

# WELCOME TO DYSTOPIA

## with MARK SMITH

### Education Resources: Grade 7-10

The following resources have been developed to take your Word Play experience from festival to classroom. Written and compiled by qualified teacher, Ella Peile, UPLIT's Children & Young Adult Coordinator, the suggested classroom exercises and activities below are designed to reflect key learning areas outlined in the ACARA Australian Curriculum.

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#### Curriculum Links

The following activities are designed to complement the Australian Curriculum Year 7-10 in English. Specific curriculum links have been noted at the end of each activity.

#### Author Bio

Mark Smith lives on Victoria's Surf Coast, where he runs an outdoor education campus for a large Melbourne boys' school. His debut novel *The Road To Winter* (Text, 2016) was shortlisted for the Australian Indie Book Awards, the Aurealis Awards, The Readings YA Book Prize and the WA Young Readers' Book Awards. It was published in both the UK and US this year. The sequel, *Wilder Country*, will be released in August, 2017, and the third of the Winter trilogy, in late 2018. Mark is also an award winning writer of short fiction, with credits including the 2015 Josephine Ulrick Literature Prize and the 2013 Alan Marshall Short Story Prize, and his work has appeared in Best Australian Stories 2014 & 2015, Review of Australian Fiction, The Big Issue and The Australian.

### About the Book: *The Road to Winter*

Since a deadly virus and the violence that followed wiped out his parents and most of his community, Finn has lived alone on the rugged coast with only his loyal dog Rowdy for company.

He has stayed alive for two winters—hunting and fishing and trading food, and keeping out of sight of the Wilders, an armed and dangerous gang that controls the north, led by a ruthless man named Ramage.

But Finn's isolation is shattered when a girl runs onto the beach. Rose is a Siley—an asylum seeker—and she has escaped from Ramage, who had enslaved her and her younger sister, Kas. Rose is desperate, sick, and needs Finn's help. Kas is still missing somewhere out in the bush.

And Ramage wants the girls back—at any cost.

Hear the author discuss *The Road to Winter* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KV8XqJr4jJM>

### About the Book: *Wilder Country*

*Wilder Country* is the exciting, action-packed sequel to Mark Smith's highly acclaimed *The Road to Winter*.

Finn, Kas and Willow have survived the winter of storms. Severe winds and cold have kept the Wilders at bay. Now that spring has come, everything has changed. They're being hunted again, and they won't be safe while Ramage wants their blood.

But Finn and Kas made a promise to Rose—to find her baby and bring her back. And finding Hope means finding Ramage...

## Classroom Activity

### Dystopias

Using think-pair-share, come up with a group definition of dystopia.

Compare against the Oxford Dictionary definition: *An imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degraded one; The opposite of utopia.*

Ask students to draw two columns and label the first Utopia. Describe an ideal world. Consider:

- Basic needs
- Degree of personal choice
- Relationship with environment and technology
- Governance

Label the second column dystopia and describe the opposite of each utopian description.

Share and discuss students' perceived utopias and dystopias. Discussion points:

- What are the minimum requirements for a pleasant world?
- What is one thing described in your dystopia that would guarantee a difficult or unpleasant world?
- What personal values do your included descriptions reflect? E.g. environmentalism, freedom, justice?
- Can the class agree on what a utopia looks like? Why would this be difficult?
- Present students with the following quote from *Anna Karenina* by Tolstoy: *"All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."* Discuss whether this applies to utopias and dystopias.

Identify common themes in students' dystopian descriptions and summarise on the board. E.g. environmental destruction, totalitarian government, war, expended natural resources. For each, detail real-world examples (either existing or threatened). Discussion points:

- How plausible are the situations depicted in dystopian fiction?
- Why do people enjoy reading dystopian fiction? What can it offer us?
- How can fiction address social, political, and environmental issues?

Research other examples of dystopias in literature and film, and reflect on how the specific kind of dystopia reflects the concerns and values of its time.

Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups (ACELT1626)

Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)

Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)

Interpret, analyse and evaluate how different perspectives of issue, event, situation, individuals or groups are constructed to serve specific purposes in texts (ACELY1742)

## Pre-Reading Homework Activity Vocab List

Afghanistan	Feverish	Threatened
Asylum	Friendship	Tracking
Cautious	Grateful	Travelling
Dangerous	Loneliness	Trust
Decisions	Refugee	Virus
Disease	Secret	Vulnerable
Dog-eat-dog	Survival	Whitewater
Dystopia	Suspicious	

Understand how to use spelling rules and word origins, for example Greek and Latin roots, base words, suffixes, prefixes, spelling patterns and generalisations to learn new words and how to spell them (ACELA1539)

Identify how vocabulary choices contribute to specificity, abstraction and stylistic effectiveness (ACELA1561)

Apply an expanding vocabulary to read increasingly complex texts with fluency and comprehension (ACELY1743)

## Group Activity Character Analysis

Break the class into groups and hand each group a sheet of A3 or butcher's paper. Ask students to draw a Venn diagram and label each circle with a character from the story.

Complete the Venn diagram, considering:

- Core values and beliefs
- Attitude to Sileys
- Objectives/ motivation
- Use of violence
- Skills and survival tactics
- Fears
- Challenges experienced

Ask students to share their comparative character analysis. Discuss what pieces of information were communicated directly by the author and which were revealed through action, speech, and thoughts.

Discussion points:

- Which characters are most similar?
- Which are most different?
- How do opposing traits inform the reader's understanding of the main characters?
- What were the biggest changes in each character?
- Do the collected attributes of each character create complexity?
- How does complexity and development in characters help readers empathise?

Recognise and analyse the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches (ACELT1622)

Interpret and analyse language choices, including sentence patterns, dialogue, imagery and other language features, in short stories, literary essays and plays (ACELT1767)

## **Class Activity**

### **Asylum Seekers**

The author's dedication in *The Road to Winter* reads "For all those who have sought refuge, only to be met by closed hearts." Discuss who he is referring to. How are these people represented in the novels? Which characters have closed hearts?

The following process drama helps students appreciate the journeys of asylum seekers.

Hand each student a piece of paper. Ask them to draw or describe the place where they feel most at home. It may be tangible or not, e.g. with their family. As they are working, encourage them to think about why this idea of home is so important to them, and why it is valued.

Inform students that they must now leave that place or person forever. They have thirty seconds to say goodbye. Students can buddy up and enroll their partner to say goodbye to, say it outloud all together, or write it down.

After thirty seconds, tell students it's time to pack their bags. They may select only what fits in a small backpack. Students write down the items they will take with them.

Ask students to move through a doorway or other division in space, and pass you their lists on the way through. For each student, select one or two items to cross off their list, giving reasons such as "dropped while running from the guards," "taken as a bribe," "fell off the boat," "sold to pay the people smugglers."

Play students one of the animations from the series Seeking Refuge.  
(Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01k7c4q> and <http://www.abc.net.au/tveducation/series/SEEKINGREFUGE.htm>)

Separate the class into two groups. Instruct one half of the class that they will now play the "locals" of the refugees' new country. This country's language is made up only of the words "wah" and "wim." The other half of the class is to play the refugees arriving in their new country. The language of the refugees includes only the words "tee" and "tah." Ask the refugee group to separate into families and give each family a task they must complete. E.g. Find the bank, Buy vegetarian food, Get to the job office. The only objects they have with them are the ones on their list (minus any crossed out.) Students play the assigned roles while attempting to complete their task using only the given language.

Debrief from the process drama. Discussion points:

- Were your initial priorities of what to take from home useful to you? What would you have changed?
- Emotional reactions to the Seeking Refuge video.
- Difficulties faced by people arriving in a new country.
- How these challenges would be amplified by the threat of persecution.

- How these challenges would be amplified by an environmental or health crisis.

How values, including freedom, respect, inclusion, civility, responsibility, compassion, equality and a 'fair go', can promote cohesion within Australian society (ACHCK052)

Reasons for, and effects of, international migration in Australia (ACHGK058)

Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)

Understand and explain how combinations of words and images in texts are used to represent particular groups in society, and how texts position readers in relation to those groups (ACELT1628)

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)

Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812)

## Class Activity

### The World of the Book

This activity explores the importance of the physical environment in *The Road to Winter* and *Wilder Country*.

Find images of Victoria's surf coast (where the author lives) and identify examples of this landscape reflected in the text. Using image search and Google Street View, collect a series of images that could be the setting of the novels, pre-virus. Present as a slideshow with quotes from the text matched to each image.

Discussion points:

- Why is the environment an important part of the novels? How is this evident?
- In what ways is the landscape uniquely Australian, and what aspects are more universal?
- Why is the environment particularly important to Finn?
- How do the author's language choices regarding landscape and environment impact atmosphere and mood, symbolism, and plot?

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620)

Recognise that vocabulary choices contribute to the specificity, abstraction and style of texts (ACELA1547)

Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to confidently create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts (ACELY1728)

Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences (ACELY1752)

Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812)

## Further Resources

Teaching Notes for *The Road to Winter* are available at <https://www.textpublishing.com.au/books/the-road-to-winter>