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ONE WOULD THINK THE DEEP

Claire Zorn



Teachers' Notes

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

ISBN: 978 0 7022 5394 2 / AUS \$19.95

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SYNOPSIS

Following the sudden death of his mother, sixteen-year-old Sam is sent to live with his Aunty Lorraine and her two sons whom he hasn't seen in many years. Living in their fibro shack in a small coastal town, Sam is plagued by anxiety and doubt. He quickly becomes disillusioned, trapped by his past and overcome by bouts of anger. Losing the will to forge any kind of future, he drops out of school, spending his days surfing with Minty and blocking out as much as possible.

One Would Think the Deep is an evocative and compelling novel about the importance of identity and belonging. More than that, it is a story about courage, as Sam is confronted with two choices – sink or swim.

THEMES

Belonging:

- Alone after his mother's death, Sam feels disengaged and isolated.

Identity:

- Discovering the identity of his father impacts on Sam in ways he never imagined.
- Ruby uncovers the truth behind her adoption.

Grief:

- Sam struggles to deal with the death of his mother.

Courage:

- It takes courage for Sam to confront his demons and regain some hope in his future.

Depression and Anxiety:

- Sam struggles with dark thoughts and finds it difficult to remove haunting snapshots from his mind.

Anger and Violence:

- Sam resorts to violence when angered; is this beyond his control?
- Aunty Lorraine and her sons were the victims of domestic violence at the hands of her husband, Glen, who is now in prison.

WRITING STYLE

One Would Think the Deep is told in third person, past tense. It is set in 1997 and strongly identifies with the music of this era, in particular that of Jeff Buckley. The depiction of Sam's struggle to overcome the 'black hole' and his doubts is beautifully nuanced and extremely tangible. Claire Zorn's skilful use of literary devices and description creates a vivid and relatable narrative. The

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symbolism of the Leviathan – a sea monster capable of swallowing all in its path – runs seamlessly throughout the text, and various threads of the narrative dovetail into this motif by its conclusion. This text would be suitable for study within Year 10-12 classrooms. It contains coarse language.

STUDY NOTES

- As you read *One Would Think the Deep*, make connections between the epigraph on p vii and aspects of the narrative.
- How has the author succeeded in directly drawing the reader into the text through the opening pages? Examine the way in which she has used pace and time to allow the death of Sam's mother to unfold.
- What can be surmised about Aunty Lorraine and her family simply from the phone call Sam makes from the hospital? How does Claire Zorn 'show not tell' so effectively?
- Why is Sam so afraid to allow his emotions to surface? How does this trait reveal itself throughout the text?
- Why has Sam 'never felt envy the way he felt envy for these people who worked at the hospital' (p7)? How does such an observation help us to empathise with and better relate to Sam?
- The author deliberately takes Sam from his comfort zone, making him a 'fish out of water'. How has this been achieved? Why is this effective as a narrative tool?
- Why does Sam feel sick that his mum thought of him as 'lovely' (p5)? How does this thought disturb Sam throughout the text? Why doesn't he believe his mother? Which other characters believe in Sam the way his mother did?
- How has Claire Zorn succeeded in creating three-dimensional characters? Choose a character on which to create a character iceberg. Above the surface, note what the reader is directly told; below the waterline, include information that must be inferred. Why is it important to create characters with such depth?
- Examine the use of figurative language throughout the text. How do these passages contribute to the literary quality of the text? Examples include:
 - A new voice: female, scratched with nicotine p2
 - A bleed of bitumen and ochre into grass p12
 - A salty breeze licked at Sam's arms p12
 - She was like an old, really tired version of Madonna p13
 - Headlights swept through the front window p14
 - The slap of feet up the front steps p14
 - The screen door whined p14
 - He felt like a monkey trying to get into a leotard p17

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- The back lawn...was a neatly kept carpet p32
- A flat blue sky faded and bleached out at the edges p34
- Unfurled like tongues panting in the heat p35
- The water was a heaving, dark mass: roaring, rumbling, swelling in peaks and engulfing the rocks in spluttering foam p44
- Flumes of spray rose from the tops of the waves, white veils caught in the whipping wind p44
- The sun crowned the horizon, throwing light into the sky, rippling orange and candy pink over the water p44
- The scrub gave way to juts of granite, like platters stacked in the cliff p78
- Waves rolled like corduroy across the sparkling bay p137
- The waves...were rolling fast and perfectly smooth, like cresting and curling liquid glass p225
- It felt like someone dragging a thick rope up his throat and through his nose p229
- The text is set in 1997 and makes reference to music from that era from the likes of Kurt Cobain and Jeff Buckley, the latter of whom plays a particularly significant role in *One Would Think the Deep*. Take time to listen to and study the lyrics of songs mentioned in the text, in particular Jeff Buckley's *Grace* and *Mojo Pin*. How are the sentiments in these songs reflected in *One Would Think the Deep*? What contemporary songs would you include in this story if it had a modern-day setting? Justify your inclusions.
- Re-read the description of Sam's first visit to his apartment since his mother's death (p8). What makes this scene so powerful?
- Sam feels there are 'things going on in his head that no one else understood' (p10/11). What are these things? Why does he think no one else will understand?
- Sam takes with him a biscuit tin filled with mementos from his childhood. Do you have a collection of childhood memories? What is in your 'biscuit tin'? Choose one item from your own collection on which to write a reflection and the place that memory takes in your life.
- What is the significance of the scene in which Aunty Lorraine holds 'out her hand ... [taking] the memories from him' (p11)?
- The opening paragraphs of Chapter 2 offer a vivid depiction of Aunty Lorraine's house. Sketch this scene.
- Sam often refers to the hurt and pain shuddering through his chest, and speaks about 'snapshots' that he is unable to shift from his mind. Discuss how the motif of 'snapshots' is used in *One Would Think the Deep*. Have you ever had 'snapshots'? Share with a friend.

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- Sam's mum, Rachel, was embarrassed by the tattoo of a star on her wrist. What does this tell us about Rachel's character? Why has the author included such explicit details about her?
- Throughout the text, Shane's character is foreboding. How does your perception of Shane change from the beginning to the end of the novel? Give examples to support your ideas.
- When Sam first goes surfing with Minty, he 'couldn't help but smile, although in an instant, the joy of the ride threw a sharp glaring light on the ache in his chest' (p23). Why is it so easy for his pain to overshadow this joy?
- How has domestic violence impacted on different members of the family?
- Claire Zorn goes into great detail when describing Archer Point. Find passages that help create this setting, such as on p35. How important is this setting to *One Would Think the Deep*?
- How is Sam like the brown kitchen bug 'tightly wrapped up for later' (p61) in the spider's web?
- Write a reflection of Rachel's funeral (see Chapters 7 and 8). What is so powerful about this part of the story?
- Re-read the passage on p66 that describes Sam's emotional state. Discuss the language features that make this passage so effective.
- Sam has two strategies when feeling under pressure – fight or flight. What other strategies could be used instead? Invite a counsellor to speak about alternative strategies.
- How are the narratives of Ruby and Sam similar? How does Ruby help Sam to realise the importance of identity?
- Explain how Claire Zorn has embedded the motif of the Leviathan in her text.
- Sam is disturbed by a black feeling that shadows him. Why does this black hole shrink away to nothing when he fights?
- Does the water help or hinder Sam's healing? Justify your response with examples from the text.
- How does your perception of Nana change throughout the text? How is her story similar to Lorraine's? What role does she play in Sam's life?
- How do the themes of light and dark feature in *One Would Think the Deep*?
- Why does Gretchen see remnants of Mr Darcy from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in Sam? What does she see in him that he can't see for himself? How do her opinions of Sam align with Rachel's?
- What role can memories play in causing both pleasure and pain? Why is Sam afraid to recall the 'soft, safe feeling' 'of life as it once was with his mum' (p106)?

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- How does the scene in which Shane taunts Gretchen show that Sam really is a ‘lovely boy’? What comment is the author making about the objectification of women?
- Why do Shane, Minty and Sam see their family as having ‘no good men’ (p203)? How important is it that a thought like this be challenged?
- Why does Sam cry after being rescued by Shane?
- Minty says that Shane is misunderstood. Do you agree? Explain your response.
- How does the game of ‘What Would You Rather’ manifest itself throughout much of the text?
- Explain the significance of the title *One Would Think the Deep*, giving examples from the text to support your ideas. How is the life and death of Jeff Buckley reflected in this title? How are the stories of Ruby, Minty and Shane and of course, Sam, also revealed through the motif of the Leviathan?
- As you’re reading the text, record sentences and phrases that you find particularly powerful and relatable. Share these with a friend. Why are these passages so appealing?
- Select a scene on which to write and perform a monologue or dialogue.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

I remember reading a news story a couple of years ago about two brothers who got into a fight with each other at a pub: one had punched the other out and put him into a coma. When interviewed, their parents emphasised how close the brothers were and spoke about both the victim and the perpetrator with unwavering love and affection. I was struck by the complexity of the situation as well as the support the parents showed for both of their sons. So often in fiction we read about characters, particularly male characters, who are either good or bad. I wanted to flesh out and explore the grey area in-between, especially in relation to violence. I was also interested in the complex ways that anxiety and vulnerability manifest in young men on the edge of adulthood. Like all my writing, I was driven by questions: What drives the impulse to lash out physically? Will a boy who gets into fights necessarily become a violent man? Where is the line between the clichéd lovable rogue and the abusive man? And finally, how do the role models young men have, as well as the females who surround them, influence their behaviours as they transition into adulthood?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CLAIRE ZORN lives on the south coast of New South Wales with her husband and two small children. Her first young adult novel, *The Sky So Heavy*, was a 2014 Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book for Older Readers, shortlisted in the 2013 Aurealis Awards for Best Young Adult Novel and shortlisted in the 2014 Inky Awards. Her second young adult novel, *The Protected*, was the winner of the 2015 Prime Minister's Literary Awards Young Adult Fiction, 2015 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards Young Adult Fiction Prize and 2015 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards for Older Readers. It was also shortlisted in the 2015 Inky Awards. *One Would Think the Deep* is her third book for young adults.

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