

Synopsis

Taha's mum becomes a proud Australian citizen. She decides to celebrate by taking a trip around Australia with Taha – in school time! The trip requires careful planning and a new campervan. There are special people to farewell – Taha's teacher, Mrs Zimmerman; his best friend, Joel; and his neighbour, Mr Wilson. Taha and his mum travel through Victoria to the regional city of Mildura. The trip is both exciting and informative. Taha records his travels with photographs, journal entries, letters and emails.

Before Reading

Discuss the following:

- Australian citizenship – Have any students or their family members attended a citizenship ceremony? Why are these ceremonies held? What happens?
- Campervans – What is a campervan? Have any students had a holiday in a campervan? What are the advantages/disadvantages of holidaying in this way?
- Touring Australia – What kinds of places attract tourists? Why? Is Australia an interesting place to tour? Which places in Australia would the students like to visit? Why?
- Indigenous Australians – Do students know about the indigenous Australians or traditional owners of the land in their local area or in the Mildura area? (More information can be obtained from the Australian Indigenous Council. It is important to acknowledge the role of indigenous Australians and explore Australia's indigenous history prior to European settlement.)

Build up a collection of resources such as books, travel magazines, maps, street directories and websites.

Language Features and Activities

First person narrative:

- The author engages the reader by using a character, Taha, to tell the story. This makes the narrative very personal. Read the opening paragraph where Taha addresses the reader (p6) and a later section where Taha asks the reader a question (p101). Students can write a paragraph about something they have done using this format, for example: 'Hi, I'm Jason, and I'm going to tell you all about my holiday in Melbourne.'

Journals:

- Taha uses his journal to keep photographs and record written information about his trip. Ask the students if they think there are any differences between journals and diaries. Students can keep a journal over a week or weekend and share their entries with the class.

Emails and letters:

- Talk about both formats in terms of language, forms of address, use of images, intended reader and writing/reading equipment required. Explore similarities and differences between the formats. Students can write an email to their best friend and then repeat the activity in letter form. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these forms of communication.

Factual writing:

- Most of the factual information in the text is presented using the device of the Oracle Pod. However, there are some occasions when Mum and Taha give information to the reader. Students can use Blackline Master 3 to investigate and research topics referred to in the text.

Interviews:

- Read Taha's interview with Ben Walker (pp113-115). Students can plan an interview with a teacher or family member about where they live. They can practise their interview questions with a friend first. Invite students to share the information they receive from their interviewees with the class.

Language Features and Activities

Recounts:

- Students can write a recount of Taha's dream sequence (pp94-101).

Vocabulary:

- The text offers many opportunities for working with words. Show the students an example of a simile ('faster than a hopping kangaroo' – p32). Search the text for more examples and make a class list.
- Use a dictionary to find meanings for words and phrases such as outback, moussaka, baklava, oracle, commercial, oasis, dusk, belched.
- Ask students to find descriptive words and phrases such as 'hit the road' (p46) and 'dawn chorus' (p72).
- Explore the list of Australian slang (p122).

Characters

Taha is a very confident and independent child. Ask students to find examples of this in the text; for example, when Taha discusses the journal he will keep for the trip (p10) and feels that he'll soon know more than his teacher (p39).

Mum's character is developed slowly, however she is obviously a caring person who loves her son. Ask students to find references to her advising and guiding Taha during this trip.

Discuss the relationship between Mr Wilson and Taha. Ask students if they think Mr Wilson is really going to miss Taha. Role-play the conversation between Taha and Mr Wilson when Taha announces that he and Mum are going on a trip.

Research Topics

- Australian citizenship
- Greece (and the island of Lemnos)
- maps
- Mildura
- the Murray River
- native animals
- indigenous Australians

Useful References

- www.citizenship.gov.au
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mildura,_Victoria
- <http://www.murrayriver.com.au/education/>
- <http://www.visitmildura.com.au/history.html>
- Tourism agencies
- Local councils, libraries, historical societies
- State automobile clubs (RACV/NRMA) – maps and trip planners



Name: _____ Date: _____

Draw a map of Taha's trip. Add pictures, captions or labels.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Write a review about this book.

Title:

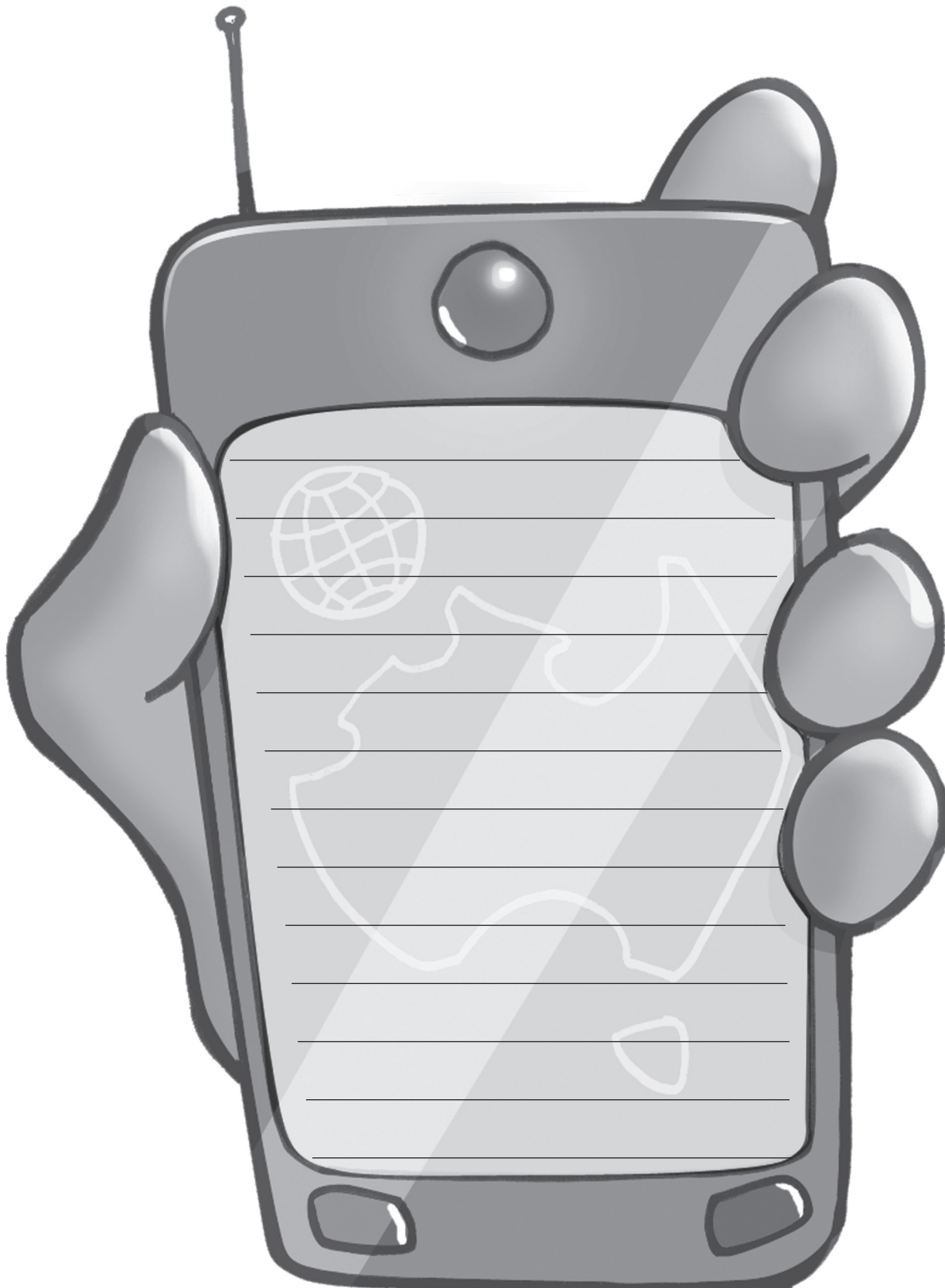
Author:

What happens:

My opinion of this book:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Choose a topic or idea from *Our Australia Mildura*. Use the Internet, books or other resources to research this topic. Record the information you find on the Oracle Pod below.



BLM 4 Taha's Mildura Adventure

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the purpose of the oath on page 5? What does it mean?

2. Why did Taha's mum plan to travel around Australia?

3. How do you think Mr Wilson felt when Taha told him about the trip?

4. Which events did Mr Wilson say would always remind him of Taha?

5. What would you put on a list of things to take away on a travelling holiday?

6. Make a list of words to describe the changes in the landscape as Taha travelled to Mildura.

7. Why did Mum take a photograph of the Murray River?

8. Why would the waiter in Mildura know about the history of the hotel?

9. How did Taha know about the Murray cod?

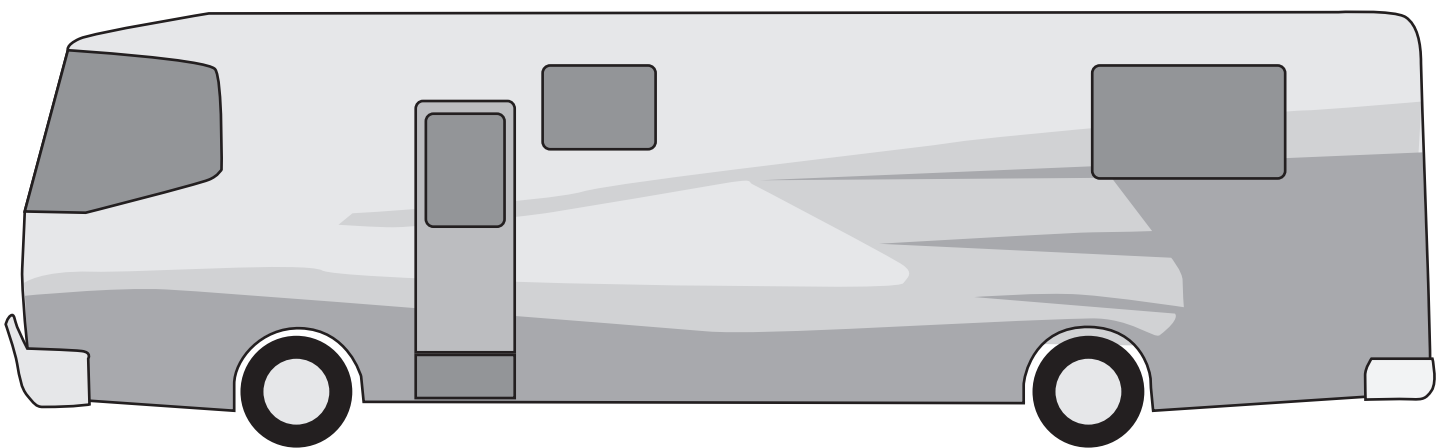
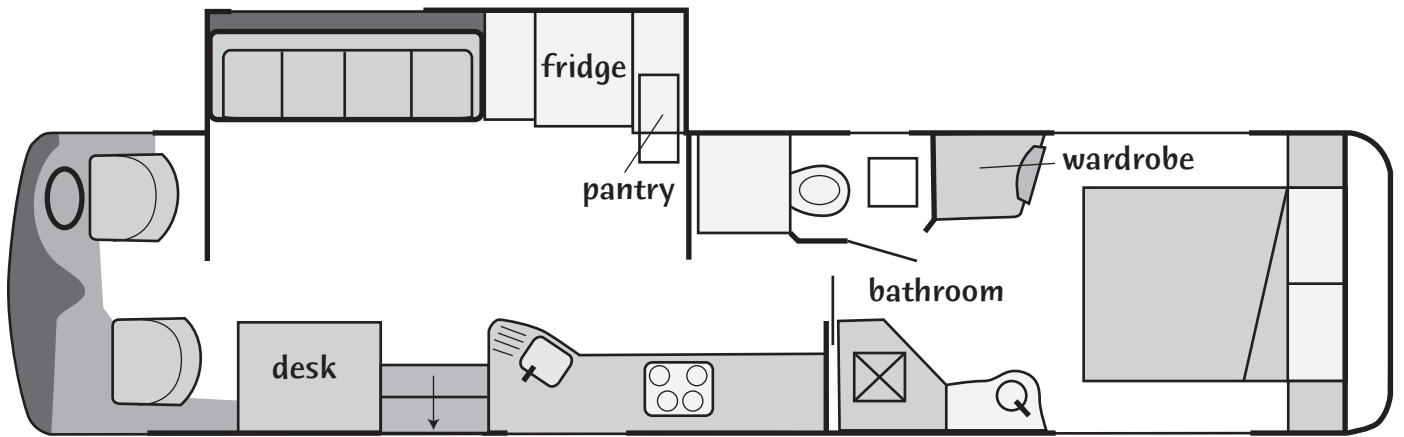
BLM 5

Design a Campervan

Name: _____ Date: _____

This is a plan of the inside of a campervan. Use the words in the box below to label each part of the van.

sink	door	stove	bed
seats	shower	kitchen	driver's seat



Use a ruler, a pencil and the back of this sheet to draw a plan of your own campervan.