



Teacher Notes

Rift Breaker

written by **Tristan Savage**

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OVERVIEW

After conducting welding repairs on the outer hull of a space vessel, token human and lowly engineer Milton Lance returns to a silent, gloomy interior. The crew is dead, and the only survivor he can find is an annoying, pointy-eared simian. When a mysterious gun-toting woman rescues the stranded pair, an unlikely trio is formed. But escaping the ship is the easy part, for Milton discovers he is not an ordinary human at all, but a saviour of worlds. *Rift Breaker* is a sci-fi action adventure driven by distinctive characters, and explores themes of alienation, identity and independence.

- Endorsed by writer John Birmingham
- Winner of the 2013 black&write! kuril dhagun Indigenous Writing Fellowship
- Driven by strong characters
- Explores themes of alienation, identity, and independence
- Tristan is a recognised performer and will present confidently at writers' festivals and schools

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Tristan Savage is a young man born in Maryborough and grew up in Townsville. He attended James Cook University and was awarded a Bachelor of Creative Arts, majoring in Theatre and a Bachelor of Theatre (Honours). Since graduating in 2010, Tristan has gone from strength to strength. In 2011 he won first place at a national stand-up comedy competition at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival; in 2012 he toured his one-person theatrical comedy show *Australian Ghost* to audiences across the country. Outside of writing and performing comedy, Tristan likes reading, watching movies, riding his scooter, playing Tetris and jogging to keep fighting fit.

THEMES

Alienation

- Milton and Tazman become stranded when their crew mates are killed.
- When Tazman leaves the *Safe Haven*, Milton is left to fend for himself.

- Milton is an orphan, while Luylla lost her parents in an assassination plot. Milton seeks acceptance, while Luylla is looking for answers. Tazman at first does not fully understand the impact this has.
- Milton, Tazman and Luylla become alienated when they are targeted as criminals by the *Tranquillian Composite*.

Identity

- Milton is one of the few Humans in *Rift Breaker*. He has been reared by non-humans. Being an orphan, he is unsure of where he fits.
- Milton gains a new sense of identity when he discovers he is a rift breaker.

Independence

- Milton shows independence when problem solving in various situations.
- Luylla is fiercely independent, not engaging in friendship easily.

Friendship

- The friendship that develops between Milton, Tazman and Luylla is based on mutual needs, and eventually, respect.
- Tazman sacrifices much to help Luylla and Milton in times of need.

Courage

- Milton must show much courage to help overcome the forces of evil.
- Tazman and Luylla both show courage when saving Milton.
- Raegar shows courage when defending the *Tranquillian Composite* from attack.

WRITING STYLE

Rift Breaker is a science-fiction adventure for young adults. It is told in third person, past tense. Vocabulary specific to the world in which the text is set is included, with a glossary incorporated at the end of the novel. The text is extremely descriptive, using a tone and mood that is mature and extremely detailed. *Rift Breaker* shows a depth of relationships and characterisation. It is fast-paced with many action scenes.

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.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- *Rift Breaker* begins with an action scene of the *Reconotyre* being taken over. Discuss the author's choice to begin the text with this scene. Why is action an effective way to launch a story?
- After reading the first few chapters, take time to reflect on the main characters. What do we know so far about Milton and Tazman? What can we infer about them?
- Re-read the description of the simian, Tazman, on p6. Sketch him as per the description. Compare your sketch with that of Tazman on the dust jacket.
- Speculate about characters, plot lines and events as you read *Rift Breaker*. When *Inhabitan* is nearing *Orisurrection* for example, did you

predict that they would find it in such disarray? Discuss the importance of speculating when reading.

- The author uses figurative language throughout *Rift Breaker*. Keep track of these devices, discussing the way in which they add to the text. Examples include:
 - He felt like his lungs were being vacuumed p17
 - The pod's engines hissed to life p29
 - The shadows of shrivelled bodies floated like ghosts p40
 - Swollen veins of anger grew down each of his arms p44
 - Self-consciousness leaked in p129
 - The leafless branches of the mud trees reached out and hooked their claws together p132
 - Insects chattered from unseen hiding places p132
- Compare Raegar with Leroy. How are their characters and approaches to leadership different?
- Imagine that you are with Milton, Tazman or Luylla, having just been wrongfully accused of being linked to the criminal organisation, *Tyde*. Write a reflection about this accusation. How are you feeling? What strategies are you going to use to try to clear your name?
- Milton is very quick to trust Reelai. Did you have any suspicions about Reelai at this stage of the story? Discuss.
- Why does Milton feel responsible for the deaths of the crew of *Reconotyre* and the people of *Orisurrection*?
- Reelai asks Milton to think about a place close to his heart. Where would you choose if this was asked of you? Write a reflection to share your response.
- What are Luylla's strengths and weaknesses?
- Tazman has a certain approach to life. He tends to make things up as he goes along and believes that, 'there's always another way if you bother to look.' Find examples from the text that support these mantras of Tazman's. Do you agree with his way of thinking? Explain.
- Tazman apologises for making jokes about Milton's and Luylla's dead parents. Hold a class discussion about the role that parents play in one's life?
- Discuss the role that power plays in the decisions that Leroy makes. How does power enable the strong but disable the weak?
- Keep a glossary of your own as you read *Rift Breaker*, including the various species, measurements of time and distance etc that are used in the text.
- How has the specific vocabulary of *Rift Breaker* contributed to the text?
- Create a review for *Rift Breaker*. This could be in the form of a vodcast, TV presentation, print or multi-modal review.
- Analyse the literary devices used by the author in *Rift Breaker*. How have these contributed to the text?
- What are the key generic features of Science Fiction evident in *Rift Breaker*? How is this genre unique?

- In small groups, plan your own Science Fiction story. Create a story graph to track the plot. Devise three-dimensional characters. Choose a small chapter each to write.
- How is Milton a reluctant hero?
- Using a blogging tool such as Edmodo, keep a class blog as you read *Rift Breaker*. What do you think will happen next? What are your thoughts about the characters? What are your opinions of the text?
- Create a Book Trailer suitable to promote *Rift Breaker*. Select or create your own suitable musical soundtrack and choose appropriate images to promote the text.

Appendix – Links to the Australian Curriculum

Year Level	English – Language	English - Literature	English - Literacy
7	Understand how language is used to evaluate texts and how evaluations about a text can be substantiated by reference to the text and other sources (ACELA1782)	Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620) Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621) Recognise and analyse the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches (ACELT1622)	Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to confidently create , edit and publish written and multimodal texts (ACELY1728)
9	Identify how vocabulary choices contribute to specificity, abstraction and stylistic effectiveness (ACELA1561)	Reflect on, discuss and explore notions of literary value and how and why such notions vary according to context (ACELT1634) Analyse texts from familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and discuss and evaluate their content and the appeal of an individual author's literary style (ACELT1636)	Explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (ACELY1745)