

Unit written by Dr Pam Macintyre & Dr Susan La Marca

## ***Bird and Sugar Boy* by Sofie Laguna**

**YEAR 7**

### **Background**

James Burdell, or Bird, is best mates with Craig 'Sugar Boy' Hill. Together they fish, ride their bikes, race the trains, terrorise their teachers, give their parents a bit of a hard time, and generally enjoy a fantastic, easy friendship. Bird is being raised by his father alone, after his mother 'shot through' when he was very small...Sugar Boy comes from a much more traditional family...Sugar Boy's family moves to Broome, and for Bird, losing Sugar Boy is more than he can comprehend.

Bronwyn Owen Teachers' Notes.

Laguna expertly captures Bird's obsessive nature and his naive view of the world. She also explores the power and importance of friends from the child's perspective.

### **Objectives**

In line with the requirements of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards for English, this unit asks students to consider this text in relation to another text format, and reflect critically on the novel and one of its themes. Visual texts are a particular focus in this unit. The relevant sections of the VELS English Domain are:

*Students compose, comprehend and respond to an expanding range of texts in print and audiovisual and electronic forms that contain increasingly unfamiliar concepts, themes, information and issues. With guidance, they reflect on reading, viewing, writing, speaking and listening in ways that develop considered and critical approaches to a range of texts*

*...Students explore the relationship between the purpose and audience of texts and their structures and features, for example...figurative language and organising structures in print texts; features of visual texts...They develop their knowledge of how texts are constructed for particular purposes, and examine and challenge generalisations and simplistic portrayals of people and social and cultural issues.*

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2005) *VELS English Domain Level 4* (p12).

**sofie laguna**

## Focus: Loss / Separation

To explore the topics of loss, separation and life journeys beyond, and relating to, the text *Bird and Sugar Boy*, students can compare this text with a number of excellent picture books.

Allow the students to read and discuss any of the following:

Gleeson, Libby *Amy and Louis* illustrated by Freya Blackwood

Tan, Shaun *The Lost Thing*

Tan, Shaun *The Arrival*

- Consider how the text, illustrations and design evoke feeling and mood.
- Compare and contrast the events in each of the picture books with the plot of *Bird and Sugar Boy*.
- Can you see similarities between the characters in each of the texts?
- What types of images or ideas are used as metaphors for loss or separation in each of the texts?

## Assessment

Using an illustration from one of the picture book texts as inspiration, respond to Laguna's realistic descriptions of loss and separation (p73, 87, 107). Respond in a medium of your choice.

## Further Reading

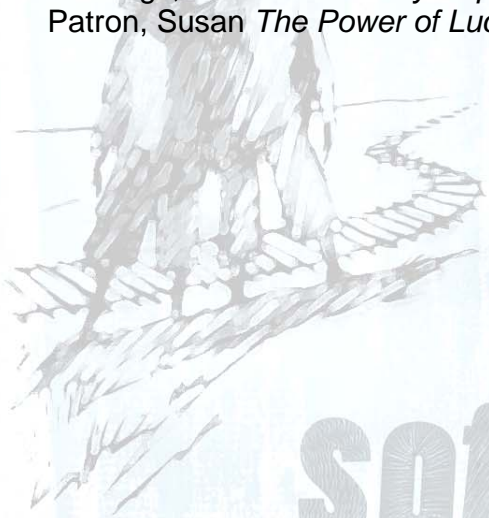
Bateson, Catherine *Rain Man and Captain Daniel*

Gleeson, Libby *I am Susannah*

Gleitzman, Morris *Bumface*

Jennings, Paul *How Hedley Hopkins did a dare....*

Patron, Susan *The Power of Lucky*



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