

Teacher Notes
Calypso Summer
written by Jared Thomas

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OVERVIEW

Calypso Summer is a story told by Calypso, a young Nukunu man, fresh out of high school in Rastafarian guise. After failing to secure employment in sports retail, his dream occupation, Calypso finds work at the Henley Beach Health Food shop where his boss pressures him to gather Aboriginal plants for natural remedies. Growing up in urban Adelaide and with little understanding of his mother's traditional background, Calypso endeavours to find the appropriate native plants. This leads him to his Nukunu family in Port Augusta and the discovery of a world steeped in cultural knowledge. The support of a sassy, smart, young Ngadjuri girl, with a passion for cricket rivalling his own, helps Calypso to reconsider his Rastafarian façade and understand how to take charge of his future.

- Winner of the 2013 black&write! kuril dhagun Indigenous Writing Fellowship
- Tackles real-life problems faced by young men and women who are trying to find their place in the world
- Models positive, loving and caring relations between young men and women
- Strong young female/male role models
- Demonstrates practical support mechanisms available to young people, through family networks and peer groups
- Well-suited to the Australian Curriculum for secondary students

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Dr Jared Thomas is a Nukunu person of the Southern Flinders Ranges and an Arts Development Officer at Arts, South Australia. Jared's play *Flash Red Ford* toured Uganda and Kenya in 1999 and his play *Love, Land and Money* featured during the 2002 Adelaide Fringe Festival. Jared's young adult novel, *Sweet Guy*, was shortlisted for the 2009 South Australian People's Choice Awards for Literature and his children's book, *Dallas Davis, the Scientist and the City Kids* is published by the Oxford University Press Yarning Strong series. Jared's writing explores the power of belonging and culture. He lives in Adelaide with his partner and two daughters.

THEMES

Identity:

- Calypso identifies himself as a Rastafarian, however as the narrative progresses, he feels a much stronger connection to his Nukunu heritage.
- Calypso learns much about himself as he reconnects with his mob; this allows his true sense of identity to develop.

Relationships:

- Calypso embarks on a number of new relationships including those with his relatives and Clare.

- He is unsure how to handle his changing relationship with his cousin Run until it is almost too late.

Aboriginal Histories and Cultures:

- Aspects of Indigenous culture such as the importance of country, kin, community, traditions and lore feature in the text.
- Calypso is Nukunu.
- Calypso embarks on a journey to discover the secrets of traditional Aboriginal bush medicines.

Respect:

- Calypso learns to respect his country, his mob and himself. In so doing, he looks forward to a bright future.

WRITING STYLE

Calypso Summer is a Young Adult novel written in first person, past tense. It deals with the complex nature of relationships and the importance of a sense of identity. It has strong male and female characters, therefore appealing to a broad adolescent audience. It is suitable for 15+. It includes drug references (marijuana), although this comes with adverse consequences.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

These notes have been written in context with the Australian Curriculum. The appendix highlights a selection of relevant cross-curriculum priorities, general capabilities and content descriptors across a range of year levels that the following activities address.

CULTURAL NOTES

An effective way to include Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander information is to regionalise it within your curriculum. Educating your students about their own local history, bringing to life the Indigenous past of your region and using local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (wherever possible) within the school and classroom context is a wonderful way to start.

The following websites provide information to help embed Indigenous perspectives relevant to this text into the curriculum:

- Once logged into Scootle (<http://www.scootle.edu.au>) access the *Embedding Indigenous Perspectives Across the Curriculum* website <http://embeddingindigenousperspectives.edu.au/default.asp>
- Splash ABC website - Indigenous Perspective on Sustainability <http://splash.abc.net.au/media/-/m/525907/indigenous-perspective-on-sustainability>
- Australian Curriculum – Cross Curriculum Priorities – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/CrossCurriculumPriorities/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-histories-and-cultures>

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- Calypso's boss, Gary, is interested in marketing Aboriginal bush medicines. This brings about issues that Calypso isn't expecting. Why is it not as simple as asking relatives about these medicines? Discuss.
- Before he knows they're related, Calypso is unsure about getting into Uncle Al's car when he first arrives in Port Germein. Discuss Calypso's thought: 'Just

'cause we're both black doesn't mean we should trust each other does it?' (p56) Do you agree with Calypso? Why? Does your opinion change after reading the novel? Explain.

- What does Calypso learn on his trips to Aunty Janet's?
- What does Uncle Ray mean when he says, 'you're here but you don't understand what being here means yet'? (p75)
- What do Calypso's uncles and cousins teach him? Use examples from the text to elaborate.
- Why hasn't Calypso's mum been home to visit her family for such a long time? What is holding her back?
- Why does Calypso burn the money given to him by Run?
- Re-read the passage starting on p91 in which Bruce talks about the difficulties of working in Aboriginal health. What does he mean when he says, 'if you don't make things better for yourself, you're letting the fellas that did all the bad stuff get at you'? How can Bruce's point be applied to one's own life?
- Write a reflection that responds to the following extract from *Calypso Summer*:
'The earth, the moon and the stars are round and time goes round in a circle. Our past, present and future are all connected to each other. What we did yesterday affects today, and what we do today affects tomorrow.' (p98)
- Bruce explains to Calypso, 'that's the amazing thing about our mob. They didn't need to cut things down or have electricity. They just learnt to live with the land in a way that made them comfortable.' (p98) Discuss this in context with the notions of sustainable living and respect for country. The following website provides information about the Indigenous perspective on sustainability:
 - <http://splash.abc.net.au/media/-/m/525907/indigenous-perspective-on-sustainability>
- After reading Chapter 13, describe what 'the Dreaming' is and how this concept is closely connected to the Aboriginal way of living.
- How has the granting of native title led to problems with exploitation and a new way of 'taking away'?
- Why do you think Calypso hasn't asked Run to move out earlier? What is holding him back from being more influential in Run's life?
- Why does Vic trick Calypso by giving him itchy pods? What point is he trying to make?
- In what way does Clare help Calypso to find his true identity?
- After reading *Calypso Summer*, discuss the way in which government decisions have impacted on Indigenous ways of life. Include the effects of cattle and sheep grazing on native lands.
- Research Aboriginal bush medicines. Use the following websites as a starting point as well as books from the library:
 - <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/features/2011/02/to-p-10-aboriginal-bush-medicines/>
 - <http://www.aboriginalartonline.com/culture/medicine.php>
 - <http://www.anbg.gov.au/gardens/education/programs/pdfs/aboriginal-bush-medicines.pdf>
- Invite a local Indigenous guest speaker to talk about local plants and bush medicines.
- Calypso often speaks about the negative aspects of smoking *ganga*. Research the side-effects of marijuana. Create an informational brochure that outlines the risks involved with this drug.
- Create a visual character profile of Calypso. Include images, song lyrics and words or phrases that best capture his personality.

- Select a scene from *Calypso Summers* on which to re-create a dramatised version. Write a play-script suitable to convey the essence of this scene. Give thought to costuming and props.
- Calypso loves Bob Marley. Research Bob Marley's life and compare with Calypso's. Why is he so influenced by the reggae lifestyle? How does living as a Rastafarian empower Calypso? Discuss whether this disempowers him in any way. What, in the end, allows Calypso to let go of the Rastafarian way of life?
- What is Calypso really letting go of when he decides to cut off his dreadlocks?

Appendix – Links to the Australian Curriculum

Year Level	English- Language	English - Literature	English - Literacy	Geography
Year 10	Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people (ACELA1564)	Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1639) Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812)	Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts , through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749) Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences (ACELY1752)	The environmental worldviews of people and their implications for environmental management (ACHGK071) The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia (ACHGK072)