

Teachers' Notes by Fran Knight

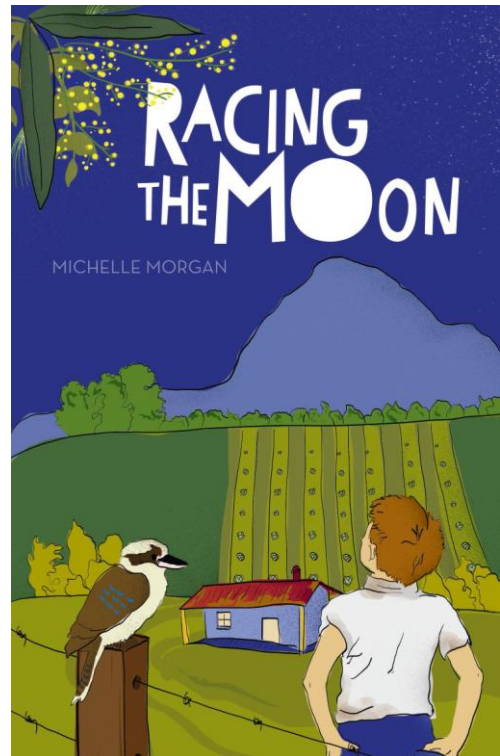
Racing the Moon by Michelle Morgan

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Recommended for ages 12 - 14 years

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INTRODUCTION

In Sydney during the Depression, thirteen year old Joe and his friend, Harry, are able to circumvent the rationing and sell eggs to people in the neighbourhood. But the newcomer, Miss Ruxton, is unhappy: she knows what really happens at Joe's house, seeing all the men come in and out on Saturdays, hearing the radio turned up loudly and the shouts from those listening.

Joe's father is an illegal bookmaker, and Joe follows in his father's footsteps, taking bets on a billy cart race which he has fixed. When the police call to warn the boys, their father takes action—not the belting Joe expects, but sending Joe to the Catholic boarding school across the bay. Joe is stunned. Who will protect his mother from her husband's blows, and stand up to this bully of a man?

This is a coming of age novel rich in historical detail, the reader taken back to Sydney of 1931. The Sydney Harbour Bridge is about to be completed, Phar Lap has won the Melbourne Cup, Bradman has hit a mammoth number of runs and the Depression continues.

Themes of abuse, poverty, survival during the Depression and women's roles within the family appear early, as the reader is absorbed by the antics of the wiley Joe, but knows he is about to fall into a realm where his wits are needed to survive the overtures of a paedophile priest. Seen as a troublemaker when he complains about Brother Felix, the lad is sent to a Catholic reform settlement miles from anywhere, and it is here he works out what he really wants in life.

This is an honest tale of rough times. Readers will encounter brief references to brothels and illegal betting; there is domestic violence at home; Joe comes home one day to find his father in bed with another woman; and the two events that propel the plot forward are Joe 'fixing' a race and Brother Felix making sexual overtures to Joe and other boys. However, these events are touched on in a way appropriate for younger readers. Most importantly, the tale is told in the first-person voice of Joe and it is his resilience and optimism that triumph in the end.

Without sentiment, the details of the situation are given which will make the modern reader start at the conditions in which many children lived. Like so many other historical novels for this age group (the My Place television series, the My Australian Girl series, and the historical novels of Jackie French, for example), the simple differences between Joe's life and ours are both fascinating and surprising to a contemporary reader. Rather like a *Harp in the South* for kids, *Racing the Moon* gives us a Sydney of the 1930s that is recognisable, yet exotically different, and Joe Riley, a complex and sympathetic character, is both a product of his time and yet easy to relate to.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The Australian Curriculum is available online at

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home>

The outlines of the three interrelated strands—Language. Literacy and Literature—can then be accessed for the English curriculum.

Thus in brief: Language is knowing about the English language; Literature is understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature; and Literacy is expanding the repertoire of English usage.

The notes for this book exemplify these three strands, ensuring that the work fits the criteria that these strand suggest. (Please check the website, changes do occur)

The History curriculum focuses on Australia as a Nation, expecting students to gain some understanding of how our democracy developed and how society has changed.

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/History/Curriculum/F-10>

This novel shows a family within the time frame of the Modern World and shows how society existed for many in the years of the Depression, allowing students to discuss how society has changed.

Joe and his siblings, as well as others they meet along the way, reflect a world of the past, one which has changed considerably. From a child's death, to children expected to work, or leave school early to add to the family income, or girls not being educated, to the father using his belt on the children for punishment, or the poor diet, students can absorb information about this time in

Australia's development. Outside the family, too, readers will see the role of boarding schools and reform schools, vastly different from what is expected in those places today, and be able to compare the stories they have read with what is presented on television reports of crimes in the past.

Consequently these notes will be divided into the three strands of the English curriculum, with an emphasis on History within each strand.

BEFORE YOU START

SETTING

Ensure everyone has a map of Sydney Harbour with its suburbs, and find a large map of Sydney to have on the display board.

SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE

This bridge caused huge interest while being built and is seen as an icon in Australia and overseas.

Have pictures of the bridge ready to have around your classroom to set the scene. If possible get some copies of artists' drawings and paintings to add to the display. It was and is a prime subject for artists.

THE DEPRESSION

The Depression that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929 affected Australia, causing millions to lose their work; thousands of men roamed the countryside looking for work, and many families were homeless.

There are references to the Depression in the novel, so go to the Federal Government website to give the class the information they need.

<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/great-depression>

Another source for the Depression is on the ABC site that deals with the historical series, *My Place*. This site has an overview of the Depression, plus information about Australia in 1938

http://www.myplace.edu.au/decades_timeline/1930/decade_landing_7.html?tabRank=2&subTabRank=2

Source some books from your library to have on hand. Perhaps find pictures of housing in the poorer areas of Sydney at the time to have on the walls. Some pictures of what people wore would be good as well as pictures of food and transport to set the scene.

Type *Australia and the great Depression* into Google and scroll down to images, and you will find hundreds of photos taken during the Depression in Australia. These would be great as a backdrop to your study of this book, put on the display board, the electronic whiteboard, or a link given to the class.

There are also Youtube videos of the Depression called 'Susso Kids' which may be shown in class.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjv5d9IPax0>

MONEY

Go to Wikipedia for a look at the Basic Wage in Australia in the 1930's.

Susso was the money given to men during the Depression to help their families.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Susso)

Have a print out of these figures on your display board. Add a table to convert pounds, shillings and pence to dollars and cents.

ABUSE

Teachers today are all mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse. Have the laws surrounding child abuse on your display board.

Have available the phone numbers and help line web sites for victims of abuse (see Themes). Be aware that some people in your class may be victims of abuse and so reading this book may cause some distress.

UNIFORMS

Uniforms at St Barts are very strictly enforced. Can you find some photos of past children in such strict school uniforms to place on your display board?

REFORM SCHOOLS

The Farm is not what Reform Schools are today. Where do young adults go when convicted of a crime in today's Australia?

Perhaps ask a Police Officer to talk to the class about young offenders and their punishment.

WOMEN'S ROLE

Women at this time had few rights. They were allowed to vote, but had no rights in their marriage. Abuse was common. There was no birth control. Married women were expected to stay at home and do household chores, though in reality many working class women had to work to support their families and some, like Joe's mother, did piecework at home which earned a few pence.

READING THE NOVEL

The novel can be used:

- (a) for class reading, with one lesson a week being set aside for the class to read alone or in groups, and then the next few chapters read for homework;
- (b) for reading aloud by the teacher and volunteer students;
- (c) as part of a Literature Circle (See Literature, below).

1 Set aside lesson time for the class to discuss issues raised in the novel, to do some of the worksheets suggested, and then read other novels with a similar theme.

2 The novel can be divided into four compact sections. Following are some overriding focus questions which may be useful for some classes.

Chapters one to seven	Set at home in Glebe	1 Who are the main characters and what is their relationship one to the other, and what do they do? 2 What do we hear of their house and suburb? 3 How do we know it is set during the Depression?
Chapters eight to nineteen	Joe goes to St Bartholemew's Catholic Boy's School	1 Who does Joe befriend in this place? 2 What rules does Joe need to follow in this place? 3 What education does he receive? 4 Can you list the differences between your education and that of Joe in this place?
Chapters twenty to twenty five	Joe is sent to the Farm and must learn to fit in	1 What is the Farm? 2 How does it differ from reform schools today? 3 What chores does Joe have to do? 4 How is discipline kept?
Chapters twenty six to thirty three	Joe learns to fit in and develops some maturity	1 What does Joe realise about his life? 2 What decisions does he make about his life? 3 What part does 'racing the moon' have in his developing maturity?

LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE

The language of religion

Joe is an altar boy at the local Catholic church and is then sent to a Catholic boy's school, and later a Catholic reform school. Many terms may be unknown to some students.

List the words in chapters 1 to 9 which reveal that the family is Catholic	Words such as rosary, altar boy ... add some more	Check whether their meanings are known to the students
At the boarding school are new terms. List these as you read.	Words such as Monsignor, mass, chapel, confession, Our Fathers and Hail Marys, Brother, AMDG and the use of Latin	
At the Farm are further terms which may be unknown to students	habit, crucifix, Our Lady, communion...	

The strong connection between the Catholic church and Australians of Irish descent is also made apparent in this book.

The language of schools

Some language is particular to schools, and found nowhere else or only in similar institutional settings. List the words and their meaning. (See in particular chapters 10-20.)

prefects	dormitory	orientation
communal shower	initiation	detention
food parcel	cane	prospectus
blazer	others ...	

The language of poverty

Many terms used in the book are particular to people living around the time of the Great Depression. Students may be unfamiliar with tripe, boiled cabbage, dunnies or latrines, night buckets, billy carts, kerosene lanterns etc. (They may also be unfamiliar with older rural terms such as cattle stop, 44 gallon drum, milk separator, charcoal pit.)

Individual worksheet

Who was Phar Lap?	Check out the Wikipedia entry (see Themes)	Why did people hold this horse in such high esteem during the Depression?
Who was Don Bradman?	Check out http://www.bradman.com.au/sir-donald-bradman/ or Wikipedia (see Themes)	Why was Don Bradman so idolised during the depression?
What is 'susso'? (p49)	Read the website http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Susso	Where does the word come from? What did being on 'susso' mean for the people who received it?
Bread and dripping (p28)	http://aso.gov.au/titles/DOCUMENTARIES/bread-and-dripping/clip1/	The weblink uses the term 'bread and dripping' as its heading. Watch the short clip and work out why the heading was used. What is 'bread and dripping'?
Charcoal	Used to fire the truck at the Farm	How and why?
Kerosine lantern	Used as lighting on the Farm	How and why? Does someone have one at home to lend to the class?
Others ...		

Idiomatic language

Racing the Moon faithfully records common Australian idioms that may be unfamiliar to some students, but worthwhile learning.

Students should note both familiar and unfamiliar idioms as they read. They may enjoy asking parents and grandparents to explain their meanings and to supply more idioms. One school period could be devoted to the teacher and students peppering their speech with as many idioms as possible!

Here are some idioms to start with:

Page	Idiom	Meaning
p. 2	scarce as hen's teeth	
p. 2	the world is my oyster!	
p. 32	shenanigans	
p. 35	first bite of the cherry	
p. 34	like a stunned mullet	
p. 40	that's a bit rich!	
p. 125	till the cows come home	

(Note the many terms used for the maximum caning punishment at school: a sixer, six cuts, six of the best, the cuts....)

STRUCTURE

The structure of a play or film can be easily analysed. The first part is the setup, where the setting is shown and the characters developed. The second part is the conflict, where a conflict is introduced which will see the main character behave in a particular way, and the third part is the resolution, where all (usually) is resolved, the conflict comes to some ending, the main character (usually) learning or growing up as a result. Narrative can be developed in several ways, in this case it is a linear structure.

Group work

Discuss the narrative structure of the novel. You may like to use the wikipedia site http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_structure for more information.

Divide the chapters into the three sections of a linear structure, outlining what happens in each section and why it fits into that section.

Discuss with your group if there is any other way the story could have been presented. What problems would a different structure create for the author and reader?

CHARACTERISATION

The four main characters are described with precision, each clearly identifiable from their descriptions and behaviours.

Class work: defining the characters

Use the following table to add a series of words and phrases which define that character. (The table is a starter for references to the chapters.)

Character	Chapters	Words/phrases
Joe	1, 3, 4, 5, 7 , (see Joe's chores), 9-20 (St Bart's), 20-35 (The Farm)	
Noni	7 (Work and aspirations, boyfriend)	
Dad	1 (Illegal bookie) 2 (Adultery) 3 (Joe runs away)	
Mum	1 (Family) 2 (Treatment) 9 (Taking Joe to St Bart's)	

Several other characters are described carefully as well. What words are used?

Monsignor Reynolds	10 (Assembly) 16 (Taking Joe back to school) 19 (Dormitory)	
Brother Felix	12 (Caning) 14 (Altar boys) 19 (Dormitory)	
Sister Agnes	21 (Joe meets Sister Agnes) 21-35 (The Farm)	

Individual work

Choose one of these written responses:

- Describe one of the main characters as if you are writing their biography.
- Describe one of the characters as if you are promoting the book to another person.
- Write the report about Joe that went from his primary school teacher to St Bart's.
- Write the police report after their visit to the Riley house in chapter 6.
- Write a letter from Miss Ruxton to her brother telling of the family next door.
- Write a report from Monsignor Reynolds to his superior about his staff.

LITERATURE

THEMES

Discuss the 1930's by talking about the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Depression, Phar Lap, Glebe, illegal bookmaking etc. Each is mentioned in the text and students can research the links further by using the following worksheet. Have a large wall map of Sydney Harbour on the display board.

Group work: Setting

Use the following websites to find out more information about the events and buildings mentioned in the text. Jot down 10 points about each to be able to make a fact file to attach to the map of Sydney Harbour in the classroom.

Sydney Harbour Bridge	http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/sydney-harbour-bridge Read <i>Building the Sydney Harbour Bridge</i> by John Nicholson for information
Phar Lap	http://museumvictoria.com.au/pharlap/ Information from the Museum of Victoria where Phar Lap remains on display
Depression	Type 'Great Depression Australia' into Google and scroll down to look at the series of photos. Choose 4 which you think may represent the Riley family to put on the map. (NB: a number of US photos have crept onto this page. Can students spot them?)
Depression	http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/great-depression
Illegal bookmaking	Film from 1938 showing how illegal bookmaking hurts families. http://aso.gov.au/titles/newsreels/australia-today-customs-office/clip2/

The Sydney Harbour Bridge

Group Work

Aim: to discover how important the Bridge was to the people of Sydney

Grace Cossington Smith http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Cossington_Smith	Dorrit Black (see http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/TLF/1475/
Photographer, Frank Hurley (see http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/66424	Use the Federal Government website http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/sydney-harbour-bridge
http://www.hht.net.au/discover/highlights/insites/bridging_sydney (Bridging Sydney)	Find the book, <i>Building the Sydney Harbour Bridge</i> (John Nicholson, Allen & Unwin, 2000) in your library

Discussion and presentation to the class

Why was the Bridge important to the people of Sydney at this particular time?

How does Joe see the Bridge? (Read again what he says about the bridge in chapters 1 & 5)

What images have you found that can be presented to the class or used to create a display? (Have you found any other picture than the ones I have suggested here? Look in books of Australian Art in your library.)

Glebe

Class work

Look up Glebe on Google on the electronic whiteboard. Use the map on the right hand side to locate the extent of the suburb of Glebe and place it on the class map. Add the suburbs surrounding Glebe. Check out the location of industries nearby.

Look closely at the position of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. What difference would the bridge make to life in Sydney?

Use the Wikipedia information to add some comments about Glebe as a suburb. From your reading of the book, what was the suburb like during the Depression? How different is it now?

Women's roles in the first part of the twentieth century

(NB I found it difficult to find information about this on Google, and academic books on the topic are of university standard, so this worksheet is based solely on the women presented in the book.)

The role of Joe's mother:

How is she treated by Joe's father?	Re-read ch1 to find references to Mrs Riley	
How is she treated by Joe and his siblings	See chapter 1 and 7	
How is she treated by her employer?		

The role of Joe's sister, Noni:

What part does Noni play in the family?	Ch 7	
Why is Joe able to tease her about her boyfriend?	Ch 7	
What work does she do?	Ch 7	

The role of the nun at St Mary's:

One woman in the novel outside his family showing Joe respect and sympathy is Sister Agnes	What is her role at St Mary's?	How does she approach the boys in her care?
Find instances of discussions between the Sister and Joe	How is Joe treated by this woman?	How does Joe respond to her?
How many nuns are apparent in the novel?	Compare the role of these women with those of the Brothers in St Bart's?	List the words used to describe these women

Abuse

Class Work

There are several levels of abuse shown in this book. Discuss these with the class, then they can do the research for themselves.

The first is that dealt out by Joe's father. He belts his children, using his age, strength and fear to intimidate, demean and hit Joe, Noni and Tim.

He abuses his wife, using the same intimidatory techniques. Several times, Joe talks of intervening to stop his father hitting his mother. He is also concerned that when he is sent away to school, his mother will not have him there to defend her.

When Joe is sent to the Catholic Boy's School, he is subject to abuse again. The teachers, the Priests, hit, cane and demean the boys in their care. One Brother watches the boys as they shower, but it is the attempted sexual abuse of Joe that is even more confronting.

All of this abuse – fathers hitting children, men hitting their wives, teachers hitting students and sexual abuse of those in their care – is against the law.

Individual work

Type of abuse	What does the abuser do?	How does the abused person react?
Abuse of Joe and siblings by his father		
Abuse of Joe's mother by her husband		
Abuse of Joe by the teachers		
Attempted abuse of Joe by Brother Felix		

Class work

The different sorts of abuse are outlined on the NAPCAN site at <http://au.reachout.com/Tough-Times/Bullying-Abuse-and-Violence>. Display this on the electronic whiteboard for the class to read and discuss.

- Where do the abuses within this story fit in the NAPCAN outline?

There are organisations which now offer help to those abused. Choose one to find out how to access the organisation and see what they can offer.

- Reach out: <http://au.reachout.com/What-is-child-abuse>
- NAPCAN: <http://napcan.org.au/>
- Kids Helpline: <http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/>

Group Work

Discuss in your group after the book has been read

- What could Joe have done about any of the abuse either within his family or at school?
- When did the child protection laws first come into law?
- How have things changed today in your home, school and church?
- What options are open for abuse victims today?
- What is 'mandatory reporting'? What does it mean to be a mandated reporter? Do you know which occupations are mandated reporters?

Critical Appraisal: Extension activity for individual students

Look closely at the sections in the book that deal with abuse.

Chapter one:	The last two paragraphs show what Joe does within his family	What abuse is hinted at?
Chapter two	Joe's father commits adultery (p. 9) Dad hits Mum (p. 10)	What does this event hint about Joe's father's attitude to his wife and family? Why do you get the idea that this is a regular event in their lives?
Chapter four	Joe breaks his arm and is fearful about his father's reaction	Why would Joe's father be angry that he has broken his arm?
Chapter six	Joe retaliates	Is this plausible?
Chapters eight to nineteen	Joe at boarding school notices Brother Felix	List the times Joe notices attention from Brother Felix
	Punishment at the boarding school would now not happen.	List the punishments meted out to the students at St Bart's. What happens if you misbehave at school today?
	What does the school do in response to Joe's complaint about Brother Felix?	Do you feel that this is the way schools dealt with 'rogue' priests in the past? Why
	What happens today with complaints such as that from Joe?	Justify the inclusion of this topic in a book for middle school students

Summary: Prepare a flyer for younger students at your school outlining the organisations they can approach for help when faced with abuse. These organisations can be within the school, organisations outside the school or helplines etc.

OR Write a chapter for the book where Joe does take action against the school.

OR Invite a speaker (social worker, police officer) to talk to the students and answer their questions

Coming of age

Joe grows and develops through the novel into a young man, sure of himself and ready to take on his future.

In each section we see a different Joe. Re-read the sections pointed out in the following grid and add events which show his growing maturity.

Novel section	Joe	Evidence of growing maturity
Section 1, chapters 1-10	Eldest son with an abusive father	
Section 2, chapters 10-18	Regulated student at St Bart's	
Section 3, chapters 20-27	Inmate at the reform school, The Farm	
Section 4, chapters 28-end	Racing the Moon	

LITERATURE CIRCLE: THE DEPRESSION

A literature Circle occurs when a class is divided into small groups, each group reading one of a group of similar books to the one being studied, and getting the groups to set the rules of the group and assess themselves. It is expected that a class read one book over 6 or so weeks, keep records about what they like about that book and report back to the class at the end of the unit. Ask your teacher librarian for suggestions and help with this as they may be able to suggest other works to include, and do a book talk for your class to select the book each group will read. I usually have 6 or so copies of each of the books ready for the groups to select and allow each group to make the selection of which novel they will read.

Once selected, the groups will have a lesson a week to read in class, and the leader of the group will allocate how much of the book will be read between lessons. At each session, the group will discuss what has been read so far and work out things like plot, story, characters and theme, to be able to present this to the class at the end of the unit. Proformas could look like this:

Group names:		
Novel being read:	Author:	Characters:
When is the novel set?	Where is the novel set?	What is the theme of the story?

Week	Story	Background	Prediction
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Summary of story and its theme	The reasons my group enjoyed the story

Each group then is able to make a presentation at the end to showcase the book they have read in some way.

There are several themes which come to mind when reading *Racing the Moon*. A literature circle could use novels set during the **Depression** (see section 6: Bibliography for Literature Circle). A series of books could be used about **Sydney**, or any **historical novels** or **coming of age novels**. Ask your teacher librarian for help here.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE

1. Why *Racing the Moon*? Do you think this title was the choice of the author or editor? What title might you have suggested and why.
2. Respond to a criticism of the book, that it will only appeal to boys.
3. What response would you make to a school which refuses to have this book in its library?
4. Debate the statement, 'All children should attend single sex schools'.
5. Debate the topic, 'The Sydney Harbour Bridge reflects Australia's coming of age'.
6. Why is 'racing the moon' so important to Joe?
7. What does Joe achieve when he races the moon?
8. Write a letter from Joe to his friend, Teddy, back on the farm following his father's accident, telling of the new place he is sent to. Imagine that you are Joe detailing the difference between St Bart's and the Farm.

LITERACY

CONTEXT

Aim: to look at recently published Australian novels for readers of this age group (12-14 years old) to see if there is a common theme or publishing trend.

Ask your teacher librarian to give a show and tell to your class about some recently published novels. The teacher librarian may like to include a selection of other novels produced by Allan & Unwin for this age group, or several of the Depression novels, or series novels.

Class work

Themes of novels published in the last few years include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dystopian (a bleak future where children must survive) • Fantasy (eg. Harry Potter) • Vampires • Bullying • Adventure (usually in series) • Humour 	On the whiteboard list the novels the class has read which fit these headings
List any other genres the class may think of	Add any other novels to this list
Can the class discover any change in themes over the past five years?	Ask your teacher librarian if they have noticed any change of direction in publishing trends

{In 2013-14, I wrote several articles for **The Literature Base** and **Magpies**. These include, 'Women in war' (a summary of books recently published about girls' role in war); 'Animals in war' (outlining the many roles animals have played in war); 'Sicklit' (a summary of the many books on cancer involving kids)}

It seems to me that Australian literature published for middle school readers recently stresses:

- Australia's participation in war, particularly stressing animals and women and those areas of war not usually dealt with;
- Australia's war effort generally;
- Historical topics;
- Issues, similar to those produced in the 1990's where books about bullying, self harm, loneliness, depression etc were a common theme;
- Humour (this is very difficult to write but there are a few authors producing funny books, eg. Kaz Delaney).

Group work

Use the library to find some recently published novels which reflect the themes listed above. (include picture books)

Title	Author	Brief summary	Theme/Genre
New Guinea Moon	Kate Constable	A young woman goes to stay with her father in New Guinea in 1967	Historical Issue (racism)
Racing the Moon	Michelle Morgan		

Class Discussion

What may be at work to influence the themes of novels produced for children and young adults? (eg. curriculum, politics, world events, television shows, films, publishers, social concerns etc.)

Individual work: Australian history

A number of historical books have been published for this age group, with settings ranging from the Depression, World Wars One and Two, the nineteenth century etc. For younger readers, Penguin has produced a series of books called 'Our Australian Girl' while Scholastic has produced a series called 'My Australian Story'.

See if you can find some in your library. As they are published for a younger age group, it will be easy to read one in a lesson or two.

Read several of them pondering the question of why there are so many being produced now.

- Devise a new series of novels, or one novel, to reflect Australian history at one particular time. You will need to create several new characters from that time and develop their personalities, needs and wants; create a credible background, cemented in historical research of the period; and make up a story line.
- You may like to develop a series of story boards for your novel, or create a synopsis and outline.

Check on some publishers websites to see what they expect from a submission from an author.

Individual work for the more mature reader: Abuse

One issue which has become a major focus for governments and religious groups in the past ten years is child abuse. Several commissions have been held with recommendations which include criminal proceedings; paying compensation to victims; strategies to prevent it happening again; and at the very least, a harsh introspective look at institutions within our society.

Collect any articles seen in the newspaper or on television about this scandal within the churches and other institutions. (There are articles on Wikipedia, but they are so long they give too much information.)

- Where might Michelle Morgan have developed her ideas from in presenting abuse in this novel?

AUTHOR STUDY

Aim: to discover what in the author's background, interests and education may have been instrumental in giving her ideas for writing such a book.

Finding out more information about an author can add to the experience of reading the book.

The author's background, interests, childhood and education can all add context.

Group worksheet

Two sections on Allen and Unwin's website offer some information, and the last address is her Twitter account.	http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=94&book=9781743316351 http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=311&author=1357 https://twitter.com/mjmorganwriter
Some questions to ponder about her background	Is the author Catholic or did she go to a Catholic school? Has she family who lived through the Depression who may have told her stories?
About her education and interests	Did she complete a history degree? Is she interested in photography?

(NB: As there are a number of authors and singers with the same name, finding information on Google can be tedious.)

Group responses

- Produce a biography of the author which will give readers an idea of where she developed her ideas for the book.
- Produce a list of questions that an admiring audience may direct to the author, and write the responses she might give.
- Create a biographical outline for Michelle Morgan to be included in her next book

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR LITERATURE CIRCLE

NOVELS SET DURING THE DEPRESSION

Allen, Peter (2004) *Our Don Bradman*, Scholastic

Victor's family is in the grip of poverty when father loses his job at the height of the Depression. But Victor remains positive as his hero is batting and the Sydney Harbour Bridge is about to be opened with mayhem about to occur. In the My Australian Story series, this is aimed at 9-14 year olds.

Calder, Charlotte (2012) *The Ghost at the Point*, Walker Books

Dorrie lives with her grandfather at the point near Jasper's Cove on the island just a few miles from the mainland. Since the Depression Gah has left his job in the town to fish for a living, and he hopes to save enough money to buy Dorrie some new shoes. The background of this story gives a clear impression of what it must have been like to live without the Social Services we expect now. (10-13)

Cox, David (2012) *The Road to Goonong*, Allen & Unwin

This wonderful, picture book for all ages depicts a family losing their farm during the Depression and having to move to the city while Dad went west in search of work. This is a moving tribute to the many thousands of families who lost their livelihoods in rural Australia (10 to adult)

Disher, Gary (2008) *The Saw Doctor*, National Library Of Australia Press

Jo Boy's family struggles with father out of work, and his saw so dull, but they have not enough money to get it sharpened. A short easy-to-read story with a real family trying to cope during the Depression (9-11)

Farer, Vashti (2012) *Sydney Harbour Bridge; the diaries of Billy Thompson and Alice Carter*, Sydney, New South Wales, 1931-2, Scholastic

One in the My Australian Story series, this tells the tale of the beginnings and construction and the opening of the bRidge. Told through diaries from two protagonist the writing gives a worm's eye view from two perspectives, one from a working class area and the other a middle class area close to the Bridge (9-14)

French, Jackie (2014) *On the Road to Gundagai*, Angus&Robertson

Another in the Matilda series, Blue Lawrence has escaped the prison of her aunt's mansion to join The Magnifico Family Circus, a traveling troupe that brings glamour and laughter to country towns gripped by the Depression. The background of this tale, as with all of French's work is impeccably real, from the itinerant men, the susso, the tents outside the towns, the need for work (9-14)

French, Jackie (2009) *Weevils, War and Wallabies, 1920-1940*, Scholastic

An overview of the major events and achievements in Australia during the time between the two world wars is covered by French in this book in the series, Fair Dinkum Histories. The Depression, Sydney Harbout Bridge and Phar Lap are covered (9 to adult)

Greenwood, Kerry (2004) *The Long Walk*, Hodder

When Mum is diagnosed with TB, Isa, desperate to keep the family together, invents an Aunt Kate who will take them in and sets out to walk from Melbourne to Apollo Bay with her siblings and find her father (9-13)

Hartnett, Sonya (2000) *Thursday's Child*, Penguin

The Flute family, trying to cope after Dad returns from the war, is given a small farm with a shanty to live in by the government. The Depression is about to hit them, the unforgiving landscape makes

life unendingly difficult, but even more so when the boy decides to live under the house. An unusual book that gives more on re-reading, the Depression in the background is close at hand (13+)

Masson, Sophie (2006) *The Phar Lap Mystery*, Scholastic

Another in the series, My Australian Story, has Sal going with her father to investigate the threats made to the life of the famous horse, Phar Lap, at the height of the Depression in Melbourne (9-14)

Newton, Robert (2006) *Runner*, Penguin

Charlie's father has just died and his mother is struggling to cope in Depression Melbourne, trying to keep her son at school. All Charlie wants to do is run for the gangster, Squizzy Taylor, running bets between the illegal bookmakers and his clients (9-14)

Nicholson, John (2000) *The Building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge*, Allen & Unwin

A fascinating non fiction picture book with lots of information suitable for all ages, giving an amazing account of the design, architecture, building and finally the opening of the Bridge during the Depression (9 to adult)

Small, Mary (2010) *Lenny's Ride*, Endeavour Publishing

A young boy wants to go to Sydney for the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Written for younger readers it nevertheless can be an addition to the pool of books about this time in Sydney's history.] (8+)

Svensden, Mark (2003) *Ratface and Snake Eyes*, Lothian

Set during the Depression, this book for younger students has two young boys making money by catching rats and selling them to the local snake dealer (8+)

ABOUT THE WRITERS

MICHELLE MORGAN

Michelle Morgan has worked as a librarian and teacher and has written several plays. She started writing *Racing the Moon* while living on Norfolk Island, and now lives near Bowral in New South Wales. Michelle says:

I was initially inspired to write *Racing the Moon* by stories that my uncle told me many years ago about growing up in Sydney during the Depression. As soon as I started doing research and reading more stories about the period, I was hooked. When I moved to Norfolk Island in 2001, I had the time to develop my ideas and potential characters, and to start writing the book. For me, writing is so much about the characters, and I spent time getting to know and developing the central character, Joe Riley, as well as the other main characters. I read widely and also drew on my own experiences and memories of childhood. Growing up Catholic, I had a rich source of first-hand experience to draw upon.

Although Joe seems like someone I know really well, he can still surprise and shock me. I want the reader to empathise with him, warts and all. The underlying tension is the fear that, because he takes so many risks, something might happen to him. But Joe is fearless – the world is his oyster!

Visit Michelle's website at <http://www.michellejmorgan.com.au/>

FRAN KNIGHT

Fran is a retired teacher librarian who loves adolescent fiction. She speaks at conferences, writes teacher notes and has articles in *The Literature Base*, *Magpies*, *ACCESS* and *Viewpoint* and has reviewed since the 1970's for *Magpies* and *Fiction Focus*.

In 2005, her book, *Ngadjuri: Aboriginal peoples of South Australia's Mid North Region* was published, following 20 years of research. Pledger Consulting has published ten books which reflect Fran's reading, with lists of books in subject headings, the latest being *Literature to support the Australian curriculum, History*.

Fran's contribution to teacher librarianship has been recognised with the South Australian Teacher Librarian of the Year award in 2005, and Honorary Life Membership of SLASA (School Library Association of South Australia) in 2007.