Things a map won’t show you—a unit for Year 8 English
Alice White, Wantirna College

The arrival of The Australian Curriculum coincided with my arrival as the new Head of English at Wantirna College and a desire by the wonderful team there to reach out to some new texts. It seemed right to ensure we brought authentic texts that met the new Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander requirement into our new scope and sequence. The school is also proceeding with an Australian Curriculum writing project so the following unit is a product of all these realities. We taught Things Maps Won’t Show You last term and found the text a delight to teach and very accessible to all students. It allowed us to simultaneously explore: the short story form and other forms of writing; how they contrast in the way they communicate meaning to the reader; indigenous culture—particularly The Stolen Generation (our students were mostly unaware of this shocking reality in Australia’s history) and grammatical knowledge, particularly sentence forms and moods. I wrote the unit, but you will see from the support materials that many teachers created new ideas for this text. The grammar element was heavily influenced by my reading of the teacher text Working Grammar by Sally Humphrey, Kristina Love and Louise Droga. You three are marvels. I can't thank you enough. This is just the text teachers need to understand how to implement the language strand of the new curriculum. I should also thank Larissa McLean-Davies for introducing me to Things a Map Won’t Show You during the VATE conference about The Australian Curriculum for English last year. Most of all I want to thank the team of English teachers at Wantirna College, for being so open to new texts and change.

Content
Students explore how meaning is created when expressing ideas and how reading is not just about decoding print text as they explore visual and print texts, comic strips, brochures etc. In particular they examine two short stories, a poem, a comic strip and a brochure in the collection to see how writers manipulate visuals and words to explore issues of cultural connectedness. When studying the short stories students learn how writers use plot structures to create interest and effectively involve readers in questioning prejudice and stereotypes; the effective creation of setting; the effect of the particular narrative viewpoint chosen, examining differences between omniscient third person and limited perspective in third person and their use in exploring key ideas producing their own oral and written pieces to demonstrate their understanding. A particular focus on sentence types (simple, complex and compound) and use of line breaks is used when exploring the poem. Students create their own poems exploring themes of alienation in another culture, experimenting with line endings and sentence type. Sentence moods—statement, command and question—are examined when looking at the brochure and how these and particular choices of verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, contribute to the humour of the brochure examined and students produce their own guide. They examine how writers examine cultural difference in a range of stories particularly between white Australian, Indigenous, Torres Strait islander and Asian communities and they learn about The Stolen Generation. Students create their own draft and a final copy of a short story paying particular attention to narrative voice, the use of setting, dialogue, plot structure (orientation, complication, climax and resolution) and produce a text response that compares two or more short stories in the collection and the different devices (such as narrative viewpoint, plot structure etc.) used by writers to convey their ideas.

Knowledge

Students learn that:

- There are a range of languages available that we use to communicate.
- The indigenous Australian population had children taken from them by the Australian Government and suffered injustice and prejudice at the hands of the Australian Government.
- Sentences can be simple, complex or compound and have a particular mood—command, statement or question.
- Line endings and sentence forms can affect the meaning and feeling of a poem.
- Writers of short stories manipulate plot, setting, characterisation, dialogue and narrative viewpoint to create meaning for the reader.
- That narrative viewpoint can affect meaning and that third person narrative can be omniscient or have a limited viewpoint.
- Line endings can affect meaning and mood and tone in poetry.

Skills

Students learn to:

- Use simple, compound and complex sentences to create different effects in poetry.
- Use sentence moods effectively in their own brochure—command, question and statement.
- Use line endings to create different effects and meanings.
- Identify elements of a short story and use them effectively in their own short story—particularly focusing on the use of narrative viewpoint (omniscient, third person with viewpoint or first person).
- Effectively analyse short stories and compare the use of techniques by authors to create particular meanings and effects.

Understanding

Students understand that:

- A language is a mode of communication and that language does not just have to be written.
- The removal of children from indigenous families had a significant impact on aboriginal Australians that is still felt today.
- Authors use a range of techniques such as narrative viewpoint, plot structure and setting to allow a range of meanings and effects to be inferred by readers.
- The drafting process is crucial in creating short stories that allow for effective inference by the reader.
- Sentence structure and mood can be as crucial for creating meaning as style of language.
- Line endings can be used deliberately by writers to change the mood and emphasis of a poem.

Resources: Please see <http://wantirnaenglish.wikispaces.com/Year+8> for a rich range of resources and links put together by Wantirna College staff for this brand new text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning activity</th>
<th>Student product</th>
<th>Formative/summative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students should set up a glossary</td>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students what is language for? Communication? Ask them if spoken and written</td>
<td>Make an individual</td>
<td>F—students reflect on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>words are the only language we have? Do a silent mime—see if they can translate.</td>
<td>mind map about the</td>
<td>their means of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask them if the clothes they’re wearing also are a language. What are they</td>
<td>ways they</td>
<td>communication—prior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicating? Write or use the data projector to display examples of handwriting</td>
<td>communicate</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the board. What does this handwriting communicate? Do different fonts make a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference?. What do different patterns of humming or singing communicate to you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write ‘How do I communicate who I am?’ on the board. Students write down all</td>
<td>Solo—students write</td>
<td>F—students reflect on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ways they communicate who they are—dress, music choices, make up, hair,</td>
<td>definition of</td>
<td>meaning of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speech, accent etc.</td>
<td>language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should understand that there are many ways of communicating meaning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They should write three sentences on their own answering the question ‘What is</td>
<td>Solo—students write</td>
<td>F—exploring theme of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language?’, Flick through the collection and find three different ways in which</td>
<td>definition of</td>
<td>poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication of meaning is occurring: e.g. comic strip etc.</td>
<td>language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain that the class will be looking at some of these to see how writers use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different forms to create ideas and feelings in the reader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ice-cream headache’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of coming to school for the first time—what’s confusing and new?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do students have to learn?—Brainstorm 2 minutes solo then share.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get students to imagine if they were an international student not speaking the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local language—what else would be hard? Share with the class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read ‘Ice-cream headache’ aloud to them, without giving them the title of poem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or reading the headings for each section. What is this poem saying? What is the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writer saying about communication and how we connect to people? Write solo and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then pair and share.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What title would they give the poem? Why?

Give out sections of poem without line breaks or headings to different pairs around the room. They must put the line breaks in and then compare with actual line breaks. Write at the bottom, which is, better—their choice of the writers and try to give reasons. Discuss as a whole class the effects of these line breaks. Add headings and compare—again write down which is better—theirs or writers with reasons.

Do Knowledge Quest 1, Sentences Section pages 78–85, so students have a sound knowledge of sentence types and structures.

In pairs, work out the sentence types in the poem and discuss the effects of the different types of sentences. Are some sentences really sentences? Is the poet breaking rules? Is that OK? Students should note how the very short sentences emphasise key intense moods and feelings and how longer sentences reflect confusion etc.

Some classes may wish to put together a group reading of the poem, which highlights the ideas the teacher and class believe it is trying to explore and perform to combined classes.

Students to write their own poem about making similar cultural mistakes. I.e. Taking just a plate to a BBQ etc. Students should also experiment with different sentence types and line endings.

| share’ then write about the poem’s ideas on communication. | F—consider effect of line breaks in poetry |
| What could be a possible title for the poem? | |
| Pairs annotation of poem without line breaks and adding headings | S—completed Knowledge quest sentences section |
| Solo—completing KQ exercises | |
| A guide to ‘Better Kissing’ | F – Kinaesthetic exploration of themes |

| Explain three sentence types or moods—statement or declarative, command or imperative, question or interrogative. | S—Demonstrate understanding of sentence types, themes and line endings in own poem |
| I am hitting the ball. | |
| Are you hitting the ball? | |
| Hit the ball. | |
| Students to write down. | F—understanding sentence mood |
Read the ‘brochure’. As you read, students need to mark the sentences, s,c or q (statement, command or question)

What types of sentences are being used? What effect does this have on the reader? What kind of tone does it create? Command, bossy etc.

In pairs find:
- Language that is typical of formal government brochures.
- Consider nouns—types of nouns.
- Verbs.
- Adjectives.

Also find language that is not typical of formal government brochures. Consider nouns, verbs and adjectives again.

Why is this language funny? In silence write ideas, then pair and share. What is the author trying to make you laugh about?

Create your own brochure or short guide about something else for foreign arrivals. For example:
- Going to a BBQ—bringing a plate, arvo, snags etc.
- Visiting the beach.
- Going on a camping trip.
- Dressing appropriately for work, school etc.
- Use of the word ‘mate’.

Alternatively, your brochure could be for Australians visiting another country you know well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotating text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo—own guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairs annotating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cloud-busting**

Aboriginal background reading range of stories.
Inform students about the Stolen Generation.

Do setting activity. Imagine the beach and write own piece—appeal to senses using own experience, focus on verbs, adjectives etc. Read opening of story and explore how language choices, line lengths, sentence structures create mood and effect. Incorporate

| Solo |
| S—Draft and final of setting activity—allows for revision of parts of speech and sentence structure and mood |
Grammar into this—use grammatical terminology. Go back and re-draft own piece. Hand in draft and final, at least 300 words.

Read the next two paragraphs in the text and write down at least four or five questions for Alice. Ensure questions include: Why have some of her children gone? Why is it tough for Aboriginals in 1967?

Hot seat Alice activity: (The teacher is Alice) Students ask her questions. Teacher gives responses—this fills in cultural background. An option after this play is to make a PowerPoint or YouTube presentation or find something that gives cultural background for Aboriginals at this time.

After watching the hot seat Alice activity, write the backstory of why you are in the flats. How do you feel about being in the flats, about being in Australia? Do you think the whites will vote for Aboriginals to be allowed? Could you ever be friends with a white person?

Read the rest of the story, ensuring the class realise that the salesman is white.

Ask the class, in silence, to write as Alice and her feelings about the salesman, then her feelings about white people in general.

What is cloud busting?

Re-write the story of the saucepans—from Samuel’s perspective or from the perspective of a racist white person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F — kinaesthetic exploration of theme and characterisation</th>
<th>and development of creative writing skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group hot seating activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo and discussion</td>
<td>S — Assessment of students’ writing skills and understanding of theme in the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo—re-inventing text into another narrative perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and solo note taking</td>
<td>F — thematic exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can people of different races be friends? Can people who are very poor and very rich be friends? Can people who part of a race that has been mean to your race be friends with people of that race?</td>
<td>F – note gathering for essay writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discuss and talk about this. Students make notes.

What does the story say about these questions? Find the evidence to prove your answers. Put the questions into a chart and then put the evidence in another column.

|Solo—chart of ideas and evidence |

‘Only a Game’

Put following questions on sheets of butcher paper and place them on separate tables around the room. Self-chosen groups of four or five move to the sheets and write comments and respond to other students’ comments as they move round the room.

- **Sheet 1**
  - Do you enjoy playing sport and competitive games? Give reasons for your answer.
  - Do you enjoy watching sport? Give reasons for your answer.
- **Sheet 2**
  - What’s best? Being part of a team or winning?
  - Why do we play sport?
  - What makes a good captain of a team?
- **Sheet 3**
  - Is winning all that’s important in sport?
  - Have you ever lost a competitive game but enjoyed it more than a game you won? Explain your answer.
- **Sheet 4**
  - What makes a good sportswoman or sportsman?
  - Have you ever let anyone win in a game or been a little easier on them (cut them some slack)? Why?
- **Sheet 5**
  - What is sportsmanship?
  - Do you think sport teaches you any important lessons about life?

Class discussion after this activity then students must individually write down three key ideas they have about sport. They have five 321 Bridge as solo and discuss

F — Preparing students to understand the key themes of the story – that showing respect should not involve being patronising and the meaning of true sportsmanship

F—deep thinking about ideas of story
minutes and can walk around the room and view all the sheets before sitting in silence for three minutes to write.

Read the story, ‘Only a Game’. I recommend the teacher as narrator and students taking on roles, reading the dialogue. Think of three ideas the story is exploring. What are two questions you have. Think of one thing the story reminds you of.

**Plot structure—effect on ideas**

In pairs, work out the chronological order of the story. Use numbering—put one next to the heading that is the first section chronologically and so forth. Why is the story not told in this way? What’s the effect on the reader of telling it in the way it is told? Students make notes.

Students write notes for their own story and experiment with the order of the plot in two or three ways.

**Narrative Voice** Who tells the story? Students will need to write down definitions of first and third person.

Write some third person narration or create a limited viewpoint activity. What are the pros and cons charts of first person versus third person? What is an omniscient viewpoint?

Students are allocated different sections of the story and must decide what type of narrative perspective is being used. Students to take the story they’ve planned and take one section and tell it in first and then third as omniscient and third limited viewpoint. Which will they use in their final version and why? Get peer assessment—which works? Which doesn’t?

Pairs of students are given different characters and create a circle of viewpoints—Harvard thinking routine.

| Pairs annotation of text into chronological order | F—exploring plot |
| Make notes in pairs for own story | F—prep for own story |
| Solo notes on first and third (omniscient and limited viewpoint) | F—understanding narrative voice |
| Chart on narrative voice | F—analysis of narrative voice and effect on reader |
| Solo—writing in different voices | F—preparing for own short story |
| Pairs of students are given different characters and create a circle of viewpoints—Harvard thinking routine. | F—Exploring viewpoint in texts |
<http://pzweb.harvard.edu/vt/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_Thin
ingRoutines/03e_FairnessRoutines/CircleViewpoints/CircleViewp
oints_Routine.html>.

Students provide their opinion of what happened in the game/of
the match. They need to find their character in the story and make
notes on what their background is, their perspective.

Brainstorm a list of different perspectives and then use this script
skeleton to explore each one.

1. **I am thinking of ... the topic ... from the point of view of
   ...** (the character viewpoint you’ve chosen.)
2. **I think ....** (Describe the topic from your viewpoint. Be an
   actor—take on the character of your viewpoint.)
3. **A question I have from this viewpoint is ....** (Ask a
   question from this viewpoint)

Wrap up: What new ideas do you have about the topic that you
didn’t have before? What new questions do you have?

Students sit in a circle and then stand up and use the script of 123
above to say what they are thinking (give it to them beforehand to
help preparation). Students report back from their own viewpoint.

Characters to be:
- Lan Nguyen
- Andy Chen
- Hiroki Yoshida
- Akram Rajavi
- Ryan West
- Tomas Nunez
- Satto Basalama
- Sal Catano
- Ms Trad
- Mr Drummond
- Mr Thistleton
- Clarice McGinty
- Mr Kabiri
- Agi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The art of hunting</th>
<th>Group—circle of viewpoints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is the key influence in helping you make decisions about how</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

to act as a person, the right thing to do? Who do you turn to for advice? Write, pair, share. Students read the comic strips to themselves. Who are the key people who shape Bud? Do his advisors change?

Some Aboriginal stories or information on belief systems—How adolescents are trained? Consider the use of ‘walkabout’ etc

Talk about the plot structure—it’s a circular plot, familiar in ghost and horror stories.

Learning about language of comic strip/graphic novel. What words does it replace. Take one frame and re-write it as if it is a novel or take one section from something already read and do as a graphic novel.

What ideas is it exploring?

Students could do another thinking routine – What’s going on? What do you see that makes you think that?

What different belief systems are competing here? Students could possibly write short diary entries as uncle gag, bud the goanna or as the doctors.

| Students re-write one to four frames of the comic strip S—create own story from comic strip understanding how different forms create meaning |
|---|---|

Two tasks

1. Students compare at least two pieces you have read in TAMWSY saying which they find most effective examining what different ideas about cultural differences they explore and the different techniques they use to express their ideas.

   Students may need explicit teaching on structuring and drafting their piece.

2. Students to create their own poem, short story, comic strip, brochure or other written piece negotiated with their teacher that explores the challenges faced when different cultures try to understand each other. Include with the piece a commentary on what techniques are used to create certain ideas and feelings

S—Comparative essay using rubric S—Own short story—using guidelines and rubric
hoped to create in the reader. Total word length at least 400 words. (Shorter pieces done could be extended during study in class.)

Cloud Busting—Think/pair/share activity

The following activity is designed to provide an initial context for planning your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Think and respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Why have some of her children gone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why is it tough for Aboriginals in 1967?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Why have children or other mums gone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Imagine that you are in the story; why might you be in the flats?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How might you feel about being in the flats in Australia?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you think that whites might vote for Aboriginals to be allowed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Could you ever be friends with a white person?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What feelings does Alice have about the salesman?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What is cloud busting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. List some language features of the text after a close examination and discussion in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Reflection
Think carefully about the following questions and respond in a short paragraph.

A) Can people of different races be friends?
B) Can people who are very poor and very rich be friends?
C) Can people who are part of a race that has been mean to your race be friends with you?

### Cloud busting and the Stolen Generation
1. Who are the stolen generation?
2. What happened?
3. Why were children stolen from their families?
4. What impact did this have on the children and eventually the adults?
5. What was the significance of Kevin Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generation?
6. What is reconciliation and why is important for all Australians?

### Dreaming stories
We can trace the beginnings of short stories back to the earliest times and cultures. In Australia we are lucky to have access to a special category of stories: the dreaming stories of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders told stories orally and drew pictures to accompany those stories. Such stories often sought to explain why things were the way they were in the world around them. For example, stories were told about why the magpie is black and white, or why the emu can’t fly. These stories help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people express their relationship with the world around them. In class, read ‘The First Sunrise’ and ‘The Lost Boomerang’.

### Exploring the form of poetry
The poem has been written out below without the line breaks. Discuss with a partner and put a / wherever a line should end. If you think the line break should also mark the end of a stanza then put //. The title and headings for each section of the poem have also been left out. Again, discuss with your partner and put in your ideas.

______________ (Title)
______________ (Heading)
‘I am an aspirin,’ you say to the man behind the counter. He nods his head, uncertainly. He smiles. There is a pause. Perhaps he didn’t hear you. You speak a little louder. ‘I am an aspirin,’ you say, again. You smile. Everyone understands a smile, don’t they?

You have become uncertain in this shiny Circle-K, with its row upon row of Japanese snacks, and signs that scream in a language that you can’t understand. The promises of air-con and convenient convenience are not working out like your planned. Nothing is working out like you planned. You arrived...how long? Seven hours ago you got off the plane. And that was the end of all that you’d known until now.

Nine hours before that with no doubts in your mind you sat in a plane on the edge of Australia. The smooth edge, the straight edge, the runway concrete. Everything under control. Taxiing smoothly to the edge of your life, ready to fly to another. Ready to fly to Japan. No doubts in your mind. You were leaving behind our everyday life with its everyday problems. You were flying away from a life that you wanted to change. It all seemed so simple back then.

Back then, back then, not even a day ago. So much now changed, your head is about to explode. You left in winter. You were wearing a jumper. A scarf. A beanie. Seventeen socks. And now you stand swearing in a T-shirt and shorts, your head full of everything, your head full of nothing. Too much. There is too much noise, there are too many smells, and the cars on the street are all somehow just different, and you’re too jetlagged to say just how they’re different, but the streets are different, and the footpaths are different, and the air is different and the people, oh the people are different.

And here. In this shiny convenience store. You weren’t expecting to find so much difference. Coffee in cans and rice balls and sushi and packets of tiny dried fish. You searched through it all for headache tablets, thinking that somehow that was going to help. But all you could fine was a swirl of unknowns. You can’t read the writing, and because you can’t read it it’s telling you nothing at all. Everything a haze of not-quite getting. Like this man who nods and smiles in front of you. There’s something he’s not quite getting.

But then, a smile of understanding. He nods his head and turns away. Reaches down behind the counter for a crispy waffle cone. Turns to the soft-serve machine beside him, pulls you a perfect serving. Places it in the holder on the counter, rings it up on the till. What else can you do? You smile, you fumble, you hand him a note. You accept the coins he carefully places in the tray beside the register.
And at that moment, you suddenly get it. Your one (and only) Japanese lesson emerging through the jetlag haze. *Ice-cream? Aspirin?* Could they sound so much the same? Perhaps (just perhaps) your accent isn’t perfect just yet. Possibly (just possibly) you didn’t say quite the right thing.

__________ (Heading)

And yet. This man in front of you. Listening hard as you mangle his language, politely trying to make sense of your mess. And more than all that, much more than all that, wanting to help you land on your feet.

__________ (Heading)

You smile at him and pick up your soft serve, walk into the street with an ice-cream in your hand. You’re feeling much better already.

Compare your ideas with the actual poem from pages 65–73. Do you think the writer has chosen the right places for his line breaks? Try to find two examples where you think the choices are good ones and two where you would have put the line ending at a different place. Give reasons for your ideas. Consider the title and headings—again consider the writer’s choices and compare with your own. Give examples of two of the writer’s headings you like and two of your own you prefer. Again try to explain your ideas.

Compare how the authors of ‘Cloud Busting’ and ‘Only a Game’ convey their ideas to the reader

Both ‘Cloud Busting’ by Tara June Winch and ‘Only a Game’ by Ruth Starke show the reader how we can connect through a shared humanity in spite of cultural difference, but do so in different ways. ‘Cloud Busting’ uses powerful symbolism and a series of narratives folded within each other to explore how a friendship between a white man and an indigenous woman can allow hope to break through the clouds of racism. ‘Only a Game’ employs a calculated use of structure and narrative viewpoint to allow the reader to see that asylum seekers are just like us and that sportsmanship can teach us many lessons including the importance of not confusing respect with patronising condescension.

Hope can be found in the darkest circumstances and Winch uses symbolism powerfully in her short story ‘Cloud Busting’ to explore this truth. The use of ‘cloud busting’ itself frames and structures the story. The reader can infer from the actions of the anonymous narrator and their brother in the opening paragraph that ‘cloud busting’ involves gazing at clouds in a manner that makes them appear as rainbows. The children go on to play fearlessly in the ocean and are described as ‘drunk on the salt air and laughter’. As the story of their grandmother’s friendship with a white man unfolds, the narrator carries on ‘cloud busting’ preparing the reader to accept this activity as a symbol for joyous actions free of prejudice and fear and for the truth, as the writer makes explicit in the closing paragraph, that the white salesman Samuel was ‘much like a cloud buster…Letting in the sun, some hope’ into the reality of ingrained prejudice against indigenous Australians. ‘Cloud Busting’ becomes symbolic of how positive friendships between those of different backgrounds can defy even the darkest situations such as the reality that a white government took away Alice’s children. The pans and Dutch oven bought by their grandmother are also used to underscore the solid and enduring worth of Samuel’s goodness as the narrator runs their fingertips over the items realising that her mother would sell everything but never the pans.

The structure of ‘Cloud Busting’ is also crucial in ensuring that the reader understands the message of Winch’s story.
The writer of ‘Only a Game’ also experiments with structure to underscore their message—for the truth that despite oppression and losing her children to the whites in authority, a black woman can have an equal and meaningful relationship with a white man, quite free of prejudice of fear. We see this activity as symbolic of actions that defy prejudice and obstacles to freedom and love.