

These notes are for:

- Primary school
- Years 5-6

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Modern History

Example of:

- Novel
- Historical Fiction

Australian National Curriculum*:

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.

Themes:

- Contrasts
- Ghosts
- Australiana
- Family
- Resourcefulness
- Foreginers
- Emotional and physical journeys
- Cultural understanding
- Empathy

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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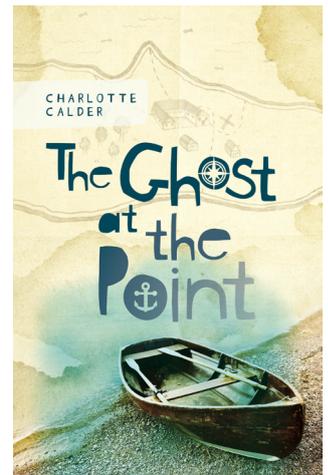
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The Ghost at the Point

The Ghost at the Point

Author: Charlotte Calder
 ISBN: 9781921977732
 ARRP: \$16.95
 NZRRP: \$18.99
 Imprint: Walker Books Australia
 June 2012



Synopsis

Life on the island is simple for 12-year-old Dorrie. But when she is suddenly left on her own on the family rural property unexplained things begin to happen: a mysterious flicker of a candle in an empty room, food missing from the kitchen and a shadow of a young boy.

Is her overactive imagination plagued by the family stories of the ghost at the point or is there something more sinister stirring? Dorrie is determined to find out, even if it means hiding from those who want to protect her.

Author Information

Charlotte Calder was born in Adelaide and has worked as an actor, photographer and occasional newspaper columnist. Her first novel for young adults was *Settling Storms* (2000), followed by *Cupid Painted Blind* (2002), *Surviving Amber* (2005) and *Paper Alice* (2008). *Stuck*, her first picture book, was short-listed in the Young Children Category of the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards 2010, and received a Notable mention in the Picture Book Category, Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, 2010. Charlotte lives with her husband near Orange, in the Central West of NSW.

How To Use These Notes

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *The Ghost at the Point*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

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Charlotte Calder on The Ghost at the Point

The island is actually Kangaroo Island, and I hardly had to do any research because the old house and its setting is that of our extended family holiday house on a cliff on the north coast there. My great grandfather bought it in about 1919, and pretty well nothing had changed since then - the kerosene lamps and fridge, no hot water or electricity, the thunderbox, the hip bath, washbasins in the rooms etc etc. So from my babyhood till my late thirties it was all just as described in the book, minus the animals and chooks! An amazing, magical place for our childhood holidays - we were all, including two of our three kids when they were little, so fortunate!!

The novel probably sprung out of wanting to use the old place as a setting, and because I love and know it so well, the writing came very easily to me. I also knew I wanted to write about a child home alone, looking after herself - something which I remember was a childhood fantasy of mine and I imagine of many other kids as well. I just wanted to write an old fashioned, rippin' yarn, complete with adventure, ghost and treasure, instead of all the urban, angst-y stuff that's so prevalent these days! It gave me a lot of freedom to just have fun with it! And of course 'baddies' were needed to top off this genre - The Magic Pudding was very much an influence when writing the ghastly/comical Crickles; in fact the dear old place had a real feel of that wonderful childhood favourite of mine. Nonetheless, the refugee aspect, an abiding concern, did find its way in, as author preoccupations have a habit of doing ...



Discussion Questions and Activities

- “Like most children on the island in 1931, she nearly always went barefoot.” What kind of lifestyle do you think Dorrie and her friends have? Do you think it is very different to the one we have now? Make a list of what you think is different or similar.
- The novel alludes to the Great Depression and the Great War (World War II). Look up these events on the internet. Particularly good websites are <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/great-depression> and <http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww1.asp>. How do you think these events have shaped the characters? Gah used to work as the town solicitor but now prefers to be a fisherman, whereas the Jennings family battle to make ends meet. Do the characters seem better or worse as a result of these events?
- When doing research on the setting, also look up the historical concept of the White Australia policy, which would have been prominent around 1931. A good website to start with is <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/belongings/about-belongings/australias-migration-history/>. How do you think this government policy affects the characters of the story, especially when Alonso and his mother are discovered?
- Consider when Dorrie thinks about “whether it actually would be good without school”. Do some research into schooling in the 1930s: what did children learn? What games did they play? Write a journal entry, either from Dorrie’s or her friend Sarah’s point of view, that talks about a typical school day.
- In one segment of the novel, Dorrie’s great-aunt Gertrude undertook an effort to “civilise” Dorrie and Gah, believing them to be “living like savages”. Indeed, Dorrie’s Aunt Janet also alludes to a ‘young lady’s education’ that she believes Dorrie should be taking. Research this on the internet. Do you think these requirements are still valid today? Make a list of what you think a “young woman’s education” should be.
- One aspect of the novel is contrasts, particularly the characters of Mr and Mrs Crinkle. Dorrie compares them to the nursery rhyme characters of Jack Sprat and his wife: “they looked like the most ill-matched couple in the world.” Apart from their appearances, what other contrasts do the Crinkles have? Do they seem to have anything in common?
- What other contrasts can you identify in the novel? What are the contrasts trying to show about the characters, the setting and the story? Think about Dorrie and her cousin Esme among other examples.



- Ghosts haunt places/people as they symbolise a time and/or a place that no longer exists. As Aunt Gertrude says about her encounter with a ghost: “He was searching for something – or rather someone”. Some philosophical and religious views argue that ghosts remain in places where their presence is strong. Despite Alonso being found out as a living boy, what other “ghosts” do you think haunt Dorrie? What about how she feels about her parents, particularly her mother?
- Discuss the significance of the title *The Ghost at the Point*. How significant is the idea of ghosts to the story?
- Make a list of what other ghost stories you know. How are they different to this story?
- Dorrie sees things which scare her into questioning whether or not there is a ghost: the candle in the window, noises in the yard, etc. What other stereotypical actions identify a ghost?
- Dorrie considers if what she is dealing with is a poltergeist. Look up the meaning of the term. Are there other different kinds of ghosts?
- Do you think Dorrie’s decision not to stay with her aunt and uncle in Redcliff while Gah is in hospital is a good one? Why or why not?
- Caleb Pearce considers that “twelve would be practically grown-up”. Do you think that today’s twelve-year-olds should be considered “practically” grown-up? Do you think there is a difference in the maturity of twelve-year-olds from Dorrie’s era?
- As the story unfolds, Dorrie finds out a lot about her family: their stories, their hidden ancestries and quirks, the story of old Ned’s treasure and the wreck, Aunt Gertrude’s ghost, etc. Think about your own family ancestry. Are there any stories? Talk to your parents and grandparents about this.
- When Dorrie discovers Alonso, they can not communicate at first. How do they develop communication methods and begin working together as a team?
- Do you think Alonso was right in not responding to Dorrie’s questions about his background, particularly the details of his coming to the island? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Aunt Janet responds the way

she does when she finds out about Alonso and his mother’s family connections? Do you think her reaction is based on feelings reminiscent of the White Australia policy and the idea of keeping things “British”? Think back to your research on this concept.

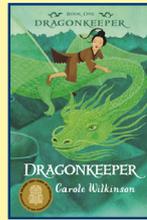
Have you read ... ?



Ophelia Wild Secret Spy

By: Elena de Roo, illustrated by Tracy Duncan
• Paperback • Feb 2012
ISBN: 9781921529672 • RRP: AU\$14.95/NZ\$16.99

Feisty Ophelia Wild decides to set up her own detective agency, with its headquarters in her tree house. Along with her assistant, Albert, she foils bullies, solves a meat-pie mystery and cracks the case of the disappearing dentures.



Dragonkeeper

By: Carole Wilkinson • Paperback • May 2012
ISBN: 9781742030593 • RRP: AU\$19.95/NZ\$21.99

Ancient China, Han Dynasty. A slave girl saves the life of an ageing dragon and escapes her brutal master. Pursued by a ruthless dragon hunter, the girl and the dragon make an epic journey across China carrying a mysterious stone that must be protected. This is the story of a young slave girl who believes she is not worthy of a name but finds within herself the strength and courage to make this perilous journey and do what must be done. This beautiful book by award-winning author Carole Wilkinson will enchant every reader.



Northwood

By: Brian Falkner, illustrated by Donovan Bixley
• Paperback • August 2011
ISBN: 9781921529801 • RRP: AU\$19.95/NZ\$22.99

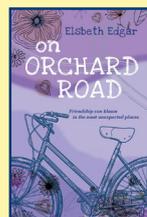
Cecilia Undergarment likes a challenge. So when she discovers a sad and neglected dog, she is determined to rescue him. No matter what. But her daring dog rescue lands her in deep trouble. Trouble in the form of being lost in the dark forest of Northwood. A forest where ferocious black lions roam. A forest that hides a secret castle, an unlikely king and many a mystery. A forest where those who enter never return. But Cecilia is determined to find her way home. No matter what.



Surface Tension

By: Meg McKinlay • Paperback • March 2011
ISBN: 9781921720284 • RRP: AU\$15.95/NZ\$17.99

When Cassie and Liam start swimming at the lake neither of them realises the dark secrets that lie beneath. As summer heats up and the lake waters become lower and lower, the shocking truth is slowly uncovered. And soon, both their lives will change forever.



On Orchard Road

By: Elsbeth Edgar • Paperback • August 2011
ISBN: 9781921720291 • RRP: AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99

Jane’s world has been turned upside down. She has a brand-new sister, and her family has moved to a small town, leaving behind everything she knows. She is sure that she will be miserable but a mysterious old lady, a curious boy and an amazing garden prove her wrong. A story about friendship, hope and the healing power of nature and art.