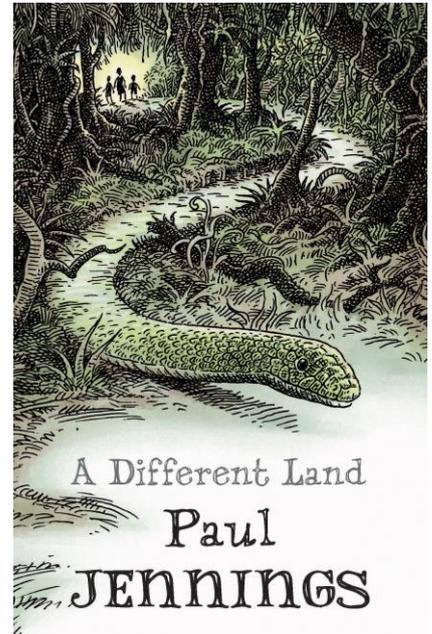


A Different Land

By Paul Jennings

September 2019 ISBN 9781760528720
Paperback
Recommended for 10-14-year-olds



Summary

This is another fantastic instalment in Paul Jennings's Different series. It follows the fortunes of Anton, Christopher and their mother Pat who journeyed to a new land in *A Different Boy*. The story is told from Christopher's point of view, as the family adjusts to a new life. When their mother Pat gets a job in a country town, Anton is happy but Christopher finds it hard to settle and wants to go home. Once again, Paul Jennings deftly explores themes of guilt and redemption while telling a compelling story, with humour and emotion.



Paul Jennings has built his career on an intimate understanding of reluctant readers and what is required to get them to pick a book up. And his *A Different Land* is no exception: this story is exciting and surprising, whimsical and gritty. Furthermore, its short sentences and simple but evocative vocabulary and imagery will enthrall readers until the book's end.

The story is loosely based on Paul's journey to Australia as a 'ten-pound Pom' but, like *A Different Dog* and *A Different Boy*, the world of the story – and what is possible in it – has a timeless reality of its own.

Use in the curriculum

This short but powerfully written novel is appropriate for Grade 4 to Year 8 classrooms, depending on the way it is treated.

Language

Text features of note are:

- chapter opening illustrations and hand drawn font for first words of each chapter;
- well-spaced text for readability (consider the audience);
- action sequences written in short sentences and simple past tense with well-chosen verbs, adverbs and adjectives. ('He bit off the fishing line and rushed to the hatch cover. With trembling fingers, he tied the rope to one of its steel eyelets. Water swirled around his feet and covered the sagging canvas that protected the hold.' p. 105)

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Literature

The novel is an excellent example of economy of writing and the use of dialogue to establish setting and characters.

In such a tightly-written text, word choice is paramount. Examine in relation to plot tension, character development and the creation of sympathy or dislike for characters.

Compare the novel with Paul Jennings' humorous stories to reveal similarities and differences and examine the author's style.

Literacy

Comprehension questions for the first three chapters are provided below in these notes.

Themes

- migration
- resilience
- courage
- loneliness
- difference
- persistence
- cultural acceptance

Discussion questions and activities

Comprehension Questions for Chapter One:

1. Why do you think the author described the three people getting off the train as alone and lonely? These two words seem similar but are very different. Explain the difference (page 1).
2. What does Anton say to Pat on page 4 that provides a clue that he might not be Christopher's brother and Pat's son by birth?
3. Why did Christopher not eat his piece of sausage even though he was hungry (page 4)?
4. 'I'll keep it for emergencies.' Christopher explains to his mother (page 4). What later emergency in this chapter involves this piece of sausage (pp 6-9)?
5. 'They were all aware of the stack of supplies that had been left at the end of the platform, but none of them suggested what was on their minds.' (page 11) Explain what you think was on Pat, Christopher and Anton's minds.
6. Find three clues in this chapter that hint that Pat, Christopher and Anton are new to Australia.

Comprehension Questions for Chapter Two

1. What was the confusion over Pat's name (page 17)?
2. Why does Christopher not like nicknames (page 21)?
3. What is the dog's name (page 21)?
4. How does Christopher feel about Crayfish when he says, 'he can sense his feelings changing like a thermometer. At the moment the temperature was definitely cool.' (page 23)?
5. Based on everything you have read to this point in the story, can you guess where Pat, Christopher and Anton's original home was?



6. Can the story that Christopher tells on page 26 help you work out when *A Different Land* might be set?

Comprehension Questions for Chapter Three

1. What two different types of animals does Christopher encounter when he is trying to pee outside Crayfish's truck (pp 30-31)?
2. Do you think that Crayfish was really going to drink from Christopher's beer bottle? What in the story told you that (pp 32-33)?
3. Why is it funny when Christopher says, 'But you can see where they've been' to Crayfish (page 33)?
4. Describe in your own words the scene that Christopher sees when he opens the door to the caravan (pp 33-34).
5. Name three instances in pp 34-36 that suggest Pat has faced terrible things before coming to Australia and is a very strong woman?
6. Who are Crayfish's partners at *The Last Coach* (page 38)?

Themes

Paul Jennings has said that loneliness, being different and missing home are themes he wanted to explore in his three novellas *A Different Dog*, *A Different Boy* and *A Different Land*.

- a) Choose one of these themes and discuss how characters, settings and events within *A Different Land* come together to illustrate it.
- b) Choose a theme that you can relate to – one that you may have felt at some time in your life – and discuss your response to the story.

Language

Read Chapter Nine and find examples of the following literary devices that highlight the tension of Crayfish and Christopher's rescue from the sinking boat.

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Repetition
- Personification

Characterisation

Make a list of words to describe Christopher in the story. Give examples of things he said or did in the story that made you think this about him. For instance, you might say he is kind and quick-witted because he saves Lonely, the dog (pp 6-9) by luring it out with the sausage. You might also say that he is sad because he misses his home country, dad and twin brother (page 26).

Plot twist

- a) Define the term 'plot twist' and
- b) explain the plot twist that relates to Crayfish visiting Peggy every week.
- c) Go back to the scene where Christopher overhears The Bot and The Beard talking in the toilet and see if their conversation now makes more sense once you know more about Peggy (page 66).

Title

In *A Different Dog* and *A Different Boy* Paul Jennings played with the titles so they could be interpreted two or more ways, depending on what happened in the story.

Can you come up with two different meanings for this title?

[Answer: *Australia is a different country to the UK, where Pat, Christopher and Anton have migrated from: and when they get here the land itself is very different with its thick rainforests, wild beaches and rivers. Also, the people they encounter speak and behave very differently to their expectations.*]

Writing Exercise

Write a book review for *A Different Land*, making sure that you:

- include the book's title and author;
- give a brief summary of the plot that doesn't give away too much;
- comment on the book's strengths and weaknesses, and
- provide specific examples to support your praise or criticism.

From the author

'English migrants to Australia did not do it as tough as those from non-English-speaking countries and they certainly did not do it as tough as refugees. But they did have stories and they did miss 'home' and, in some cases, suffer greatly. Many of them, like my parents, were running away from personal tragedies. I used my experiences on the boat and my personal family history as background for this book.

'When I arrived in Australia as a migrant or 'ten-pound Pom', I realised that all was not well. The day before we left England my grandmother had a dream that she would die on the boat and refused to come. My mother missed home so much that she was never really happy again. Later, I found out that she had had a brother. We had migrated, in part, because he had killed himself six months before we sailed.'

— Paul Jennings

About the author

Paul Jennings has written over one hundred stories and has won every Australian children's choice book award. Since the publication of *Unreal!* in 1985, readers all around the world have loved his books. The top-rating TV series *Round the Twist* and *Driven Crazy* were based on a selection of his enormously popular short-story collections such as *Unseen!* In 1995 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for services to children's literature and he was awarded the prestigious Dromkeen Medal in 2001. In 2019, *A Different Boy* was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal (UK), and Paul received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Children's Book Council of Australia.

