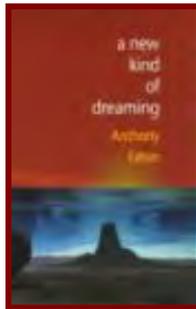


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A NEW KIND OF DREAMING

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Teachers' Notes

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OVERVIEW

Jamie Riley is not a bad boy, but his lack of family support, and a rather unfortunate attitude mean that he's had his fair share of trouble. When he is sent to Port Barren as an alternative to going to jail, he is put in the care of a social worker, Lorraine, and is boarded with the sage Archie. His troubles begin almost immediately when Elliot Butcher, the local police sergeant, harasses him. He soon finds out that the town has an evil atmosphere and an unfortunate history. Two young people have mysteriously disappeared: one, a problem kid from the city like Jamie; and the other, a young girl, a survivor of a massacre on a refugee boat.

Jamie begins hearing voices, particularly when he explores the boat, abandoned on the beach. As the messages become stronger, and as the provocation from Butcher increases, Jamie begins to understand the real cause of the town's trouble. Because of this, he is kidnapped by Butcher and abandoned at Flaherety's Curse, the disused mine works far from town.

Just as it seems he is to follow the same fate as his predecessors, a school friend Cameron rescues him. After discovering the bones of the dead refugee girl, they begin the long walk back to town to prove Butcher's guilt. On their return, the story reaches its climax when Butcher traps Jamie in the boat that he sets alight. Jamie is rescued just in time and he is able to lay the girl's spirit to rest and restore harmony to the town.

Character

'James Riley, seventeen, father missing, mother deceased, one brother currently serving a maximum security sentence for armed robbery and theft,' is an unwilling hero.

For most of his life the efforts of social workers and cops have been entertainment for him. He's managed to deal with them, as with most things by a quiet, 'I don't give a damn' attitude. However this is not enough to deal with the malevolence he faces, nor with the voices which reach out to him from the past, when he is sent to isolated care in Point Barren, the scene of some of his last childhood memories with his mother.

Setting

This is no holiday resort. The gritty landscape, balanced between the sea and the desert, is always a presence. Set on the northwestern tip of Australia, the remote mining town has lost its equilibrium as a result of its violent past.

Plot

Jamie's journey is an archetypal search for identity that should hold strong appeal for boys. There's tension and the supernatural here, as the plot is driven

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relentlessly forward. His initial attempts to stay out of trouble are a failure as he responds more urgently to the mysterious calls from the abandoned boat and the intense provocation of the crooked policeman. With the assistance of his schoolmate Cameron, Jamie finds himself at the centre of a struggle to lay to rest the town's ghosts, and ultimately on an arduous journey to survive and to reveal the truth.

Themes

The book offers a new perspective on the isolation of Australian life. It focuses less on the Aboriginal Culture suggested in the 'Dreaming' of the title, than on a more inclusive interpretation of belonging, drawing in the refugees from the north into the cultural and narrative history of the area. Jamie himself finds a new sense of place at the end of the novel, no longer a 'wanderer' or a 'lost one', but a 'local'. And it is in the final resting place of the dead girl that the novel achieves its resolution and the creation of a new kind of dreaming.

Motifs

This novel is largely plot driven. A few brief distinguishing features delineate the characters, and their relationships are defined primarily through conflict. There are a number of interesting motifs running through the book that can usefully be explored:

- The idea of balance
- The grittiness of the setting
- The boat as centre of disharmony
- General sense of unease
- Imprisonment

Each of these ideas is developed through patterns of imagery that make useful Language Study activities.

Use in the Classroom

The book can be used in the classroom in a variety of ways, but it is a good read. The writer has cleverly condensed events, so they appear to happen consecutively with a strong hook at the end of each chapter to keep the pages turning. Any approach that maximizes this quality is recommended.

Central to the novel is the journey, so Joseph Campbell's Mythic Structure provides an interesting framework for a discussion of the plot and the role its characters play in it. (See Student Activities)

A CLOSER LOOK – FOR TEACHERS**The delinquent**

Most of what we are told about Jamie Riley is contained in his file: 'seventeen, father missing, mother deceased, one brother currently serving a maximum

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security sentence for armed robbery and theft', beyond that we have to look to his behaviour.

He is a man of few words. This is so by habit, 'He'd learnt the best way to deal with people like this long ago. Simply shut up. Let them talk themselves out. Most people didn't like the silence, so if you let them try to fill in the gaps they'd give away more than they intended'. (p19)

Jamie has used this silence as a way of gaining power in relationships, and it is worth looking at the exchanges between characters to see how the author explores this idea.

- Elliot and Mike in the cruiser before they board the abandoned ship (pp5-6)
- Jamie and Eddie in prison (p17)
- Jamie and Archie (p26)
- Jamie and Lorraine (pp18-19)
- Jamie and Elliot (p33)

Victim or Protagonist?

How well equipped is Jamie to cope with his new situation? For much of the first half of the book, Jamie is a fairly passive character who finds himself reacting to others around him. It is not until he confronts McKenzie in the pub that he becomes a genuine protagonist. Whilst he eventually shows physical courage and endurance, for much of the book, Jamie is very much the victim.

- Elliot beats him up. (p33)
- He passes out overnight when he first visits the boat (p52)
- He is tortured by being locked up in the back of Elliot's truck. (p59)
- He falls and injures himself the second time in the boat (p89)

Q: Ask students to investigate what kind of a hero Jamie is.

The Channeller

If Jamie isn't trying to keep out of Elliot's way he is responding to the 'messages' he is receiving from the girl on the boat.

At first; 'He couldn't shake the idea that something was drawing him'. ('51) Later the signals become much more specific: 'A sudden overpowering presence invaded him swamping his mind with panic and fear...he thought he heard a girl's voice...' ('61)

Q: Ask students to plot the relationship between Jamie and the girl and investigate the changing nature of her influence on him.

The Land

As he comes to understand his new situation and view it more realistically, and after he has listened to Archie's story, he undergoes a physical change. The dark mystery of the place loses its fear for him, he begins to develop a relationship with the land, and he prepares to confront the challenge which will

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be the making or breaking of him. A close reading of this passage (pp127–129) will enable students to identify key features of the novel:

- His isolation
- The desert
- His fear
- The girl
- Archie's story
- Nature
- Imprisonment
- The atmosphere of evil

Physical vs Mental Strength

Jamie's friend, Cameron, plays an important role. He is physically strong as a balance to Jamie's mental strength. He rescues Jamie from the boat on two occasions, and frees him from Flaherety's Curse. He is practical and organized where Jamie is not. He provides the alibi that frees Jamie from Elliot's truck. Together they travel back from Flaherety's Curse, and finally it is he who brings the rescuers to free Jamie from the burning boat, and defeat Elliot Butcher.

Q: Ask students whether his role is a bit too pivotal, and whether the solution to the problem should come more directly from within Jamie himself.

The Orphan

Jamie is without family. He is even separated from his older brother by the security glass of the maximum-security prison, and he has a pattern of behaviour that isolates him from support. When he arrives at Port Barren he is completely alone.

Q: Ask the students how it would feel to be completely alone in a strange place. How would they react in Jamie's situation?

Q: Can any of them tell a story of a time when they were without support?

A Mother Figure?

Lorraine is the only female in the novel. Interestingly we are told perhaps more about her than almost any other character through her physical description in the first chapter. Jamie sees her as a stereotype: 'Spot the Social worker', but the reader is treated to a description of clothes, skin, hands, hair, her gaze, and her workspace. She has primary responsibility for Jamie and it is interesting to look at this description for clues as to how she may perform this role. Her characterisation raises a number of questions:

Q: How does she really feel about Jamie?

Q: Is Lorraine a victim in this situation or does she deserve her fate?

Q: How typical a sexual stereotype is Lorraine?

Q: Should the reader feel sympathy for her?

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As we learn more about her, we discover her unsavory past and eventually, after a series of minor betrayals of Jamie, she is given an ignominious end trying to drive her car across a floodway. The detective's comment about her sums her up fairly well: 'She was stupid to even try to get across, especially in that crappy little car of hers'. (p222)

The Villain

Sergeant Elliot Butcher is a powerful bully. An archetypal villain. He is also a cop. He was 'one of the largest cops Jamie had ever seen – not just tall...but also fat. Very fat. But despite his size the cop moved with lithe agility.' Boys may strongly identify with such a character.

Q: Ask students to investigate how police are depicted in popular texts such as *Blue Heelers*, etc.

Q: As an alternative ask them to investigate the stereotyping of villains, drawing on popular culture.

Elliot has interesting antecedents, and the country cop makes a fascinating area of study. Compare Butcher's portrayal with Jock Crawford in *Wake in Fright* by Kenneth Cook, or Ray Lorkin in *Dead Heart*, available as a movie directed by Nick Parsons from his play. (Be aware that this text contains very adult language).

The Mentor

Archie is the antithesis of the kind of adults Jamie has met before; 'well-meaning church-going dogooder(s)'. His major ability seems to be to remain silent, preferring to talk only to those 'who want to listen'. Nevertheless, 'Jamie had the feeling he wouldn't be so easy to fool'. (p26) He has 'an ageless appearance, the look of someone who's seen a great deal, and hasn't let any of it worry him particularly.' (p27)

Students can be invited to question whether Archie takes this ability just a bit too far. Does he let anything worry him – including Jamie's welfare? Archie performs a crucial role in the book and, through his story, imparts the critical knowledge of the wanderers, lost ones and locals. His behaviour in the novel challenges much conventional wisdom about bringing up young people and this should provide a rich area for discussion.

Comic relief

There is little room for laughter, but Constable Robb is a deceptive character. At first he is threatening behind his dark glasses, then comic in his immaculate uniform, but ultimately he is a saviour to Jamie in his hour of need.

Q: What is the writer suggesting in his use of the descriptions of the immaculate uniform?

Q: What is Robb's relationship with Butcher?

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Q: How is this reflected in the author's references to the gum chewing and smoking?

Q: How does Robb react after he has shot Butcher?

Q: How does this influence our reading of his character?

Port Barren

This fictional location is important for generating an eerie, threatening atmosphere. It is a point of contact for Australians with the outside world, and in particular for boat people. This raises the current issue of asylum seekers and the treatment of refugees.

Dirt Music by Tim Winton and Feeling the Heat by Pat Lowe explore similar territory, although in quite contrasting ways.

Balance

Archie's house is on the edge of town. 'Over the road lay the rest of Port Barren, dotted across the flat scrubby plain towards the sea, and in the other direction, to the south behind Archie's place stretched the empty expanse of the Great Sandy Desert...The whole place rested in kind of deathly, unnatural stillness.' (p30)

This setting is obviously inspired by Tim Winton's quote at the beginning of the book. It is a physical representation of the balance that has been disturbed by Butcher's violence. Jamie's quest is to restore balance in the community.

We see this imbalance in:

- The first sight of the boat at sea, in its rudderless course (p1)
- The rolling that brings McPherson's 'face to within centimetres of the surface of the water'. (p4)
- The confusion between the desert and beach (p51)
- The boat resting at an angle (p52)

Order is only restored when Butcher has been shot and the boat is transformed into a pile of ashes. It is the rain that brings the desert back to life, and finally the 'burying' of the bone in the pool brings a resolution.

ACTIVITIES – FOR THE STUDENT

A series of activities have been included that will enable students to demonstrate outcomes of English Frameworks appropriate to Year 9 Level. Teachers should consult their relevant state guidelines for further details.

Activities have been arranged in the following order of complexity:

1. Comprehension
2. Application
3. Analysis
4. Synthesis
5. Evaluation

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1. Comprehension**Before Reading***1 (a) A Read and Retell Activity*

Quietly read Prelude: Awakening (pp1–11)

- Allow yourself enough time to check anything that you are unsure about.
- Close your book.
- In about half a page, write a recount of what you have read.
- When you are finished, work in pairs and read aloud your account to your partner.
- Discuss any differences between the two accounts.

Discussion topics:

Q: What is the most important idea in the passage?

Q: Has anything been left out that should have been included? Some examples could be:

- The boat's sinister atmosphere
- Eliot's character
- Mike's character
- The danger of their environment
- The power struggle between the two men
- The issue of refugees
- The killing
- The witness
- The title of the prelude 'Awakening'

Q: When you have completed your discussion, write a few sentences in which you predict what will happen in the book.

Q: What does this passage tell you about the genre of the book?

After Reading*1 (b) Draw a simple map of the area around Port Barren*

Q: Details of the location can be found in Chapters 22 – 29.

Q: Mark the following on your map:

- The main Highway
- The coast
- Port Barren
- Flaherety's curse
- The pinnacle
- The Gorge
- The Pool
- The road to Karratha

2. Application*2 (b) The Hero's Journey – A*

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The table below shows some common stages of a hero's journey as they occur in many stories written today and in the myths and legends of the past. In the right-hand column are a series of incidents as they occur in *A New Kind of Dreaming*. Match the comments on the right with those in the left column.

Stages of the hero's journey	Incidents in Jamie's journey
Ordinary World	Jamie throws the bone into the Lake
Call to Adventure	Jamie goes to live with Archie
Refusal of the Call	Jamie thrown in the back of the truck
Meeting with the Mentor	Jamie and Cameron discover bones
Crossing the threshold	Jamie hears the girl's voice
Tests, Allies, Enemies	Jamie tries to avoid Butcher
Approach	Jamie talks to McPherson in the pub
Supreme Ordeal	Jamie is a delinquent teenager
Reward	Jamie sees Butcher burning school
The road	Back Jamie is taken to Flaherety's Curse
Resurrection	Jamie and Cameron cross the desert
Return with Elixir	Jamie is trapped in the burning boat

2 (a) *The Hero's Journey – B*

The table below shows some common characters who appear in many stories written today and in the myths and legends of the past. In the right hand column is a list of characters as they occur in *A New Kind of Dreaming*. Match the characters on the right with their archetypes in the left column.

<i>Archetypal Characters</i>	<i>Characters in A New Kind of Dreaming</i>
Hero	Archie
Mentor	Jamie
Herald	Lorraine
Shapeshifter/Trickster	Butcher
Shadow	Robb
Threshold Guardian	Cameron
Ordinary World	Jamie throws the bone into the lake

Q: How useful is a framework like this in understanding the structure of the story?

Q: For more information see:

http://www.phm.gov.au/starwars/activities_english_students.pdf

3. Analysis

3 (a) *Jamie's relationship with the dead girl*

Q: Skim the text to find those occasions when the dead girl communicates with Jamie.

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Q: Design a chart to show:

- What he hears
- Where he is
- How he reacts to it.

3 (b) *Jamie's relationship with Lorraine*

Q: When Jamie first meets Lorraine the reader is given quite a detailed description of her. What

impression of her is formed by this description?

Q: How does his relationship with her change during the course of events?

- his first impressions (p18)
- his time in the hospital (p114)
- when he has returned from Flaherety's Curse (p204)
- the last time he sees her, in her office (p209)

3 (c) *The Boat*

Jamie's fate is strongly linked to the boat.

Q: What function does the boat serve in this book?

Q: Explore the imagery surrounding its description:

- a beast
- a whale
- its darkness (p52)

3 (d) *Archie's story*

Archie's story is obviously central to Jamie's salvation, and the theme of the novel.

As he tells it he is obviously placing a great responsibility on Jamie. Jamie has to pass the double test of withstanding the old man's stare, and of really wanting to listen.

After he has heard the story of the wanderers, the lost ones and the need for balance, it is clear to the reader that Jamie has been handed the mantle of 'chosen one', and so begins his rite of passage.

Q: Read pages 124–129 carefully and explore the transformation that comes over Jamie at this point.

3 (e) *Identity*

Lorraine reveals details from Eddie's file. (p23)

Q: How does Jamie react to this?

Q: What is the significance of his comment 'Eddie's not like that and neither am I'?

Q: Who is the real Jamie Riley?

Q: How does Jamie change during the course of the novel?

4. Synthesis

4 (a) *Responsibility*

Q: Lorraine has primary responsibility for Jamie. How well has she met that responsibility?

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Q: There are critical plot points where she could have acted differently:

- Vandalism in the town – is she helping him or threatening him? (p46)
- In the hospital – is she reassuring him? (p67)
- After Jamie is injured on the boat (p115)
- She takes his hand? (p114)
- She reminds him of his mother? (p114)
- Her sudden change of demeanor (p115)

Q: To what extent is Lorraine a victim of Elliot's bullying? Explain.

4 (b) The boat revisited

Consider the three main scenes when Jamie visits the boat. They follow a similar pattern, although as the story progresses there are variations.

Q: What is similar about these scenes? Note the variations. What does each of these scenes add to our understanding of the situation?

4 (c) Archie – the wise old man

Archie, the wise old man is a very interesting character. Characters like him are common in stories, going back as far as Merlin in Camelot and turning up in folktales from all around the world. His job in the story is a positive one, to train and support the hero, in this case Jamie.

Q: Make a list of five films you have seen recently in which there is a character who performs the role of the 'wise old man'.

Q: Share your list with a partner and discuss the different ways in which they support the hero.

4 (d) The mentor – A Wide Reading/Viewing Activity

Q: Read or view a text of your own choice and investigate the role of the 'mentor'. For example:

- 'M' in the Bond movies
- Alfred in Batman
- Gandalf in Lord of the Rings
- Dumbledore in the Harry Potter stories

4 (e) The Police

Elliot Butcher is not your average policeman.

Q: What is the stereotypical policeman, and how is this image created?

Q: Research a range of novels, films, and TV shows to investigate the presentation of the police in the media.

Q: Check to see if you have a Police in Schools program, or you could invite your local police to visit your class.

5. Evaluation

5 (a) Isolated Care

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Before

Q: Imagine you are Ms Karen Kernol of the DSS. What appeal to the court would you make in favour of sending Jamie to Port Barren? Try to include details of how you think it would benefit him.

This could be presented to the class as speech, or as a written piece.

*5 (b) Isolated Care***After**

Q: You are sent to Port Barren to check on Jamie's progress after the arrest of Sergeant Butcher.

How would you review the change in Jamie? Present a formal report of what you discover.

5 (c) Prison

Chapter one explores two very different types of prison. The author invites comparison between Eddie, stuck behind the safety glass of the maximum-security prison, and Jamie stuck in a 'hot, dusty hole with flies'.

During chapter seventeen Jamie goes through a transition, during which he begins to understand the significance of his new situation: 'That's really what Port Barren was meant to be for him. A prison.' (p129)

Q: Investigate methods used to reform young people and present a report to the class.

5 (d) Archie – should he have done more?

Q: When Jamie first meets Archie he says 'this guy's gonna be different' (from other foster parents). How is Archie different? (p26)

Q: His quiet manner commands respect, yet are there times when he should have spoken out?

Q: How much does he know about the real vandal in town?

Q: Why does he continue to let Jamie take the blame?

Q: How much has Robb told him about Butcher?

Q: If he is so wise, how come he is unconcerned about the fate of previous young people who have mysteriously disappeared?

Q: Why is he apparently happy to let Jamie face the same fate?

Q: Can he be accused of sitting back and allowing Jamie to suffer unnecessarily?

5 (e) Who are the authority figures in your life?

Q: At the beginning of the novel Jamie deals with adults by using dumb insolence. Why do you think he does this? Has it been a successful technique?

Q: How do you deal with people in authority? What strategies are successful?

Q: Write a guide – humorous or serious, titled How to get along with adults.

Q: Choose an appropriate format to present your ideas to suit your audience.

5 (f) A holiday resort

Q: Imagine that calm is restored to Port Barren. An enterprising eco-tourism company takes over Flaherety's Curse to establish a base for adventure

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holidays. Produce an imaginative advertising brochure to describe the facilities that will be available. You may use this beginning if you wish.
 'Inner Quest Pty. Ltd. offers adventure holidays that bring people into the wilderness to rediscover the lives of their ancestors, to find harmony with the rhythms of nature and...'

Some suggestions for further reading:**Boy Overboard**

Morris Gleitzman

Feeling the Heat

Pat Lowe

Going off

Colin Bowles

The Ivory Trail

Victor Kelleher

Stony Heart Country

David Metzenthen

By the Sandhills of Yamboorah

Reginald Ottley

Wake in Fright

Kenneth Cook

Wildlight

David Metzenthen

Treasure Hunter

Allan Baillie

Deadly, Unna?

Phillip Gwynne

Nukkin Ya

Phillip Gwynne

Crossfire

James Maloney

A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove

James Maloney

Killing Darcy

Melissa Lucashenko

Dirt Music

Tim Winton

A Cage of Butterflies

Brian Caswell

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Eaton was a teacher of Drama and Literature before becoming a full-time writer. He has written a number of award winning books writing across age groups and in many different genres. His novels *The Darkness*, and *Fireshadow* were both awarded the Western Australian Premier's award for Young Adult Literature, the latter also named as a CBCA Honour Book. His most recent book is *Skyfall*, the second book of his *Darklands* speculative fiction trilogy, which was published in July, 2007. He is in the final stages of researching an historic adventure novel set in Antarctica for which he spent Christmas 2005 at Casey Station in Antarctica.

Anthony and his wife live in Canberra.