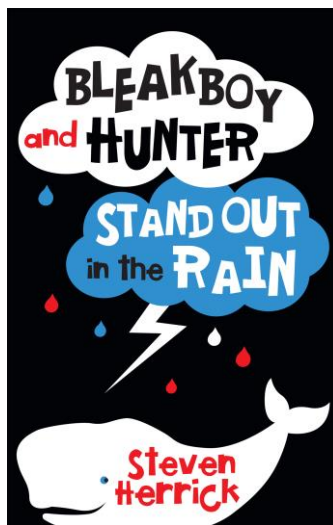


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BLEAKBOY AND HUNTER STAND OUT IN THE RAIN

Steven Herrick



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

ISBN: 978 0 7022 5016 3 / AUS \$14.95

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SYNOPSIS

Can one person make the world a better place? Or are some things simply too big for an eleven-year-old boy to solve on his own?

When Jesse decides to help Kate 'Save the Whales' he realises that sometimes, it's the little things people do that make a difference. Will Hunter, the school bully, ruin their efforts? Or is there more to Hunter than meets the eye?

Bleakboy and Hunter Stand Out in the Rain is a humorous and inspirational story about the unlikely friendship between two very different boys and the power of small gestures.

THEMES

Relationships:

- Hunter is angry at his father for leaving; this forms the basis of his negative behaviour
- Les becomes the 'father figure' that Hunter is missing
- Jesse and his dad share a loving relationship
- Hunter is craving a friend who truly 'gets' him

Bullying:

- Hunter is seen as a bully, however his actions are often misinterpreted
- Jesse realises that it is ok for him to stand up to Hunter; once he does this, their friendship develops

Whaling:

- Jesse's class protests against the whaling industry

Community Service:

- Jesse and his class raise money for CARE Australia
- Collectively, small gestures can make a big difference

WRITING STYLE

Bleakboy and Hunter Stand Out in the Rain uses a dual narrative: Jesse narrates in first person, present tense, while Hunter's chapters are told in third person. The text is cleverly written. Because of its themes and use of sophisticated humour, it would appeal to both younger and young adult readers. Steven Herrick seamlessly combines funny and sad elements in the one text, a difficult thing to achieve.

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STUDY NOTES

- The first two chapters of *Bleakboy and Hunter Stand Out in the Rain* introduce us to the two main characters, Jesse and Hunter. What do we find out about these characters from these chapters? Create a table that outlines what we are told explicitly and what we need to infer.
- Create a character profile of either Jesse or Hunter as you read. Include examples from the text to help develop this profile fully.
- Narratives need problems. What problems has Steven Herrick included in *Bleakboy and Hunter Stand Out in the Rain*? Discuss the way in which tension can be created when characters do things they wouldn't normally do.
- Jesse says that, 'everybody needs someone' (p10). Do you agree with this statement? Why? Discuss how this relates to characters such as Jesse, Hunter, Les and Mrs Riley.
- Why does Jesse talk to 'Trevor'? Who do you talk to when you need a sounding board?
- What small gestures does Hunter make that tell us he is a good kid who is misunderstood?
- Discuss the school's 'Thought for the Day' concept. How do these thoughts relate to the themes of the story?
 - *Kind words are the easiest to speak.*
 - *Help others before yourself.*
 - *To give is better than to receive.*
- Try having a 'Thought for the Day' in your classroom.
- How is Jesse's school different from yours? What do you like about it? What do you find funny? What practices do you wish your school would adopt?
- Critique Anastasia's story outline found on p19.
- In what ways is Hunter misunderstood? Use examples from the text to support your answers.
- Kate stays silent when Hunter teases her. Discuss her technique of 'doing nothing' when being bullied. She comments that 'brains beat brawn'. What does she mean?
- Discuss the friendship that develops between Les and Hunter. How do they help one another?
- What point is Steven Herrick making about world issues such as famine and starvation in Africa? Why does Jesse steal his dad's credit card to make a donation?
- Discuss the scene in which Jesse confesses to his dad that he stole the credit card. What do we learn about Jesse, his dad and their relationship from this scene? What would your parents do or say if you had done this?

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- Write a reflection about a time when you had ‘that awful feeling in your stomach’ (p75). Do you agree that feeling regretful and sorry is enough punishment? Discuss.
- In Chapter 15, we learn more about Hunter and his father, who seems like a kid himself. Is Hunter’s dad more interested in his new car and his frisbee than Hunter or is that just how it appears to Hunter? Would his dad deliberately do this?
- Jesse asks if doing something good always comes at a high price. How would you answer Jesse’s question?
- Like Jesse’s class, write a persuasive letter to convince an organisation to stop doing something harmful to the planet.
- Discuss Hunter’s theory that threatening people is the way to solve problems.
- What does Les mean when he says, ‘Old people and children. We’re not so different’ (p101)?
- Les says that ‘I’ is the ugliest word invented and that ‘we’ is the most beautiful. How is Les’s sentiment expressed throughout *Bleakboy and Hunter Stand Out in the Rain*?
- Why doesn’t Hunter tell Les what annoys him until much later in the text?
- Jesse’s family have to make sacrifices to help send money to Kelifa. Consider holding a community service day at your school to raise money for a similar charity. Consider inviting students to ‘Have-a-Rice-Day on World Food Day’. <http://hungerresponse.org/campaigns/have-a-rice-day/1151-2>
- Jesse comments that it must be ‘puppy love’ when two dogs greet each other in the park. Discuss the parallel ‘puppy love’ developing between Kate and Jesse.
- Jesse tells Kate that her braces help ‘make you, you’ (p119). What makes you you? What makes your friends unique? Spend time writing positive comments about your classmates on a ‘Warm Fuzzy’ wall.
- Create your own leaflets informing the public about the issue of whaling.
- Why does Les let Hunter ride on his scooter? What does he mean when he says, ‘you’re smarter than you seem’ (p132)?
- Kate tells Jesse that he always sees the positives (p139). Why is this an important trait?
- What is Hunter really removing when he takes his father’s clothes to the Salvos? Why does his mum call him a ‘beautiful boy’ after he’s done this?
- How do you feel when Hunter finally talks about his dad and cries about him leaving? Why is it important that Hunter shows his emotions in this way? What happens to Hunter after this?

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- Jesse thinks that, 'some things are too big for a boy to solve' (p165). Do you agree with Jesse? Is it this simple? Discuss.
- What persuasive techniques does Hunter have? How has he been able to get the sushi shop manager to help with the class's cause?
- The narrative changes tack when Jesse stands up to Hunter. Why do you think this is the case?
- Discuss Jesse's comment that Hunter is just trying to act tough because he's weak (p170). Discuss how Jesse feels after saying this.
- Why does Hunter think that his dad should be on detention? (Chapter 30)
- Discuss the symbolism of Sarah wiping all of Hunter's detentions off the whiteboard.
- What does Les mean when he says, 'we miss what we don't have, without being thankful for what we've got' (p189)?
- Discuss whether or not you agree that Hunter making his mum happy is the best way to be happy himself.
- What role does Les play in *Bleakboy and Hunter Stand Out in the Rain*?

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

I wrote this book because I believe it's important to explore the complex and immediate problems that are facing humankind – starvation, loss of environment and social dislocation – for both young and old. The people who'll have to address these issues in the future are the children of today. This story allowed me to explore how optimistic and thoughtful young people can 'make a difference' both at home and in other countries.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Herrick is the author of twenty-one books for children and young adults. *Pookie Aleera is Not My Boyfriend* co-won the 2013 WA Premier's Literary Award and earlier verse novels have twice won the NSW Premier's Literary Award. His books have also been shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year Awards. For the past thirty years he's been a full-time writer and regularly performs his work in schools throughout the world. Steven lives in the Blue Mountains with his partner Cathie, a belly dance teacher. They have two adult sons, Jack and Joe. www.stevenherrick.com.au