# A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove

## Pre-reading questions

*Try to answer the following questions thoughtfully and in as much detail as possible.*

*Write in full sentences, using accurate spelling and punctuation.*

1. What do you regard as parents’ responsibilities towards their children?

What are all the things they should provide, both in terms of economic support and emotional support?

What are the personal qualities you think the ideal parent should possess?

What should a good parent never do?

 (100 + words)

1. What do you regard as your responsibilities towards your family?

What are the personal qualities you think the ideal teenager should possess?

What should a good teenager never do?

 (100 + words)

1. If your parents were not there to support you, what would happen to your family?

Who might look after you?

What might your role be in helping your family to cope with the situation?

Which family member do you think would take the key role in this scenario?

 (100 + words)

1. Do you think it is fair for children to be judged by what their parents or siblings

(brothers or sisters) have done?

Has this ever happened to you?

Describe one of these situations and how you felt about it?

If it has not ever happened to you, think about and describe a situation where this could occur and how the person would feel and react.

 (150 + words)

 *Criteria for Assessment:*

* *Questions answered thoughtfully and in detail*
* *Answers are written in full sentences with accurate spelling and punctuation.*

 *Unit developed by Alison Robertson*

## Introductory Questions

1. In what ways does a family represent a team, and a team represent a family?
2. How important are traditions in culture? In our community? In our society?
3. What is the value of routine in our lives? What are its drawbacks?
4. How doe tradition and routine relate to stability?
5. How do the things we buy help alleviate the routine of our lives?
6. What constraints are imposed on us by society?
7. In what forms can *“escape”* take? From what do we seek escape?
8. What value do we place on travel? Why do we enjoy returning from a trip?
9. How is prejudice propagated?
10. How does lack of knowledge promote prejudice?
11. What misconceptions occur through judging by appearances alone?
12. To what extent do you believe parents contribute to bias in their children?

## Response Journal Questions

*Write responses to the following questions as you read the novel.*

#### Prelude

Having read this first chapter explain what you think the novel might be about. Why do you think this?

#### Kerry

What are your reactions to the different family members you have been introduced to and why?

Do you have any sympathy for Kerry?

Why or why not?

#### Sarah, Aunt Beryl, Wattle Beach

What are your predictions of what the novel will be about and what may happen next on the basis of these three chapters?

Explain why.

#### Harley

What is your response to Harley’s stealing?

Do you think what he did was all right?

What do you think about the way Beryl reacted?

Could Carl’s response be better in the long run?

#### The Cafe, Merry Christmas

Comment on the ways the boys and girls relate to each other in town.

Who is responsible for Maddie’s drunkenness?

Should Nathan share the responsibility or is it all her fault?

Should friends look out for each other in these situations?

Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation?

Describe it.

#### Birds of Prey

What is your opinion of Bruce and his actions and beliefs?

Why do you think this chapter is called ‘Birds of Prey’?

#### Holiday’s End, Birthday

What are your opinions about the way Beryl treats the boys?

Do you sympathise with her or not?

Write a paragraph as if you were her, explaining her side of the story.

Response Journal Questions Part 2

#### Joy, Wiseman’s Cove, Skip Duncan

What are your reactions to Joy and Skip?

Can you understand why Skip is still so angry?

Write the conversation Joy might have had with Skip, convincing him to employ Carl.

#### The Barge, A Pump and a Long Black Hose, The Curse of the Matts

Describe Carl’s qualities, as evidenced by these three chapters.

What aspects of his character do you admire and why?

#### A Piece of Cake, Dreams of Escape, Chains

What are your reactions to Aunt Beryl’s treatment of Harley?

What does Harley really need?

What would you do to stop Harley getting in trouble again?

#### Good Friday, Justine, In the Kitchen, Rest Day

Comment on the ways different families are shown in these chapters.

What points does Justine make which gets Carl to consider his own family life?

What might the description of the osprey and the garden Carl build with his mother, symbolise?

#### Near Pelican Reach, Turn of the Tide, Harley Redeemed, Win Win

Consider and discuss the skills Carl uses to get Skip Duncan and Aunt Beryl to do what he wants in these chapters.

What leads to his success?

#### The Pizza Queen of Wattle Beach, The Last Wedge, Flashes

Maddie’s Farewell Party is very important to Carl and also full of action.

Describe a memorable party you have been to.

What made it memorable?

## The Matt Family Tree

## Read and Do

### Speaking and Listening:

#### Activity 1:

**Discussion Points:**

Use these discussion points in small groups or as part of a whole class discussion as you read the novel.

**Page 9**

“*Sarah was acting like Kerry”*

* What does Carl mean by this statement
* Even though Sarah says she’s only going away for a few weeks, Carl knew she would

 be gone longer.

How does he know?

Why doesn’t he say anything?

**Page 19**

*“Once again he was the only solitary human being on the entire planet”*

* Why does Carl feel so alone when the girl leaves?
* Why does Carl feel he is a solitary human being?

**Page 34**

*“Hard to miss a big bloke like you.”*

* There are lots of references to Carl’s size.

How do you picture him?

See if you can draw him or find images from magazines of people you think could be Carl.

* Why does Carl help Maddie on New Year’s Eve?

**Page 51**

*“Love you? Christ, I suppose so. It’s not something you talk about, is it? It’s sort of taken for granted. I mean who’s going to love you if your own mother doesn’t?”*

* What effect does this statement have on Carl throughout the novel?
* Do you think it would have the same effect on Harley?

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**Page 94**

“*He wished Aunt Beryl could see Harley now ...........He’s miserable and hurt. He’s not a wild creature, just a little boy”*

* Is Harley a wild creature?
* Does Beryl see any other side to Harley?

**Page 99**

*“For a few brief moments he’d given way and let loose what was inside him”.*

* What did Carl let loose inside him?
* Why did it frighten him?

**Page 102**

* What does the work on the barge mean to Carl?
* Why has the barge become a sanctuary for Carl?
* What are the nameless fears that he wants to escape?

**Page 121**

*She talked all the time, talked to me, told me how good it was going to be, picking our own tomatoes ...... It didn’t seem to matter any more if Mum wasn’t part of it. The plants just shrivelled up.”*

* What does this reveal about Kerry?
* Why was Kerry not interested in the tomatoes the next day?
* How does this symbolise their relationship and the events that have occurred in the

 novel?

**Page 143**

*“You’re a smart one, aren’t you, Carl ...... That little brother of yours is a lucky one.”*

* Do you think Carl is a “smart one”? In what ways?
* Why does Beryl think Harley is a “lucky one”?

**Page 147**

*“Joy couldn’t understand that it was better to be alone with yourself than embarrassed by what you were”*

* Why doesn’t Joy understand this?
* Do you understand what Carl means by this statement?

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Read and Do (Part 3)

**Page 159**

*“It must be great to be free again, like that. I almost know how the bird feels.” She sounded wistful, though Carl was still so full of the moment that he missed her meaning”.*

* What does Maddie feel free of?
* What is the significance of the release of the Osprey for each person in the scene?

**Page 183**

*Carl says “I’m always the one who gets short-changed”.*

* Is this true?
* In what ways is he short-changed?

**Page 184**

*“You’re coming alive. That’s what it is. You’ve been playing dead all this time and now you can’t keep yourself down any longer”.*

* What does Justine mean by ‘playing dead’?
* Do you agree with her assessment of Carl? Explain.

**Page 218**

*“I don’t want to go causing any trouble for him. If he’s not here, then it’s not up to me, is it?”*

* Why doesn’t the policeman want to cause any problems for Bruce?
* What do you think of the policeman’s attitude in this scene?

**Page 241**

*“The tears he craved welled in his eyes. With them came the longed-for ache of his mother’s death and he knew at last that he was alive to feel it”*

* Why does Carl need to be alive to feel grief?
* Is it significant that he finally opens up on the barge? In what ways?

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## Wrap Up

### Four Corners

Make up 5 separate signs with the following words:

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Undecided
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Place 1, 2, 4 & 5 in different corners of the room and Undecided in the middle of the room. Explain to the students that you are going to read out a series of statements about the novel *A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove*. Once they hear the statement they should move to the area of the room that best expresses their opinion. Where appropriate ask the students to discuss their opinion, particularly if the class is obviously divided.

### Statements

Kerry Matt was a bad mother

Sarah had every right to go and live her own life overseas

Carl was a weak person because he allowed Sarah to leave without saying a word

Kerry Matt loved her children

Kerry Matt didn’t love her children

There is absolutely nothing good to be said about Beryl

Harley was wrong to graffiti Nugent’s store

Harley only ever thinks about himself

Carl only ever thinks about others

I felt frustrated with Carl’s inability to express his feelings

Justine was often too nosey

Joy and Skip were using Harley to replace their lost son

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## Family Fights

Begin this discussion as a whole class.

Consider questions about family fights such as:

* Who has fights in their family?
* What are the fights about?
* Who normally wins? Why?
* How do people show their anger?
* Where do the fights usually take place?
* How do you feel when fights occur in your family?
* What do you do if you’re not directly involved in the fight?

Work in groups of 4 -5 and brainstorm a list of things that their families fight about.

### Activity 1

Ask students to write for one minute on eah of the following questions or statements:

* Why might young boys or girls be forced to live on their own without anyone taking

 care of them?

* How can unusual occurrences change a young person’s life?
* What is it like being in a new and completely different environment?
* What makes a person strong or courageous?
* What does it feel like to be different from everybody else?
* Who do we most expect love from?
* Can you imagine what it feels like not to be loved?
* What should young people expect from their mothers?
* Describe a time when you felt totally free.
* Describe a time when you felt trapped.

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### Activity 2

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to share their writing from the previous activity.

### Activity 3

#### Short Writing Task

Imagine that you are to play one of the main characters in a film version of the novel. Write a detailed account of your view of this character, giving references to specific moments in the story. How do you want the audience to perceive this character? How will you achieve this through the use of voice, gesture, movement and costume?

Compose a letter from Justine to her pen pal that describes her friendship with Carl.

Compose a letter from Maddie to her sister that explains her feelings for Nathan after the events at the farewell party.

Imagine you are the editor of the school magazine. Write up a report that tells the story of Harley’s rescue. Include a headline.

Write three new titles for the novel that would give a good idea what it is about.

Write the lyrics (and music if you can) to a song that one of the main characters would sing if he/she became a rock star. Perform it to the class.

Discuss ways in which the Osprey functions as a symbol in the novel.

Make a list of all the times Carl receives praise from someone and how this effects him.

*A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove* was named Book of the Year, older Readers in 1997. It also won the Family Award, the 1997 Children’s Peace Literature Award and was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier’s Award.

Imagine you are a judge of one of these awards.

Write an explanation of why you chose this book as the award winner.

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### Quote Quest

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Page** | **Quote** | **Character** |
| 10 | It’s your turn. What if mum never comes back? |  |
| 16 | Jesus, you brought enough clothes with you. |  |
| 23 | I was just getting some stuff for these kids I met |  |
| 39 | Girls aren’t interested in a bloke whose build like a brick shit-house |  |
| 45 | No, Sarah didn’t say. She never told us anything about it. |  |
| 51 | Love does funny things to people. |  |
| 62 | An Osprey. Some people call ‘em sea eagles but they’re not the same thing |  |
| 66 | One of those mongrels... the Cove... never. |  |
| 92 | Nugent’s gross. I hate him. And I hate you. |  |
| 94 | Was there some demon growing within the boy, making him less human with each week they spent in Wattle Beach? |  |
| 97 | What are we going to do, Harley? Mum’s gone, Sarah’s gone, everyone hates us. |  |
| 99 | You won’t hit him, you won’t even touch him, no matter what he does. He deserves better than that. |  |
| 101 | You embarrassed the crap out of me last night. |  |
| 184 | Well, maybe I’m starting to see it now. Just in little flashes, like something is trying to break through. |  |
| 185 | I felt like I was melting just watching you and I knew straightaway that I wanted you to look at me like that. |  |
| 229 | Grief has to come out. It’s a kind of release. |  |
| 230 | How many do you need, Carl? How many have to love you before you can see it? |  |

### Oral Presentations – Exploring Themes

On these pages there are several oral presentations for exploring and presenting ideas on the themes of the novel. Select one of the oral presentations and work in a team or individually to show how events involving the central characters develop important themes, that is, ideas about life and living.

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| **RELATIONSHIPS** |
| ***Carl and Beryl***Form a team and choose several passages from the novel that develop the relationship between Carl and Beryl.Build a sequence of scenes that show how the relationship develops and changes, especially how Carl gathers the strength to challenge her.Act out each passage in a sequence of scenes that show:Beryl’s power over CarlThe reasons for their clashesBeryl’s motivation – why she acts the way she doesCarl’s motivationHow Carl learns to deal with BerylHow he “wins”.Reread each chosen passage focusing on the way Beryl and Carl speak and move. Use the words of the author as directions or clues for speaking and moving.Use a narrator to read linking text if you wish.***Carl and Justine*** PRESENTATION 1Write and act out a script for the conversation between Carl and Justine in the chapter Flashes. Use dialogue and movement, without a narrator. | Finish the script with Carl saying: “Me, Me most of all.”Workshop how Carl would say this – the tone, pitch and volume of his voice.Look closely at the language used by the author to describe how Justine and Carl speak to each other.Use different tones of voice and create moments for pauses.Build the script of the conversation towards a climax – Carl’s final statement.In rehearsals, practise ways of showing the different moods of the two people involved.PRESENTATION 2Working in pairs, act out two scenes that show different sides of the friendship between Justine and Carl.Some possibilities are:Their first real talk – at the Duncans (pp 107-110)Caught by surprise (pp 118 – 122)The chapter Flashes pg ??Moments of conflict (pp 207-208)“It was because of you.” (pp 236 – 238) |

Oral Presentations – Exploring Themes cont...

*Teaching Film as Text 2*

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| **RELATIONSHIPS** |
| PRESENTATION 3“Skin like ours ...” (p 161)You could script and act out another scene for the end of the novel in which Justine and Carl talk about how their friendship developed – handling the possum, licking the cake beaters, sharing the osprey, putting on the sunscreen.Investigate the meaning of the word “rapport”. Does this sum up their relationship? If so, why?***Carl and Joy***PRESENTATION 1Play a scene in which two voices tell the story of | PRESENTATION 2Act out the conversation between Carl and joy in the Pine Forest. What is Joy trying to do? How does Carl respond?Create the space or distance that occurs between Carl and joy in this scene. How is this done? How and where should the actors move?Think about how certain lines should be spoken: eg, “It was your mother, wasn’t it?”Practise the changes in Carl’s tone of voice – from near whisper to shouts.Practise Joy’s body language, especially the way she uses her arms. |
| the role of Joy in Carl’s life. Focus the conversation on several key incidents that established a bond between Joy and Carl. | **IDENTITY** |
| Which two characters could describe this role from close observation? Could joy tell the story from her own perspective? What might Maddie think of her mother’s efforts on Carl’s behalf?In preparing this presentation, think about the following questions:What kind of role did Joy play in Carl’s life – mother? adult friend? big sister? teacher?What did Joy do for Carl that Beryl could not?“It’s just Carl and me and the bird now.” (p 158) Why did Joy give the osprey to Carl?Why does Joy arrange the visit to the Missing Persons Bureau?What does the conversation in the Pine Forest tell you about Carl’s attitude to Joy? | PRESENTATION 1As Carl, tell the story of the Curse of the Matts and how you broke free from it. Use the following questions as a guide to what you say:Could you have done this all by yourself?How important to you was the job on the barge?Why did you reject Bruce’s offer?Why did you decide to stay in Wattle Beach?To which people do you feel most grateful? Why?This presentation could take the form of a monologue, or Sarah reading a letter from Carl. |

Oral Presentations – Exploring Themes cont...

*Teaching Film as Text 2*

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| **IDENTITY** |
| PRESENTATION 2As Skip, have a heart-to-heart (man-to-man) talk with Carl in which you explain?What you thought of him at firstWhat changed your mind – little things as well as dramatic events such as the rescue of HarleyWhat impresses you about Carl now.PRESENTATION 3“... is Carl the only one at this party?” (p 173)Dramatise the scene at the pizza party. Start at the point where Carl is the centre of attention as the boys talk about the rescue of Harley. How does Carl show “the modesty of the true hero”? What tone of voice does he use?Write a script for the bracelet scene and for the scene in which Nathan tries to leave with Maddie.What tone of voice would Nathan use when he talks to Carl as “fat boy” and “tub of lard”?How and when does Carl reply? How does his voice sound?How might Nathan change his tone in the Lost Causes statement?Finish at the point where Maddie says “I’m not coming, Nathan.”PRESENTATION 4Act out some of the moments when Carl thinks about his personal situation. Present this as a monologue, a scripted conversation, or a sequence of scenes combining these kinds of presentations.Show how Carl develops a sense of identity through his involvement in the events in the novel. | When did he feel:* lost?
* abandoned”
* confused?
* ashamed?
* cursed?
* powerless?
* rejected?
* hopeless?

When did he feel:* needed?
* valued?
* clever?
* liked?
* loved?
* strong?
* powerful?
* free?

How important to Carl’s sense of identity was having the job on the barge?Use these questions to select scenes that show the rises and falls in Carl’s self-esteem.Decide how to show some of Carl’s private thoughts about events.One way is to rewrite these passages as a monologue, that is, in the first person.Another way is to give these thoughts to someone close to Carl – eg. Justine or Joy – to speak on his behalf, as a commentary on how he felt at this time. |

*Teaching Film as Text 2*

Oral Presentations – Exploring Themes cont...

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| **CONSIDERING THEMES: DISCUSSION AND WRITING** |
| Form a small group to discuss the themes of the novel. Make notes of contributions to the discussion.DISCUSSION 1Compare the character of Carl Matt at the end of the novel with the person you met at the start.In what ways is he different? What changes have occurred? What brought about these changes? | DISCUSSION 2What do you think might have happened to Carl and the Curse of the matts if he had not stayed in Wattle Beach? Why?What does the novel suggest to you about how young people can develop a sense of identity?SUMMING UPAt the end of the discussions, write responses to these questions in your journal. |

###  Oral Presentations on an Issue

*Teaching Film as Text 2*

The class and I came up with the following topics, they then gave an impromptu oral presentation with the topic being randomly selected by me. They spoke generally on the topic and had to relate it back to the book.

1. It is important that you feel loved by your family.
2. Young people drinking can cause problems.
3. It can be difficult for boys to talk to girls.
4. Living on take away food is not good for you.
5. Some people find it hard to show their emotions.
6. How does it feel to be in a new completely different environment?
7. People show their anger in different ways.
8. What would it be like living on your own without parents?
9. Students should be allowed to leave school when they want to.
10. Being overweight can make life difficult especially for a teenager.
11. It is important to praise people.
12. Fights and arguments occur in all families.
13. You should look out for your brothers and sisters.
14. Parties are nothing but good fun.
15. Adults can gamble and waste money.
16. Children take after their parents.
17. Why children steal and graffiti.
18. Mistreating children
19. The importance of friendship.
20. Peer group pressure can have adverse affects.

By J Norman

### Group Work and Oral Presentation

Ask each group to explore the real life issues associated with the events which occur in the novel.

1. Nathan gets Maddie drunk.
2. Beryl puts Harley on a chain.
3. Beryl loses on the poker machines.
4. How the osprey came to be injured.
5. Carl hates his body.
6. Carl’s search for a job.
7. The damage to the yellow barge.

Have the groups present their findings to the class as an oral presentation.

## Further activities

### Essay topics

Select one of the topics and write your answer in essay form (100 – 900 words)

1. Compare the character of Carl at the end of the novel with the person you met at the

 start.

1. *“A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove*  is more than a good yarn. The author shows how people

 can be rescued from despair.” Comment on this statement using evidence from the

 novel to support your opinion.

### Exploring the Language

Discuss the language used by James Maloney to tell his story. Here are some examples of the author’s use of language for you to explore.

1. “She blocked his excape and he bounced away like a dodgem car at ninety degrees.”

 What kind of movement do you see from this word picture?

1. What kind of figure of speech is “like a dodgem car at ninety degrees”? p 230
2. “The girl speared her knees into the beach beside him.” p 238

What picture does this create for you?

Why is “speared” an effective metaphor?

What is a metaphor?

Further activities cont...

1. Symbols: What memories might the following things hold for Carl?

beach sailor’s cap barge osprey chains sandbar

cake cake beaters sunscreen pizza barge

1. Images: re-read the sunscreen passage p 161 – 162

Pick out the words that convey the sensations experienced by Carl.

“The hand was moving more slowly now ...” Why not “Justine’s hand was ....”

1. “The pine forest fell silent ...” p 230

 “a single tear reached the tip of his nose ...” p 115

 Why are these word pictures so effective in telling the story?

1. Select two other examples of effective images from the novel and explain why you think

 the author used them.

### Writing in the Style of the Author

Think of a place you like visiting or where something memorable happened in your life. Write about it using some images of your own in a style similar to your favourite passage in the novel.

#### The Pine Forest Chapter

After reading this chapter, discuss:

* The kinds of feelings expressed by Carl and Joy
* The events that generated these emotions
* The problems this scene resolves

Looking back over the novel, what moments, events or scenes do you think were stepping stones in Carl’s personal journey that culminates in The Pine Forest chapter.

Which events do you think he will remember for the rest of his life? Why?

Which of the other characters made really important contributions to his progress as a person?

In what ways?

How far do you think Carl has travelled as a person by the end of the novel?

#### Carl’s Memories

1. Imagine Carl returns to Wattle Beach many years later.

 Which scenes and events from his early days at Wattle Beach might he clearly recall?

1. What might he remember about the osprey?

 What memories might seeing an osprey later in his life evoke in Carl? Why?

### Wrap up

#### Essay Questions

* What is “the curse of the Matts?” How does Carl overcome it?
* Discuss how James Moloney uses the images of the osprey throughout the novel?

 What does it represent?

* Carl was afraid to breathe. The weight of the bird and its piercing gaze was enough to freeze him here forever. “*Now Carl set it free*”.

Discuss how the various women in the novel help to set Carl free.

* The blurb on the back cover of the book tells us ‘*This is a moving story about an unlikely hero who readers will care about and remember*”.

 Do you agree? Explain.

* Imagine you are a member of the Duncan family.

Discuss the ways in which Carl and his family have changed your life.

* Carl uses his initiative a number of times during the novel to make positive changes to his circumstances. For example guiding the cars to the red barge, hosing the cars on the barge, finding Harley by making sure the sun is behind them.

Discuss these incidents in terms of the effect they have on Carl and the people around him.

* Write a series of diary entries by Carl
1. After the New Year’s Eve incident
2. After the release of the osprey
3. After the Pizza party
4. After the events of the novel
* “*You’ve been playing dead all this time and now you can’t keep yourself down any longer”.*

Discuss the ways in which Carl plays dead and compare these to the moments he feels most alive.

## REVIEW by Jacob Cripps

*“A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove*” by James Moloney. Author and Title

University of Queensland Press 1996 Publisher, Date

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Structure**FictionIntroductionTime (setting)ThemesMain characterPlotPlace (setting)Examples of stylesusedWhat I didn’t likeConclusion | This novel is for young people who would easily relate to a story which deals with some of the problems teenagers face today: family breakdown, moving homes and making new friends.The main character, Carl Matt, learns to handle heartache and disappointment in his life. Through his struggles to adjust to rejection, fear and loneliness, he comes to terms with who he really is – and discovers that he likes what he finds.After being deserted by their mother and then their sister, Carl and his younger brother Harley must live with their Aunt Beryl in Wattle Beach. By the end of the novel, the boys had learnt what it means to belong, making new friends and a new home.The author made the story very believable by making it not too easy for Carl and Harley to fit in. They had to handle a few upsets before everything finally worked out for them. Carl, especially, seemed like a real person and someone I could relate to. His day-to-day experiences are true to life, and the way he responds to them is convincing. Throughout the novel, many conversations between characters took place which helped me to understand what the characters were actually saying and how they really felt. The short sentences the author used also helped me understand the story and help keep the pace of the plot moving.The author balances the dialogue and descriptions of action with creative word pictures that help to form interesting images for the reader. These techniques make the story seem real.At times, this novel made me feel sad, and a bit angry about what Carl had put up with. I would have liked to see a bit more in the novel about why Kerry did what she did, so I could understand her actions better. All in all, however, I thought this novel was a well written story with a believable and exciting plot. It should be enjoyed by all teenagers. | **Language****Features**Audience for which the novel is suitedDescriptivewords to create feelingDescriptive word to describe plotOpinionReference to the writerOpinion |