



Worlds Next Door

Teaching Materials

THROUGH THE BREAK
BY JEN BANYARD



Themes:

'Through the Break' is a story in prose poetry style with themes of overcoming fears, belonging and rites of passage.

Summary:

Young new immigrant Shai has been yearning all summer to join the others on their boards among the waves breaking on the shore. He builds up the courage, makes it through the break and, in his weary exhilaration, is swept out to sea on a rip. Creatures of the sea guide him back in, urging him on when he starts to flag. Back ashore, Shai 'staggers to his feet. Bends sideways. Shakes water and animal visions from his head.' Did Shai only imagine the shag, the flying fish, and the stingray talking to him? Real or imagined, the creatures he saw and heard enabled him to paddle harder and save himself.

Questions and activities for students:

Belonging: There are several clues in the story as to Shai's previous home e.g. 'But here the water is restless, the swell unhampered by coral reef.' What are some others? What type of place did Shai live in before coming here? Why might he have come here with his family?

Fears: Shai was afraid of the waves at first. When you were younger was there something you were afraid of? How did you handle it? Did you get on top of your fear? How did that feel? Looking back, is it hard to believe you were afraid?

When is it okay to be afraid?

In the story, Shai 'remembers [too late] the signs that talk of rips.' How is being cautious different from being afraid?

Rites of passage: Making it through the breaking waves and back again helps Shai to say goodbye to his old island home. Why do you think Shai felt like that? Have you

ever done or experienced something that makes you feel like a different person afterwards? Is there something that you'd really like to do but have to wait for?

What are some other things that people new to Australia might find strange, scary or fascinating?

Writing style:

This story is halfway between a poem and prose. Re-cast a section of this story to read like a straight poem, for example by adjusting line breaks, deleting small words or experimenting with word order.

There is a lot of imagery about waves and water and sun in this story. What is imagery? What are some of the examples here? Think of examples that you could use, based on your sensations when you are at the beach. Don't be afraid to sound crazy!