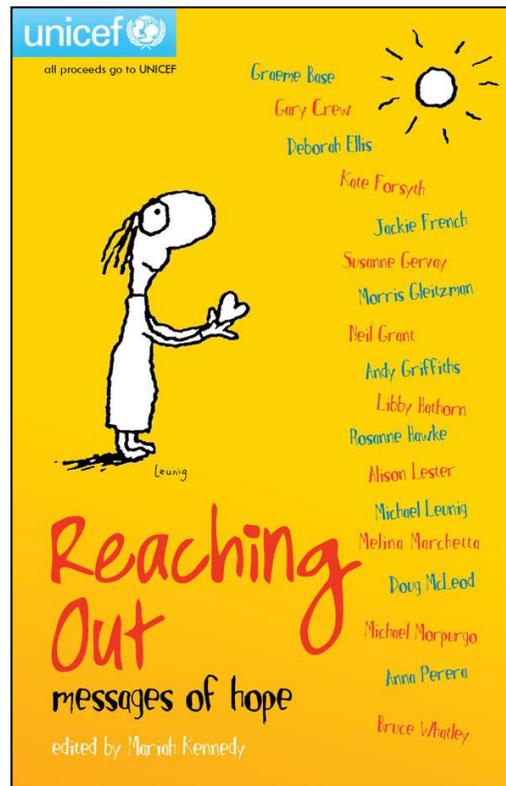


Reaching Out

Messages of Hope



Edited by Mariah Kennedy

TEACHERS' NOTES

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Notes by: Jess Black

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- Study notes on curriculum topics and themes:

a) Curriculum Topics:

Reaching Out can be used for students ages 12 and above for a variety of objectives and subjects. Due to the massive variety and scope of the material, we have concentrated on the following elements only:

- Texts in Context
- Responding to literature
- Language for interaction, interpreting, analysing and evaluating
- Visual Literacy
- Creating texts
- Text Structure and Organisation

b) Themes:

- Social Justice
- Setting
- Power and Function of Story
- The Notion of Place and Belonging
- Journey
- Identity
- Hope and Faith
- Questions for reading and discussion
- About the author of the notes

Introduction

‘My generation is often criticized for our selfish and wasteful ways. We are always told that we are out of touch with the world, spending too much time on things that don’t matter. What most people don’t realise is that we do care and want to make a difference. We just don’t know how.

Reaching Out is an anthology aimed at children ages 12 and above. Authors, illustrators and advocates from around the world have come together to create a book for children with a focus on the major issues within our world today – particularly poverty and war.

The aim of *Reaching Out* is to interest and educate the youth of today, who will grow to be the leaders of tomorrow, about these crucial global issues in the hope that they will become passionate about making a difference. In uniting some of the most influential figures in children’s literature and child rights of today to promote such a cause, young people will be encouraged to discuss and think about these issues.’

Mariah Kennedy

As the UNICEF Australia Young Ambassador, Mariah created *Reaching Out* as a fundraising project and all royalties will be donated to UNICEF. Exploring the theme of social justice, this heart-felt and inspiring book contains stories, poems and illustrations that have been donated by some of the most world’s most renowned and respected authors and illustrators, including Graeme Base, Jackie French, Michael Leunig, Bruce Whatley, Michael Morpurgo, Andy Griffiths, Anna Perera, Libby Gleeson, Melina Marchetta, Alison Lester, Morris Gleitzman and many more.

About the Editor

Mariah Kennedy is a 16-year-old schoolgirl from Geelong, Victoria. She grew up on a small farm alongside three brothers, a sister, several dogs and her pet goat. Aged 11, Mariah attended an international children's convention in Japan, which sparked a passion for social justice and youth advocacy, inspiring her to raise over \$20 000 for various causes and run several youth advocacy groups. Mariah is currently a Young Ambassador for UNICEF Australia and loves playing sport, public speaking, drama, animals and playing guitar. In the future she hopes to study medicine or law and use her work to help break the cycle of poverty around the world.

You can learn more about Mariah in the following places:

<https://twitter.com/mariahgkennedy>

http://www.everydayhero.com.au/hero_pages/view_posts/mariah_kennedy_3

Editor's Inspiration:

Mariah writes:

'I have been interested in social justice and the power of youth to create change for a long time. I found it frustrating how little information was available to young people to explain these issues in an interesting, kid-friendly and accurate way.

The first step in making a difference lies in identifying the problems and then thinking about how you can change them.

I'd always been looking for ways to help young people to have access to this information, so that they could become aware of and engaged in these issues, and maybe find a passion in it, like I did.

While at boarding school one night, I had a look around me at what people were reading. Everybody in my dormitory was engrossed in a book, oblivious to the world around them. The style of book and author differed from each student, but the significance of the process was the same for all of us.

This little moment of reflection brought me the idea. What if I were to use literature to transport its readers into different worlds, to harness the ways books can appeal to kids? What if I were to write to a few of the authors who so inspired my peers, who in turn would write about the issues which are truly important in this world? What if such a collection were to, not only interest and move youth, but show them the reality of the issues heard in news? What if they could have a face to the statistics or a personality to the issues in political arguments?

What if, by bringing together some of the most influential children's authors and illustrators, we were able to invoke real and positive change in the minds of young people – and thus in the world? And so, the idea behind *Reaching Out* was formed.'

Study notes on themes and curriculum topics

Texts in Context

First Impressions

- This compilation of stories, poems and illustrations is a deeply personal collection. What about the front cover conveys this message to you?
- As an organisation UNICEF, has many arms to it.

Activity: In small groups research each arm of UNICEF - Education, Child Protection, Child Development and Survival, HIV/AIDS, Water and Sanitation, Emergency Response, Sport for Development and Governance and Policy. Report back to the class. (you can go to <http://www.unicef.org.au/About-Us.aspx> for a good starting point)

- Explain the title of the novel, *Reaching Out: Messages of Hope*. Give several possible interpretations.

Making a Difference

- Mariah Kennedy compiled this collection and has donated all proceeds from the book to UNICEF. Her tireless dedication to the work of UNICEF is impressive, as is her maturity.

What does it mean to make a difference? In groups discuss how you can make a difference on a local and global level.

Point of View

- Rewrite a scene from *Travels With Teddy* by Deborah Ellis from the character Carlos point of view. What life events might have participated in him becoming a drug dealer between Mexico and the United States?
- Put yourself in Juanita's situation in *Travels With Teddy* by Deborah Ellis. Write about what it would feel like to be Juanita for one day. Write about your feelings and frustrations.

- Describe a childhood experience where you felt afraid.

Responding to Literature

In her introduction Mariah Kennedy says:

‘Through literature I have discovered passions, adventures and morals, and I have challenged my views of the world.’ (p. 1)

- Do you agree with this statement? As a class group discuss the role of literature in personal growth and challenging the individual. Hold a debate – one group agrees with Mariah’s statement and one is opposed.

‘Words can and do change the world.’ (Mariah Kennedy p 1)

- Some people believe that the way to change the world is through changing how people think and others believe it is more effective to change the world through actions and violence. Set up a mock debate to discuss each of these views, where each side must defend why their method of changing the world would be more effective.
- Why is art a powerful way to get a message about democracy to the outside world? Have you ever witnessed the above quote actually happening? Share stories from your life. Interview your parents and family and friends. Research a moment in history when words did change the world.

‘They crossed the Rio Granda that same night, plunging into the dark, raging river, Sam strapped to his mother’s back with a cloth over his mouth so he wouldn’t cry out.’

Extract from *Travelling with Teddy* by Deborah Ellis. (p 54)

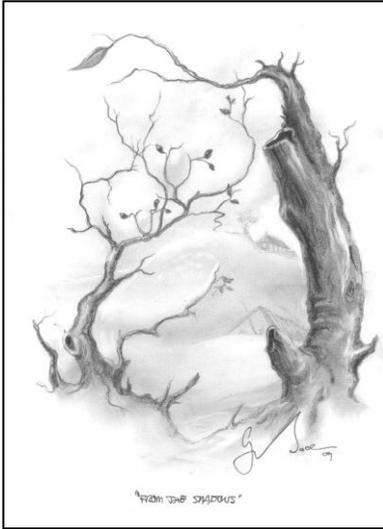
‘The rain hit, so hard it stung. Foam flew through the air, dripping like shaving cream. The boat rose up, then crashed back down. Wet wave tops slashed their faces. A child screamed. Faris heard the words of prayer, a woman’s sobs.’

Extract from *Refuge* by Jackie French (p 96)

Have students research the history of asylum seekers coming to Australia from Indonesia and the migration of Mexicans to the United States. Identify the similarities and differences in the two situations. What methods have Australia and the United States attempted to deter the influx of illegal immigrants?

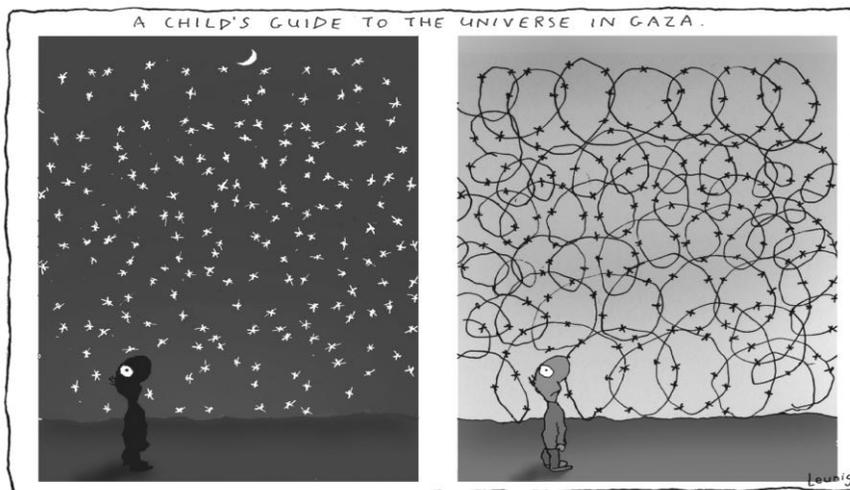
Illustration

- In *From The Shadows* by Graeme Base do you think he adds an illustration to his poem, **or** does he add a poem to his illustration?



The illustration is whimsical and expressive. Try reading the poem again and then look at the illustration. Do you notice anything new in the picture or the poem that you didn't see before? How do pictures help to tell stories? How do they tell a story differently to words?

- Study the illustration by Leunig entitled *A Child's Guide to the Universe in Gaza*. Research the current political situation in Gaza. How does the illustration help you to empathise with a child growing up in Gaza?





Examine the illustration by Alison Lester called *War*. What are some of the techniques that the illustrator has used? What atmosphere has she conveyed? What mood does the juxtaposition of the different styles create?

Activity: Using any material you like, design an image that you believe portrays social justice.

Drawing Inspiration

Activity: Write a letter to one of the characters in the book explaining your feelings about the events in their story. What advice would you give to the character?

- Trace the story of one of the following characters. Imagine you are a reporter doing a story on one of their lives. Write everything you know, as well as whatever you can infer about the character in order to write your magazine article.

Juanita in *Travels with Teddy*

The dog in *The Rules for Smiling*

The girl in *Tails*

Language

- In the story *Meatloaf Soldiers* by Suzanne Gervay the action of the family story is **juxtaposed** with a television news update reporting on the political situation in Syria and the resignation of Kofi Annan. Have students come up with how the news footage relates to the story of the family and a boy being bullied. What are the parallels? Why would the writer choose this method to tell their story? Is it effective?
- Suzanne Gervay has a colourful and informal way of using language such as **slang** which is used to contrast with the serious and formal news piece at the beginning of the story. What are some examples of slang that the author uses?

Characters

Reaching Out has an enormous cast of characters, each with their own special stories to tell. Who did you identify with? Were there characters that you didn't like?

- Write a brief description of each of these characters; list their physical appearance and your impression of their personality:

Jadda

Juanita

Freshhta

Karabunga

Can you identify similarities in their character and personality? Discuss how growing up with adversity can shape a person.

Activity: Write a scene where two characters from different stories meet for the first time. Would they be able to find common ground? What would they talk about? Would language be a barrier?

Multi Media

- Divide the class into groups to make a podcast based on the story *Literacy* by Andy Griffiths. This podcast should have students explaining their understanding of the subject and reporting their own research into the causes for indigenous Literacy.
- You are a reporter at one of the following scenes. Present the story for your viewers watching the news:

Joshua's plan in action against his bullies – *Meatloaf Soldiers* by Susanne Gervay

The wreckage found of Jadda and Faris boat – *Refuge* by Jackie French

The arrival of the Taliban in Bamiyan – *No Rules for Smiling* by Neil Grant

- Create a playlist for two of the stories in the book. Explain what motivated your choices, both for the stories and the music.

Visual Literacy

- Start a dream book. Write about your hopes and dreams for the future of Australia and any other nations you are concerned about. Decorate the cover and include drawings and photos.
- Create a poster to be used as a marketing tool for *Reaching Out: Messages of Hope*.
- Create a collage inspired by a story, poem or illustration of your choice. Explain your choice of symbol, subject, colour, form and texture in a brief artist's statement you also include with the project.
- The cover illustration was donated by the famous cartoonist Michael Leunig (see above). Why do you think it was chosen? Why did the designer choose the colour yellow? What does it symbolise in our culture? Can it symbolise other things in other cultures?

Activity: Find an image (it can be anything, a drawing, a painting, a comic) that you think encompasses the themes of *Reaching Out* and design an alternative cover using your choice as the central image.

Understanding of Text

- Is there such a thing as the typical Australian? Talk about what readers have learned about themselves and their country from reading these recollections. Do we really live in the lucky country? What does it mean to live in a lucky country?

Activity: Each student is to write a pivotal anecdote in their lives in the first person. As in *Reaching Out Messages of Hope* it could be in the form of prose, poetry or an illustration.

Themes

Social Justice

- What is a social movement? Have students research what it takes to make a social movement and to use an example from history of a social movement which was successful and why.
- In Australia, we have a pretty good understanding of what justice is. Justice involves courts and lawyers, which makes sure that the bad guys get punished, the good guys get compensated, and that everyone gets a fair go...Is this true? Discuss.

Activity: Research a group or individual you feel has been unfairly labelled or stereotyped in some way. Find information that challenges the stereotypical views.

Setting

- Use an atlas / map or google to pin point the countries which feature in the various pieces. Find the flags for these countries and research what their flags represent.
- Is there a running theme in the types of places mentioned in *Reaching Out*?

Power and Function of Story

- Have a discussion with the students with about their understandings of the different interpretations of the word 'story'.
- What sorts of stories do you tell – to yourself? To your friends? About events in your life?
- How important are stories to you?
- In what ways are the stories expressed in *Reaching Out*?

Activity: Make a mind-map of all the different ways a story can be told

The Notion of Place and Belonging

- The ideas of **place** and **belonging** are intrinsic to the stories in *Reaching Out*. Many of the characters are preoccupied with finding somewhere safe to be free from persecution. However many find that the safety and freedom can compromise their culture and identity. Can you think of examples where this occurs?

Activity: Read *Tails* by Jack Heath

- Who is the woman the girl and boy both miss in *Tails* by Jack Heath?
- We are not told the location of the story *Tails* by Jack Heath. Where do you think the story takes place and why? What clues are you given throughout the text?

Activity: Have a classroom government. When students are active decision makers, they learn that their opinions matter. Hold a mock election and have those running for government give a campaign speech outlining their policies.

Discuss stereotypes – how much does a person’s appearance effect our perception of them?

Activity: Keep a vocab journal while reading the compilation. Make a note of any words you come across that you don’t know and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word/phrase.

Journey

- The journey that Jadda and his mother take is huge. Have students mark on a map the journey of Jadda and Faris.
- A recent study conducted by the UNHCR suggests that the first thing two-thirds of Australians think of when they hear the word “refugee” is “boat people”. A follow-up study found that half of Australians are less sympathetic towards those refugees that arrive by boat than those that arrive by other means. Discuss.
- The issues of refugees / asylum seekers / detention centres and the treatment of other cultures in our society have dominated the front pages of our newspapers for a number of years. They have been divisive issues, causing a great deal of debate both between and within political

parties and in the wider community. What is the current Government's stance on Asylum Seekers? Do you agree with it?

- A guest speaker from one of the many support organisations or asylum seeker advocacy groups could be invited to address the class.

Identity

- Invite your class to construct a **sociogram** of how many different versions there are of being Australian within the class, Australia being a country of immigration from its beginnings.
- Apart from Indigenous Australians everybody in Australia has come here, or is descended from someone who came here from another country. What are some of the reasons people have had for coming to Australia at different times?
- Talk to someone who has come to Australia, or whose parents have come here from another country? Why did they leave their country? Why did they choose to come to Australia?

Hope

- 'Mum reads us all a story, about brave princes racing white horses across sandy beaches.'
Extract from *Meatloaf Soldiers* (p195)
- What can we learn from fairy tales about real life? Is the traditional role of a prince in a fairy tale still relevant for boys today?
- In the story *The Rules for Smiling* by Neil Grant, the dog discovers a joy for life hidden underneath all that violence. The dog begins to have hope for the future beyond day to day survival. Discuss how having hope can give a person or animal the will to survive.

Questions for reading and discussion

1. Do you have any stories or special words that you tell yourself to help make you feel better when faced with a difficult or upsetting situation?
2. What are your hopes for the future?
3. Imagine you are given the chance to start a new life like Juanita in *Travels With Teddy* by Deborah Ellis. What would you do differently and why?
4. What is Graeme Base referring to with the title *In The Shadows*? What are the shadows?
5. Can the boy and the girl in *Tails* by Jack Heath overcome the odds and better their lives? Discuss.

About the author of the notes

Jess Black has written for children's television, the *Bindi Wildlife Adventure* series, *The Bindi Behind the Scenes* series and the *RSPCA Animal Tales* series. She has published over 20 chapter books for primary aged children. She lives in Newcastle with her husband and two children.

Jess studied Theatre and holds a BA Honours Degree in Theatre Directing. She has written, directed and performed for the theatre.