Nipper is just an ordinary twelve-year-old boy, one who has a dream of being a surf lifesaver, like all the local heroes he admires. As he begins to keep a diary he realises there’s more to everyday events than meets the eye, even if he doesn’t completely understand the ripples left in the wake of the Depression and those forming in the lead up to the war.

His wish to be a lifesaver intensifies as he frequents Bondi beach more and more and records the sublime movements of the surf and the vibrant culture that flocks to it. One Sunday in 1938 the surf turns rough and Nipper can’t just stand back.

STUDY NOTES

- How does the diary help Nipper? What are the functions a diary can provide?
- Why does Nipper not want Mrs Kearsley to see his diary? Do you think it’s common to have doubts about aspirations? How do things change for Nipper by the end of the novel?
- Have a close look at the cover. How does the design convey meaning about what the story is about? Consider elements such as what is pictured, the composition, the illustration style and the colours.
- Black Sunday was the first mass rescue operation in Australian history. Add further context to the event Nipper describes by reading/watching and discussing the following resources and any other material that can be sourced: http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/black-sunday-1938-hundreds-washed-out-to-sea-on-bondi-beach-as-freak-waves-kill-five-injure-dozens/news-
• Re-read some of the weather and surf descriptions (e.g., pp 12–16). How does the author create the sense of the weather and nature as an awe-inspiring force? Provide examples.

• Investigate the historical setting of the novel *Black Sunday*. Divide the class into groups and assign each with a topic to research, such as: Black Sunday events, Bondi and Bondi Beach, surf lifesaving, the Great Depression, gender roles, school life. Each group is to then write a wiki page on their topic for a class wiki site that brings all the groups’ findings together.

• ’I never knew that when you read it, it could bring whoever it was back to you, at least for as long as you’re reading it. I wonder if that’s what it will be like if someone reads this diary years from now.’ (p 24)
  a) Given Nipper has written his diary in 1937–38, do you think this statement reads true for readers living in the present? What aspects of *Black Sunday* give us a sense of time and place and how these shape Nipper’s character?
  b) Imagine you lived in 1930s Australia. With what you have learnt from *Black Sunday* and research, write an account—in diary or narrative form—about a day or a week in your life.

• Grampa has a lot of sayings. Identify them in the novel. As a class discuss what each saying means and where/how they originated.

• What do you think Grampa means when he says, ‘Most heroes I’ve met dunno much about bravery.’ (p 18)?

• What is Arthur referring to when he mentions ‘whitefella trouble’? How might Arthur’s version of Captain Cook’s landing and the events that followed differ from what Nipper would have learnt in school?
• In **Black Sunday** the Freemans emigrate from Germany to Australia. Discuss the plight of Jews and the crisis in Europe before World War II was declared. A helpful site for some background information can be found at http://www.fsmitha.com/h2/ch21b2.htm.

• Discuss the importance of lifesaving methods such as today's DRSABCD technique. Hold a class lifesaving awareness session. Useful information can be found at http://www.royallifesaving.com.au/schools/in-the-classroom.

• 'If you were a lifesaver, even if you hadn’t saved anyone, nearly everybody looked up to you. And every day you were standing alongside blokes who really were heroes, like Aub Laidlaw and Grampa Jack and lots of other blokes.' (p 81) Why do people look up to lifesavers? Can you think of any other roles models/heroes that many people have looked up to in past and/or present Australian culture? What do you think has made these people roles models/heroes?