

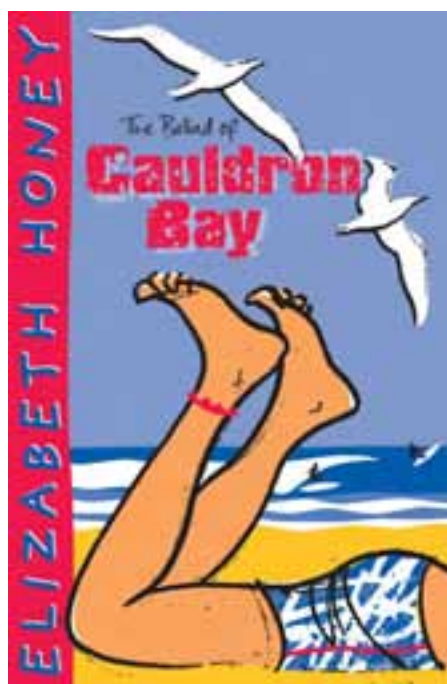
Teachers Notes (Middle Years)
by Julie Stafford
The Ballad of Cauldron Bay
Elizabeth Honey

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Recommended for ages 10-14

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INTRODUCTION

The Ballad of Cauldron Bay is a warm and humorous novel suitable for middle years students. It is the third novel about the Stella Street mob, the earlier two being *45 & 47 Stella Street and everything that happened* and *Fiddleback*.

Henni, the narrator, is now in Year 7 and everything is changing. She wants this Easter holiday to be like the other happy times the Stella Street mob have spent together but when Tara is foisted on them Henni has to deal with her despite their personality clash.

When *are* you old enough to go off by yourself with people your parents don't know? Are there laws about relationships? In turmoil, Henni asks herself why *she* feels responsible for Tara.

Another major theme is the family, in all its permutations: The Biddle's who run the shop, the surfies who appear on the waves, the German family who built the house the Stella Street mob stay in, even the blue wrens and bower birds have interesting family arrangements. Then within the family there's the role of the different children: Henni is the eldest child, the responsible one, and Tara is a privileged only child, an increasingly common experience, but we find out Tara's situation is not enviable.

The form of the book is original. Henni is given a computer for her birthday and experiments with fonts and footnotes. She dreams of becoming a writer. The story is littered with metaphors and poetry, her new passion.

On another level *The Ballad of Cauldron Bay* is like a holiday in a book, set in the bush on a beautiful isolated Australian beach, where the kids are largely left to their own devices, to enjoy climbing, swimming and exploring—adventures with an edge of danger. The remote setting, perfect Cauldron Bay, also raises questions about conservation.

“WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?” by ELIZABETH HONEY

First and foremost, *The Ballad of Cauldron Bay* is about life being good. It's set at the beach. Cauldron Bay is a combination of Wilson's Promontory, Croajingolong, Tamboon, Bittangabee Bay and other most beautiful Australian beaches.

It's about accepting change. Henni, the main character, is mourning the loss of childhood.

It's about growing up and being responsible for yourself, and the clash of two strong personalities—Henni and Tara.

It's about the increasingly common experience of being the only child. It's also about the role of the eldest, the responsible one, and the influence this has on your character.

It has a strong sense of community. The Stella Street mob are robust and know each other very well.

It's about language and Henni's dream of becoming a writer and how she experiences writing. She's loving poetry even though she doesn't like that word.

And it's about play: mucking about with words, water, sand . . . you name it!

I wanted to give kids a story of their problems and their feelings in Year 7, when everything is changing.



ENGLISH

WRITING SKILLS

METAPHORS

In Chapter 2, 'How it all Started', the reader is introduced to metaphors (see footnote 2). Metaphors are richly used throughout the story. Discuss the metaphor and the simile and distinguish between the two.

(An excellent reference is *Enjoying Poetry* by Sadler, Hayllar, Powell pp. 21-30.)

Divide into small groups. Select a chapter and build and compile a list of metaphors discovered in that chapter.

Scan comic strips in newspapers and collect those containing metaphors. (Some examples can be seen in *Enjoying Poetry* p.28)

Design a comic strip using a metaphor you have located in the novel. Those familiar with PowerPoint or an equivalent presentation program could use this to develop and present a comic strip.

ABBREVIATIONS

The reader is introduced in Chapter 1 to the abbreviations *viz.*, and *etc.*

Using the Style Manual (for authors, editors and printers) 6th edition 2002, compile a list of Latin shortened forms.

Examine a variety of publications including history texts, newspapers, pamphlets, etc. to locate examples of their usage. Compose sentences containing appropriately used abbreviations. Take careful note of the correct punctuation for each abbreviation.

SILENT LETTERS

'(A word with a silent letter has more character. It's like someone who hasn't had their teeth straightened.)' These are Henni's thoughts on page 27. Explain in your own words what you think the quote means and then compose your own wacky sentence using as many silent 'g' words as you can.

Hint: Find the page in a dictionary that contains words beginning with 'gn'.

WAFFLE

Do you have trouble getting to the action in your stories? Henni tries footnotes to avoid the problem of waffle. Do they work? Did you read them? Where are footnotes usually used?

A SUMMARY

In Chapter 8, 'Ice Chickee-babe meets the Surf Clowns', we discover through Mrs Biddle why Cauldron Bay was so-named. Carefully read this section of the chapter. Summarise the circumstances leading to the naming. Compile a list of all the main points made by Mrs Biddle. Finally, combine all these points into a concise paragraph.

LETTER WRITING

Look at the fascinating website of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme:

www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/science/abbbs

Imagine you have found a bird that has been banded (see pp. 198/199). Write a letter to the Scheme about the bird you have found. Describe the type of bird, where it is banded, where you found it and what you think may have happened to it. You may like to ask for a response and feedback to your letter.

The following small book about banding is an excellent reference: *Private Lives-Ages, Mates and Movements of Some Australian Birds*, by Pauline Reilly, Kangaroo Press, 1988

POETRY

In **Chapter 1, *Wrapped!*** Henni informs us that she is 'into poetry now' and collecting her favourite poems in a sketchbook.

Read the following two poems by **Spike Milligan** as an introduction:

My Sister

My sister Laura's bigger than me
And lifts me up quite easily
I can't lift her, I've tried and tried;
She must have something heavy inside.



Rain

There are holes in the sky
Where the rain gets in,
But they're ever so small
That's why rain is thin.

A SKETCHBOOK COLLECTION OF POEMS

Use a small sketchbook, refer to 'What person is that?' on pages 10 and 11, and write similar verses or limericks for each character in the story. Include the cue words provided by Elizabeth Honey.

e.g. There once was a dog called Briquette
 From Stella Street, pray don't forget,
 Chocolate eggs she did **guts**
 In her teeth stuck like nuts
 That green silver foil
 Such a klutz!

Collect your favourite poems and compose a number of your own. Draw up a contents page that records the title, author and page number of each poem collected. Begin with the above two poems. Collect, record and share your poems. Illustrate each one. Negotiate the collection period and the number of poems you must write yourself.

Discuss and identify a number of ideas arising in *The Ballad of Cauldron Bay* and write poems reflecting each of those issues.

e.g. friendship, trust, holidays, happiness, conflict, family.

BALLAD

What is a ballad? Discuss Henni's *The Ballad of Cauldron Bay* which appears at the back of the book, and other examples. Take a topical story and write it as a ballad.

CREATIVE WRITING

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

There are several scenes of mucking about, e.g. playing pop bango, building the sand castles, Madam de Glam dishing out the beauty treatment. What role do these scenes play? Is there more going on than meets the eye?

Write an entertaining scene with light-hearted dialogue where something else is happening beneath the surface.



A SEA POT SPELL

On page 69, Sue recites the witches' chant from Act 4 Scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Brew a sea pot spell in a cauldron to create a mythical sea creature.

The first two ingredients are mandatory: "Tooth of shark and cuttlefish chunk....."

Present the spell graphically as a poster.

Write two detailed paragraphs that describe your creature.

STELLA STREET, FIDDLE-BACK, CAULDRON BAY

Where does Cauldron Bay sit in relation to these earlier books? If there is another Stella Street book what could it be about?

Write an outline for Henni's next story based on untied threads from Cauldron Bay.

SMELL

Smell is a very evocative sense. Henni talks about the sea air, a drift of smoke from the fire, the smell of fresh bread. What other smells?

Write a description of something where smell plays an important part.

PATHETIC FALLACY

What does pathetic fallacy mean? How does weather affect the feeling of the scene? Find examples of it in Cauldron Bay.

Brainstorm all the different terms we have for different sorts of rain, e.g. gentle shower, drizzle, squall, torrential downpour . . .

Choose one sort of rain and use it as the background to a scene involving a character you have developed. Include the beginning of the rain, the end, what effect it had and how your character felt.

KNARF AND YAM

What sort of a story is Knarf and Yam? Has anyone in your family made up stories for little kids. What were they? When were these stories told?

Make up a little story to entertain a five year old. Have a story telling session by candlelight.

OPTIMIST, PESSIMIST

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Is your mother an optimist? What about your father? Do you become an optimist or a pessimist or are you born like that?

Brainstorm a list of events that could have either a positive or a negative outcome, e.g. looking at a dark cloud or waiting for the news on TV

Write a conversation between an optimist and pessimist doing one of these things together or present at the same event.



ORAL PRESENTATIONS / DRAMA

AN INTERVIEW

On pages 138/139 the discussion concerns some of the natural/herbal remedies that people have traditionally used to cure or treat various ailments.

Design a series of interview questions to elicit information about natural cures and remedies. Use these questions and interview parents, grandparents and neighbours about their knowledge and/or experience of natural remedies. Include people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Tabulate your information in a clear and logical presentation. Use MS Word or MS Excel to create this table.

MORAL DILEMMAS - A DEBATE

Henni agonised over her decision about whether or not she should become involved in the relationship between Tara and Stigg. What would you have done if you were Henni?

Organise a debate around the questions arising from this moral dilemma. The topic for debate is:

'Henni should have minded her own business.'

Other topics for debate include:

'It's better to be an optimist than a pessimist.'

'It's better to be an only child than a member of a larger family.'

CHARACTER SKETCHES

Choose one of the following characters from the novel:

- Henni
- Tibor
- Tara

- Mrs Biddle
- Stigg

Build a character profile of this person referring to information provided throughout the novel. You may include physical attributes, character/personality traits, and an incident/s in the book involving a character about which you particularly enjoyed reading. You may like to include some quotes from the book. If so, remember to use the appropriate punctuation and page references.

Orally present a short prepared character description to the class.

DIALOGUE

What was said in the telephone conversation between Donna and Stigg?

We can only speculate about the conversation, because Elizabeth Honey does not provide detail. With a partner, develop and perform this conversation as a telephone dialogue.

Write your dialogue up in the form of a script

WHEN SHALL WE THREE MEET AGAIN?

In groups of three read, analyse and discuss Act 4 Scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The witches in a darkened cave are brewing their malevolent concoction. (Sue recites this verse in a way that sends shivers down Henni's spine.)

Rehearse your designated parts and present this orally. The focus should be on developing the dramatic elements of voice, gesture and movement to enact the characters being portrayed.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

HIERARCHY

What position are you in your family? First child? Second? What influence do you think this has had on your character?

WORKING AS A GROUP

It's always hard to reach a decision when a group of people are involved. How many ways can you think of, of coming to a decision? Describe a throw down in your family.

Write about an incident when your family's plans went haywire and how it was worked out. These situations often make for great stories.



CHORES

What chores do you have at home? Are your chores linked to pocket money?

Ask your parents and grandparents about chores they had when they were young.

FROSTY FRUITS V MAGNUMS

What happens in your family when the children want something? How is it negotiated?

Write a funny scene about people wanting different things. Get the voices right for the ages involved.

SMOKING

Why does Tara smoke? Henni gets upset. What's wrong with smoking?



STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

WEATHER

The Bureau of Meteorology has an excellent informative website suggesting many activities:
www.bom.gov.au

What instruments do the Biddles use to give their weather reports?

What would the surfies look for in a weather map?

MAPS

We know that the fictional Cauldron Bay is a five-hour drive on a highway, followed by a turn-off and a three-quarter hour drive along a coast. Use a map of your state to locate an actual coastal town that would be comparable to Cauldron Bay in its distance from the capital city.

Research the attributes of your chosen locality. Pay particular attention to its size, population, employment patterns, accommodation and special tourist features. Design a foldout information brochure that includes a map of the town centre, and clearly and attractively provides the tourist and visitor with adequate information to ensure an enjoyable stay. Include a legend and a scale measure.

Elizabeth Honey's map of Cauldron Bay has partial perspective in the drawing and includes some features of special interest to the story—for example, the thunderbox—that would not appear on other types of maps. Collect a number of different maps of the same area and compare them. Note their differences and similarities and relate these to the different purpose and audience for each map.

BLOW HOLE

What is a blowhole? How are blowholes made?

Where do you find blowholes on the Australian coast?

Write an explanation of blowholes.

RIP

What is a rip? What causes it? What do you do if you're caught in a rip?

Prepare a safety poster or brochure for holiday-makers at Cauldron Bay

THE MUTTONBIRD/SHEARWATER

The Latin name for this bird is *Puffinus tenuirostris*.

Man has harnessed the diving ability of the cormorant. How? Where?

Individually or in small groups collect facts about this bird. The first fact is provided for you.

Fact 1:

These birds are easily extracted from their burrows provided you don't mind being scratched, bitten and spewed upon with red, oily liquid.

Collate everyone's facts on a large poster. Ask your school librarian if the poster can be displayed in the library so that the information may be shared.

**SKINKS**

Henni informs us about the 'stacks of nature' at Cauldron Bay and the little skink that survived the chopping block, although its tail dropped off.

Present an informative poster of the skink. Collect information from your school and/or local library and the Internet. Include: its habitat, classification, reproduction and lifecycle, survival traits (camouflage or defence) and food sources. Insert a labelled picture of the skink and a bibliography that details your references.

BOWERBIRDS

Carefully read pp.167-170. We learn some fascinating facts about this bird that is peculiar to Australia and New Guinea. Make up a list of all the facts you can glean from these pages and any others you can find elsewhere about the bowerbird. Add a picture of a bowerbird's bower.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SCHMIDTS?

On p.64/65 we read about Konrad Schmidt and his family. We learn that they were German and that Konrad built their house in Cauldron Bay in 1915. World War One took place between the years 1914 -1918 and we also discover that German people in Australia at this time were viewed with suspicion. Research and collect information about Australian - Germans during this period. How were they treated?

What do you think happened to the Schmidt family? Write a speculative mini-chapter about the Schmidt family post Cauldron Bay. Don't forget to take into account Mrs Biddle's comments on p.206.

LIFE IN 1915

Research other objects the Stella Street mob might have found in the Schmidt's house, e.g. candles, thunder-box, slow combustion stove, the copper or mattock

What were they? How were they used? Who used them?

MORSE CODE

Find a Morse code alphabet. Signal a message to someone else across the class room. Is Morse code still in use?

SURFING

Stigg abandoned the professional surfing circuit. Discuss the changing nature of the sport. Examine issues such as commercialisation, sponsorship, labelled/boutique surfing gear, clothing and equipment. 'Surf' the Internet for information on surfing and surfers, both as a recreation and a profession.

What's 'the circuit'? Who are the current stars? Where are the best waves?

Read surfing magazines, e.g. *Waves*, *Tracks*. Note the surfing jargon. Watch a surfing video, then interview a surfer about the good and bad aspects of the sport.



ART

COVER DESIGN

Click here to see the first two versions of Elizabeth Honey's cover design for *The Ballad of Cauldron Bay*.

Cover images can be downloaded at:

www.allenandunwin.com/teaching/images/cauldronbaycover1.pdf

www.allenandunwin.com/teaching/images/cauldronbaycover2.pdf

Discuss their merits. Was the right design chosen?

Imagine that the publisher of Elizabeth Honey's next Stella Street novel has commissioned you to design the dust jacket.

Be sure to include:

- title and author's name
- an appropriate illustration/s
- a blurb
- ISBN and barcode
- price

P.S. Please ensure that the dust jacket is the appropriate size for the book and that you have been market savvy!

SNAKES AND LADDERS

We discover on page 66 that the German word for Snakes and Ladders is *Leiterspiel*. There are several references throughout the novel to the symbolism of the snakes and the ladders represented in the traditional, childhood board game.

Carefully consider the following quotes from the story:

p.66 'But snakes and ladders is snakes and ladders in any language.'

p.130 'No snakes, no ladders, just going along well together.'

p.142 'Down the snake I go.'

p.153 "'It's a fine day to say hello to the blowhole," I suggested, trying to set up a ladder in this snakes and ladders life.'

How would you explain the meaning of the symbols as intended in these quotes?

Design your own Snakes and Ladders board game substituting the snakes and ladders with your choice of alternative symbols.

WHAT 'WHAT BOOK'?

Design a funny double page spread from an original 'What ...?' book.

For example:

What foul object is that?

What vegetable is that?

What teacher is that?

What wound is that?

HENNI'S LAST VIEW

Draw the vast panoramic view Henni saw from the lookout platform.

TURNER

How did Turner paint the weather?

What other artists have painted skies and weather? What mediums did they use?

Paint a sky with clouds.

TYPEFACES

Discuss the typefaces Henni has chosen for the different parts of the book and the places where she uses handwritten script. Is her typography successful?

WHAT CLASS IS THAT?

Look at the illustration *What person is that?* On pages 6 & 7 and draw a similar illustration of your class, or family or group of friends. The aim is to catch their personality through body language, clothing, relationship to others.

SKETCHBOOK

The smaller illustrations in the book were developed from sketches done at the beach and in the bush. Look at sketchbooks and sketching. It's the collecting of visual information.

The illustrations in the book were drawn with 4B and 6B pencils, and for the fine lines, a Faber-Castell Grip 1347 0.7 propelling pencil, bought from the post office. When converted to line the illustrations darken up nicely.

Take a sketchbook to the gardens, beach or bush and sketch natural forms.



USEFUL REFERENCES

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MEET THE PEOPLE

ELIZABETH HONEY

Elizabeth Honey is the hugely popular, award-winning author of poetry, picture books and junior novels. Her playful humour, originality and irrepressible energy strike a chord with kids everywhere and her stories about the Stella Street mob have been translated into many languages.

JULIE STAFFORD

Julie Stafford was a teacher of ESL, English and History at Braybrook Secondary College in Victoria for eighteen years. She has also taught English to NESB adults at Neighbourhood Houses and currently teaches ESL at a Day Centre for the Older Person. For the past eight years Julie has run a freelance proofreading and editing business.

