Tony and their stories together? What general issues does the video raise? Students can discuss and justify their responses to these issues, drawing on the work they have done during the unit.

As a class or in groups, discuss this statement:

Despite any differences, being treated as the same as everyone else, and being accepted and included by peers is very important for all people my age.

Make a class statement which captures the main points which have emerged from the discussion.



Stage 5: Action planning

Students decide what action they can take: individually; as a class; as part of the school community; and the wider community to ensure that people who are physically or culturally different are treated as normally as possible and are made to feel 'one of us'.





Captain Johnno

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Disabilities; Genre; Our Place in Space and Time; Multicultural Australia
Description:	These activities focus on life for those who are seen as different because of their disability or culture. Students explore the issues through the film techniques used to tell the story.
Resources:	Captain Johnno, Touch the Sun

Lesson plan:

Johnno is deaf. If the students have no experience of deafness it might be useful to explain the relationship between hearing and speech so that students understand why Johnno's speech is difficult to understand.

View the film then replay part

Replay the scene in the family's living room. Discuss each character's behaviour and ask students to suggest the character's motivation, e.g.

- Why does Johnno free the crabs?
- Why is his father angry?
- How does Johnno's father feel about Johnno's deafness?
- What is Julie's response to Johnno?

The aim of the discussion is to take students beyond the obvious and get them to understand the strains that Johnno's disability places on other family members.

Analyse film techniques \

Examine the camera work. Replay the scene in which Johnno's father lies in bed and talks to his wife. Ask students to watch the movement of the camera around the bed. Discuss the effect of the bed rails forming dark bars through which we see Johnno's father. Why might the filmmaker prefer to use this shot rather than simply a close-up of the father's face? Link the type of shot used to the creation of mood in the scene.



Johnno and (Tony) the Italian immigrant form an unspoken bond. Look at the jetty scenes and church scene. They are both outsiders and objects of ridicule by others. Discuss the scenes which mark each of them as different from others (neither have access to the English language). What qualities does Tony have that Johnno's father lacks?

Examine the scene in which the teacher kills Captain Claw and Johnno loses his temper. Look at how drama and suspense is created in this scene. Focus on:

- the length of each shot (fast editing)
- the use of dramatic close-ups and angles (low angle close-up of teacher's face, low angle of Johnno)
- the loud sound effects (the banging of the cricket bat), dramatic music
- the effect of the use of low angle shots.

5. Focus on body language and gestures. Replay the scene in which Johnno's father beats him. There is no dialogue in this scene but it is very compelling. Discuss how Johnno's father feels after the thrashing based on the viewers' interpretation of the father's body language.

6. Look at the scene in which Johnno is at sea in the storm. Film has the capacity to present situations which never actually happened. This is possible because individual shots, perhaps taken many miles and months apart, can be edited together. How is the scene of Johnno at sea in a storm created through selective editing? (Look at the choice of shots and the sequence in which they are edited together.)

7. The people who have rejected Johnno make a symbolic gesture to welcome him back at the conclusion, eg.

- teacher uses sign language
- father hugs him
- children clap

Identify and discuss the importance of symbolic language to:

- the hearing impaired
- the hearing world.

8. Ask students to develop a list of television characters who are in some way impaired/disabled. Discuss the following

- How representative is the list of the range of disabilities in our society?
- Are the characters shown to have abilities as well as disabilities?



9. The Hollywood film industry is showing increasing sensitivity to individuals with special problems. This theme could be further developed through study of one or more of these titles:

- The Miracle Worker.1962. story of Helen Keller.
- Charly. 1968 based on the short story "Flowers for Algernon" about a man with a mental disability..
- Edward Scissorhands.1990.

10. This film raises a number of issues about family life - conflict responsibility, adjustment. Discuss students own experiences of disability in families and how people they know have responded. Discuss the sort of support that families with disabled members need.



Captain Johnno B

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	Humanities and Social Sciences
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Disabilities; Families; Cultural Studies; Multicultural Australia
Description:	Students undertake film analysis and research to explore conflict in the family and in the community; immigration and multicultural society; and the Australian identity and masculinity.
Resources:	Captain Johnno, Touch the Sun

Lesson plan:

After viewing the entire film replay some key scenes which demonstrate the various levels of social conflict explored in **Captain Johnno**. Some suggestions are:

Conflict at the level of the family - early scene in which the family is decorating the Christmas tree and Johnno clashes with his father. Scene in which Frank chases Johnno into his bedroom and tells him that he hates his son.

Conflict at the level of the society - scene in the fish factory in which Tony is told that he needs a licence to fish. Scene in the hotel bar in which Tony tries to give Frank a fish.

Class discussion

Divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss these questions and issues:

- What are the causes and consequences of each level of conflict depicted in the film?
- Which type of conflict would cause them most distress?
- How are the different levels of conflict interconnected in the story?
- Identify some of the indicators of social conflict in Australia today, eg. racist graffiti, newspaper editorials on law and order, homelessness, drug offensives.
- What are some of the causes of such conflicts?
- Is social conflict inevitable? Give examples of how this does/might come about.

The film illustrates community reaction to immigrants in the early 1950s. Give students some background (see below) to the post war immigration program depicted in **Captain Johnno**.



Small group research

Have students do library research on patterns of post war immigration and present their information in graphic form (column charts, pie charts and timelines). As part of their research they should prepare answers to these questions:

- What countries contributed the greatest number of immigrants to Australia in the 1950s?
- Why do population figures before 1961 exclude Aborigines?
- What reasons can you suggest for the pattern of population change?
- Which states in Australia received the most immigrants and who went where?
- How does the pattern of population change in your own state compared with the rest of Australia?
- What can you say about the ethnic composition in Australia in 1861 compared with 1961 and the present day?
- What is meant by the term net migration?
- When was net migration to Australia at its highest?

In 1800 the ratio of males to every 100 females was 263:05 and in 1978 it was 100.42 males to every 100 females. What has happened to the gender balance in Australia and what might be some of the reasons for the changes?

In 1957, in John O'Grady's novel *They're a Weird Mob* migrants were told: "*There are far too many New Australians in this country who are mentally living in their homelands, who mix with people of their own nationality, and try to retain their own language and customs...Cut it out. There is no better way of life in the world than the Australian way of life*" (p204). Using the evidence presented in **Captain Johnno**:

- Describe the "Australian way of life" in the 1950s.
- What does the idea of an Australian way of life imply about other ways of living?
- How can this concept be a tool of intolerance?
- What are the major similarities and differences in Australian attitudes to immigrants then and now?
- Is there still an "Australian way of life"?

Small group or individual presentation

Have students prepare an oral presentation accompanied by a slide show on the impact of immigration on one of the following areas:

- food
- customs
- language
- employment
- consumption



Analyse the symbols of masculinity

The film sets up an opposition between two constructions of masculinity, European on the one hand and Australian on the other. These two versions of masculinity are articulated through the characters of Frank and Tony, the former representing the Australian version of masculinity and Tony the European version.

Replay the following scenes and ask students to note the characteristics of Australian male behaviour and European male behaviour.

- Tony arrives in town and hugs the bus driver farewell.
- Frank removes Johnno's fishing rod from the hotel dining room
- Frank verbally abuses Johnno in the bedroom.
- Tony collects his parcel from home and later unpacks it in his shack
- Johnno's family bids farewell to Julie.
- Tony comforts Johnno after Julie leaves for boarding school

Using class responses create a board chart of the different behaviours demonstrated by the characters of Tony and Frank. Use the chart as a prompt to discuss:

- different definitions of masculinity,
- the positive and negative sides of each representation,
- changes in 'acceptable' Australian male behaviour.

Background notes

The large-scale post-war assisted immigration program begun by Chifley and continued under Menzies was the product of earlier 'populate or perish' fears, the Japanese threat during the war and the decision to industrialise Australia. What distinguished this from earlier immigration schemes was not only its size and effectiveness - between 1947 and 1964 more migrants were added to the population than in the 80 years after the 1860s (Blainey, Geoffrey *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, Sun Books, Melbourne 1966 p. 334) but also the fact that a large proportion of immigrants were not British. Both immigrants and Aborigines were required to assimilate under Australian government policy of the day. Underlying this policy was an assumption that there was a common, homogenous Australian way of life which would be threatened unless outsiders conformed to it.



Devil's Hill

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 7 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Film Language; Genre; Narrative Structure; Environment
Description:	Students analyse some of the techniques used to tell stories on film. They explore fear and handling fear, conflict and the film-makers apparent ambivalence towards the Australian landscape.
Resources:	Devil's Hill, Touch the Sun

Lesson plan:

Devil's Hill is an adventure film. Here is one definition of an adventure story - a narrative which features the unknown, the uncharted, the unexpected with elements of danger, excitement and risk-taking. Before viewing identify the genre. Discuss the expectations one brings to an adventure film.

Replay the opening sequence

This sequence shows Badge riding through the bush to visit his father. It is useful for teaching about the use and function of cutaways and issues of continuity. Play the sequence and discuss:

- the screen direction in which Badge is travelling. Is it the same in every shot? What would be the effect if changed from shot to shot?
- count the number of cutaways (shots that are not part of the main action), describe the content of the cutaways.

Discuss: What do the cutaways tell us about the setting? What is Badge's reaction to the bush?

Replay one of the adventure sequences

Replay one of Badge's near drowning in the river - the cave sequence - the rock climbing sequence

Focus on the choices the filmmaker must make to construct a sequence. Distribute the [student worksheet](#). Ask students to jot down examples of film techniques used in the film.

Ask them to use their notes as a basis for discussing why the filmmaker has made the particular choices about a shot. Focus on the impact, the contribution to mood and pace of the sequence.



Discuss fear

At the beginning of this film we are told that some of the characters have particular fears, eg. Badge - heights, Sheppie - storms, Bron - horses. Only Sam denies that he is afraid of anything. Discuss the fears that each child has faced and the efforts they make during the film to overcome these fears.

Why does Bron say that *"It's all right to be afraid."* Do any students share similar fears to those of the characters in the film? How do they cope with their fears?

Discuss how the film depicts conflict

Devil's Hill depicts some of the characters in conflict both with others and within themselves. Use the sequence showing the first meeting between Dave and Tink to discuss external conflict and the sequence in which Badge crosses the rope bridge to discuss internal conflict. Discuss the particular difficulties of showing internal conflict on film (cannot give the viewer direct access to the character's emotions but gesture, facial expression, suggests certain emotions that would be articulated in a written narrative.) Identify the techniques the film uses to suggest Badge's internal conflict e.g. facial expression, dramatic music, cutaways to the fast flowing water, close-ups of his feet.

Review the definition of an adventure story given in the previewing section above. As a class group identify those elements of the story that fit the definition. Discuss why so many adventure stories involve a journey away from home. What opportunities does a journey offer the storyteller?

Badge and Sam each have their strengths and weaknesses. Identify them for both characters and discuss the role their strengths play in their survival.

Conflict between family members is not unusual. Discuss the causes of conflict in *Devil's Hill* and how it is resolved.

Explore ambivalence in film

The film presents some beautiful images of natural bushland. At times the environment appears beautiful and at other times hostile. Identify examples of each type of depiction in the film. This ambivalent attitude to the environment is a common theme in Australian films (***Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Man From Snowy River*** of Australian Screen online for 3 min excerpts). View another film which features the environment strongly and discuss the reasons for the filmmaker's ambivalence. This theme can also be traced across much Australian poetry.



Devil's Hill
Student Worksheet
Film language

Film technique	Examples in Devil's Hill
<p>Shot Type close up medium shot medium long shot long shot</p>	
<p>Lens Movement zoom in zoom out no movement</p>	
<p>Depth of Field sharp focus soft focus variable focus</p>	
<p>Lighting and colour natural light artificial light use of shadows colour filters</p>	
<p>Camera angle high angle low angle eye level</p>	
<p>Camera movement pan tilt track/dolly no movement</p>	





The Gift

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Environment; Self and Relationships; Genre; Narrative Structure; Symbolism and Icons
Description:	Useful for teaching about television genre, this program shows the artificial and constructed nature of quiz shows. The activities also explore conflict and environmental issues.
Resources:	The Gift, Touch the Sun

Lesson plan:

Using a television guide, identify and compare some television genres - sport, quiz shows, news, drama, magazine programs, current affairs, soap operas etc. Identify their similarities and differences.

Cue and view

Look at the Lucky Aussie Quiz Show sequence in **The Gift**. Discuss and make notes on:

- **set and props**
 - what atmosphere is suggested by the surroundings?
 - what behind-the-scenes information do we get about the set?
- **compere**
 - what other TV quiz comperes behave like this one?
 - sound track
 - what is an applause track
 - cue sheets
 - why is all the dialogue written on cards?
 - role of male and female quiz hosts
 - who is in control?
 - prize
 - how is the prize given major status (drum roll, lights, etc)?

Discuss the key characteristics of quiz shows and point out the similarities with sports shows, eg. real people not actors, real time, presence of an audience, emphasis on winning, importance of conflict.



Small group work

Have groups of students prepare their own quiz show based on a current television version. They will automatically satirise it but this is a useful way to identify the conventions and rituals which govern such programs.

Discuss conflict

The program touches upon both generational and cultural conflicts. Identify and discuss the conflicts which the students consider to be generational and those which are cultural. Some of the conflicts are:

- Sophia's relationship with her father
- Nicos' relationship with his sister
- Nicos' relationship with his father

Have students identify specific scenes to support their answers.

Discuss parallel construction of time

The narrative structure of this film demonstrates the construction of parallel (or simultaneous) time, eg. event in place A - event in place B appear to be happening simultaneously. It is an effect achieved through editing. Look at the sequence beginning with Nicos' mother forgetting to lock the bird cage. Identify those shots which depict events happening in Melbourne and those which depict events in Western Australia. Discuss the effect of the parallel construction of time in drawing together the two stories. Perhaps draw the two continua to illustrate an understanding of this concept.

Discuss the environmental issues

This film raises the issues of conservation and the environment. In discussion with students identify the major local environmental and conservation issues. Discuss the students' perspectives on these issues. Have them write a letter to the appropriate authorities putting forward their point of view.



Peter & Pompey

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Film Language; Stereotypes; Narrative Structure; Humour and Satire
Description:	Students explore the relationships between the characters and the film language used to tell the story.
Resources:	Peter & Pompey, Touch the Sun

Lesson plan:

1. Opening scenes

As a whole class

View the opening scene. This scene establishes the mood of the film which is mainly one of fun and adventure. Examine how mood is created through:

- lighting (high key, bright, strong highlights)
- colour (use of white, blue and red)
- music (light, up-beat).

2. Establishing relationships

As a whole class

The emotional and cognitive relationship between Peter and the fantasy figure Pompey is established in a number of ways. This relationship is central to the story and therefore must be made clear to the audience early in the film.

Pause the tape at the point in the opening scene when Peter stares at his reflection in the water and sees another boy's face. Ask the students what is happening in this scene? Do they understand it? Pause the tape again a little later when Peter sees the boy beckoning to him. What do the students think is happening? What function do they think the apparition will have in the story?



Ask students to reflect upon how the effect of the false reflection in the water is achieved in the film. Ask them for suggestions as to how this sequence could have been shot:

shot 1 Peter's face

shot 2 reflection in water of a different actor's face

shot 3 Peter's face

shots edited together and the audience interprets them as sequentially related.

3. Comic techniques - Role reversal

As a whole class

Both Margaret and Peter come from what many might see as unusual or different types of families.

Compare the scenes in which Margaret shows her exam results to her father and Peter and his mother discuss his absent father. How do Margaret's parents behave? Are we meant to take their behaviour seriously? Discuss the idea of role reversal - Margaret, although the child, plays the part of the serious adult, while her father is the irresponsible child.

This comic technique is used in many films. See for example any of the Fawlty Towers tapes in which Polly is the serious 'adult' and Basil the 'silly child' figure.

4. Stereotypes

As a whole class

The characters in this film are larger than life, caricatures in some cases. Using a visual example, perhaps from a newspaper cartoon and explain the nature of a caricature to the class (exaggeration for the purpose of drawing attention to flaws).

Replay the scene in which Margaret apologises about her excellent test results to her father.

Examine the ways in which her father, the mayor, is caricatured. Look at:

- his dialogue, eg. *"If you were a boy I would know how to raise you. Clip around the ear and a few games of footy."* *"That's what life is about being just the same as everyone else."* *"Megsy please fail at something."*
- his clothes - big flowered shirt.
- camera framing - use of close-ups and low angles to make him look 'larger than life'.

Discuss the film's attitude to the mayor. Does it show respect or disrespect?

5. Humor

The topic of sexism and sex role stereotyping is treated through humour.



As a whole class

Have students list Mayor Leo Bainbridge's expectations of his daughter and Mr. Barbuto's expectations of Wayne, eg.

Margaret - expected to be lacking in intelligence or might have a low I.Q, interested in her appearance

Wayne - expected to be confident, tough.

Discuss the stereotypes of daughters and sons which the parents expect. Are these stereotypes still found in today's society? Do the parents of students in the class have different expectations of their sons and daughters?

6. Narrative structure

This film has a double narrative structure - the story of Pompey and his father and the story of Peter's, Wayne's and Margaret's adventure. Peter's story (the framing story) delivers the 'back' story - the story of Pompey.

The first story (of Pompey) is accessed by the audience through the children's reading of the diary and Pompey's voice over narration with occasional dramatic inserts.

Individual activity

Ask students to concentrate on the story of Pompey as it is recounted to the audience. As a writing exercise have students write the story of Pompey. More able students may be able to write it from the first person point of view. (Recount)

7. Film genre

This film can be understood as a mixture of genres - fantasy, adventure, comedy.

Write the genres on the board and then ask students to identify sequences from the film which fit each of these categories.

Related Picture Books:

Anthony Browne's 'Piggybook'





Top Enders

Program:	Touch the Sun
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Civics and Citizenship
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Ethics, Values, Justice; Cultural Studies; Indigenous Issues
Description:	Students explore some film techniques, characterisation, stereotyping, juxtaposition, and storyboarding. They discuss these themes in the film: growing up, risk taking, adventure and independence.
Resources:	Top Enders, Touch The Sun

Lesson plan:

Examine the ways setting is established in a film and its importance to the narrative.

View the opening of Top Enders

Watch the opening 5-10 minutes of the time. Record these topics as the basis for discussion:

- Top Enders
- Place
- People

Discussion points:

- What part of Australia is known as the Top End?
- What knowledge do you have of this area?
- What do we learn about Darwin from:
 1. the scenery (ocean, beaches, palm trees)
 2. the people (summer clothes, Aborigines)
 3. the buildings (wooden houses and shutters)
 4. the objects/props (mosquito net)
 5. Agriculture (mango and avocado trees, cattle)

Ask students to think about what they have heard on the sound track and to list everything they can remember (dialogue, music, SFX). Have them list the specific sound effects they can remember (car engines, crickets). Explain that the sound of crickets is an ambient track (a continuous sound in the background which in all likelihood either came off disk or was collected at a different time). Discuss



why this track is used and how such tracks are collected. Ask students to identify the ambient noise in their environment.

Discuss the characters

In the first five minutes we meet the central characters of the film

- Alice
- Mick
- Susie (Alice's mother)
- Jack (Alice's father)

For each character have students record their first impressions. Students should read their impressions aloud and then be asked to justify their views by referring to specific behaviours or examples of dialogue from the film, eg.

Alice:
competitive - car dragging scene
aggressive - *"you are my useless lump of a father"*

Ask students to concentrate on one of the main characters and make notes for use in a character profile to be written after viewing.

Analyse the relationships

This is a film about relationships both broken and mended. Ask students to describe the relationships in the first half of the film between:

Alice - Jack

Alice - Susie

Alice - Mick

Compare the situations at the conclusion of the film. Discuss:

- Why the relationships have changed?
- What new knowledge does each character have?

Make a storyboard

Top Enders makes some interesting use of camera angles and has some specific sequences that are useful in teaching the construction of point of view. Look at the scene in which the children come over the rise and look down at the tourist bus below. Identify the camera angles used in the sequence. Ask students to sketch in storyboard form the sequence of shots that establishes the view of the coach as the children's point of view, eg.



- shot of children from low angle in wide shot
- high angle shot of coach
- close up of children's faces

Discuss the stereotypes

Top Enders mocks and satirises the stereotypes of Aboriginal people. Look at the sequence in which the children get money from the tourists. **Discuss:** what stereotypes of Aboriginal people are being made fun of in this scene. What is the film's attitude to the tourists?

Discuss the role of juxtaposition in narrative

The film uses a series of counterpointed scenes to explore the children's relationships with their significant others. Replay the two scenes in which Mick buries his dog and Alice talks to her injured father. **Discuss:** how does the juxtaposition of the scenes influence the way you understand each situation? Why have these scenes been placed alongside each other?

Discuss the themes

The themes of **Top Enders** are relationships and growing up in two cultures. Have students identify the behaviours and knowledges that define 'growing up' for Alice and 'growing up' for Mick. Jack also says he has 'grown up' but he is an adult. Discuss what Jack means by this statement.

This film touches upon the themes of independence, risk taking and adventure. Ask students to identify the sequences which best amplify these themes. **Discuss:**

- the relationship between risk taking and independence (can someone go too far? eg. extreme sports)
- other films which show girls having an adventure.
- the steps each child in the film took towards independence



Top Enders
Student Worksheet
Character Profile

The character is:

What the character is like

Character actions:

- what they do
- what they fail to do

Dialogue:

- what a character says
- what other characters say about them

Clothing:

Body Language:

- facial expressions
- posture
- gestures

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