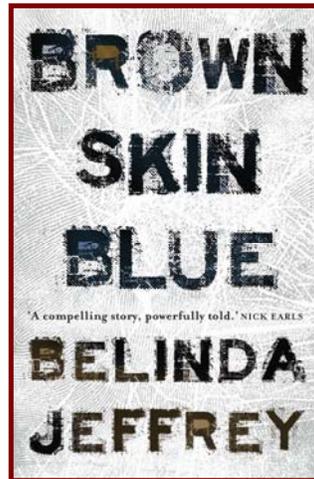


UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

BROWN SKIN BLUE

Belinda Jeffrey



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising senior secondary teacher

ISBN: 978 07022 3713 3 / AU\$19.95

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Synopsis	2
Themes	2
Paedophilia	2
Family	2
Teenage Identities	2
Study Notes	3
About the Author	4

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

SYNOPSIS

Brown Skin Blue explores some very challenging, taboo topics that permeate society. The protagonist, 'Barramundy', is a not-so-typical teenager searching for his identity. He has brown skin and blue eyes. He has a father he has never met, an alcoholic mother with white skin who often put food on the table with prostitution and a gaping hole inside him caused by a childhood trauma, which he desperately desires to fill.

The first-person narrative follows Barramundy in the search for his unidentified father, the search for himself and his search for belonging. Fortunately, he finds a makeshift family through his job at 'Top End Croc Jumping Cruises' where he strikes up friendships with fellow workers. This is the foundation he needs to grow into a man, addressing the issues that have plagued his life since he was young.

THEMES**Paedophilia:**

- The story follows the personal healing process of Barramundy, a young victim of paedophilia.
- The government's role in providing services for victims is subtly included.
- Consequences for perpetrators of this crime are discussed implicitly.
- Societal values and beliefs regarding paedophilia are explored.

Family:

- The implications for children growing up in a broken, dysfunctional home are poignant throughout the novel.
- The desire/need to understand parents' motivations and identities is a strong motivation of the main character.
- The positives within a dysfunctional home are highlighted to help lessen prejudice towards sections of society.
- Barramundy's relationship with his mother is an interesting look at love in its different forms. Stereotypes are challenged.
- The human desire to belong is explored through Barramundy's search for answers.

Teenage Identities:

- Barramundy's drive to find himself is the foundation of the story.
- Teenage sexuality is a strong part of Barramundy's healing and growing process.
- Barramundy has to learn how to be a man without a parental role model, even though he finds a role model in his friend Boof.

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

STUDY NOTES

- Read the first chapter of the novel and describe how you felt when Barramundy explained what happened with McNabm Blue. Is this generally a taboo topic? Do you feel comfortable?
- Research 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'. Does the internal dialogue of Barramundy match the symptoms? What sort of support does a young person need to work through these issues? As you read through the novel, think about how Barramundy's life may have been different if there were adequate support systems for him to access.
- Paedophilia incites many intense emotions in society. How do you feel about this topic? What do you believe should be the consequences of this behaviour?
- Before reaching 'Top End Croc Jumping Cruises', Barramundy meandered the Northern Territory. Do you think this is simply a teenager's search for identity or a response to his traumatic childhood event?
- Barramundy's feelings about crocodiles are very deep. Explain why this is so. Does it stem from issues of identity and belonging?
- Barramundy's relationship with his mother, Dolly, is very interesting. Give an overview of this relationship, outlining any poignant moments. You may wish to assemble a time-line with the information Barramundy gives throughout the story.
- Dolly Mundy's lifestyle habits and parenting style are not viewed favourably by many in society. Are these judgements totally appropriate, considering she managed to raise a son with a very strong set of morals and ethics?
- In the search for his father, Barramundy creates his own stories for each potential parent. Why does he do this?
- "Boof and Cassie were the major reason Barramundy stayed in the one place." Do you agree with this statement? Explain.
- Sally initially chose to stay with Bob when she found out about her pregnancy. What motivated her to do this? Was this the best decision?
- Sally leaves to forge her own destiny after Barramundy gives her Dolly's car and van. As Sally, write a letter to Barramundy explaining how you are feeling.
- Each of Barry's stories about his fathers address a particular event in Australia's history. Do historical events shape cultural identity? Think about how any recent events may impact on the Australian cultural identity.
- What were the major turning points for Barramundy's growth and healing in the story?
- Why do you think the author involved the crocodiles in Barramundy's final step in the quest for personal understanding? Explain the irony in this traumatic event.

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

- The author chose to write this book in first person narrative. Would/could the reader have the same understanding of Barramundy if the novel were written in the third person?
- “Aboriginal Australia is only a shadow in the background of *Brown Skin Blue*”. Address this statement.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Belinda Jeffrey lives in Brisbane with her husband and two boys. Her short story, *The Hallelujah Roof*, was published in *One Book, Many Brisbanes*. Belinda wrote *Brown Skin Blue* after she went on a croc jumping tour in the Northern Territory.