

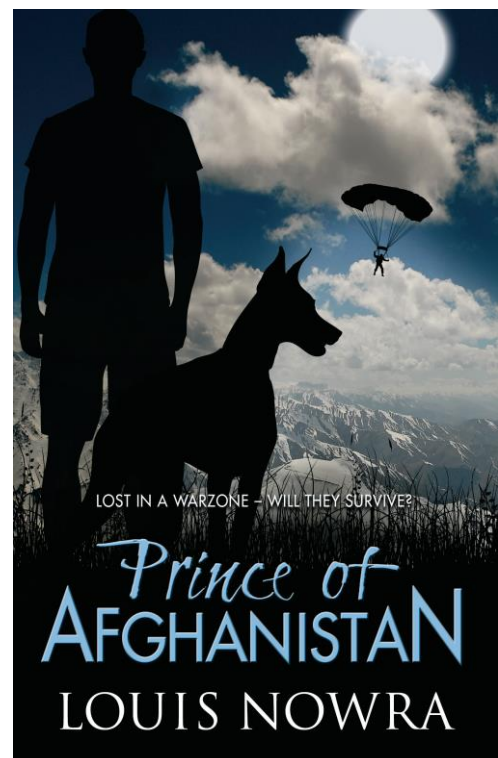
Teachers' Notes
by Lindsay Williams

Prince of Afghanistan
by
Louis Nowra

ISBN 9781743314821
Recommended for ages 13-16 yrs

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Introduction	2
Links to the curriculum.....	2
Pre-reading activities.....	3
Reading the text	4
Working with the text.....	5
Part A: Structure	5
Part B: Matters of style	6
Part C: Significance of the novel.....	9
Review, consolidate and challenge the text	9
Further reading.....	11
About the writers	12
Blackline masters.....	13



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INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

Two Australian soldiers, Casey and Mark, are involved in an American mission in Afghanistan to rescue hostages captured by the Taliban. Mark is a new recruit from a small country town, Emerald Creek, in the Snowy Mountains. Casey, on the other hand, is an experienced dog handler. He is responsible for Prince, a dog who has been trained to sniff out land mines. After the mission is completed, Casey and Mark are waiting for a helicopter to take them back to base. Unfortunately, a Taliban rocket takes out the helicopter just as it is landing: Casey is killed and Mark and Prince are left deafened and injured.

Realising that the Americans will believe that they have all been killed, Mark makes the decision to take Prince and head overland back to the American base. Initially, the story unfolds as a fairly typical 'on-the-road' story, as Prince and Mark make their way on foot through rough terrain. During the journey, they must try to keep ahead of the Taliban who are pursuing them, and deal with searing heat, thirst and hunger. While they face plenty of obstacles, they receive no assistance and are constantly in peril. Consequently, they must learn to trust each other if they are to survive. Eventually, the two are lying in a field of maize near death, both having been shot. Will they survive?

Running parallel to the story of Mark and Prince's journey, the reader gradually learns more about Mark and his background. We discover that he is not merely the reluctant hero of this adventure. Instead, flashbacks reveal that Mark is dealing with his own considerable demons: back in Emerald Creek, Mark's mother has died of cancer, his relationship with his father is strained, and he has come to rely on marijuana as an escape. Joining the army was Mark's solution to his problems and was done, in part, to spite his father. At one point, he realises that his life in many respects has been similar to the unfortunate Afghani's that he encounters during the journey.

As can be seen, this is a multilayered novel and can be used to explore a range of themes. These include:

- the nature of courage and heroism
- mateship and trust
- the bond between humans and animals
- father-son relationships
- the effects of war on all sides.

This is a deceptively simple novel that most students will find easy to read. However, it is nuanced and layered, making it an ideal novel for study in the junior secondary, English classroom. Although aspects of this novel are quite dark, the story does have a hopeful conclusion. *Nevertheless, teachers should be cautioned that there are drug references in the novel, and scenes that might upset some readers. In particular, care should be taken if there are students in the class who have fled Afghanistan or similar countries.*

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM

Prince of Afghanistan could be used in a variety of learning areas, including English and History. However, these Teachers Notes have been designed particularly to provide teachers with suggestions for how the book could be used in the English classroom. There is great potential to consolidate learning of numerous content descriptions from the *Australian Curriculum: English*. Some pertinent ones for Years 8 and 9 are suggested below.

Year 8

- Understand how rhetorical devices are used to persuade and how different layers of meaning are developed through the use of metaphor, irony and parody (ACELA1542)
- Understand how coherence is created in complex texts through devices like lexical cohesion, ellipsis, grammatical theme and text connectives (ACELA1809)

- Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups (ACELT1626)
- Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)
- Interpret and analyse language choices, including sentence patterns, dialogue, imagery and other language features, in short stories, literary essays and plays (ACELT1767)
- Create literary texts that draw upon text structures and language features of other texts for particular purposes and effects (ACELT1632)
- Apply increasing knowledge of vocabulary, text structures and language features to understand the content of texts (ACELY1733)
- Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to create, edit and publish texts imaginatively (ACELY1738)

Year 9

- Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor (ACELA1552)
- Understand how punctuation is used along with layout and font variations in constructing texts for different audiences and purposes (ACELA1556)
- Present an argument about a literary text based on initial impressions and subsequent analysis of the whole text (ACELT1771)
- Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)
- Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts (ACELT1772)
- Analyse how the construction and interpretation of texts, including media texts, can be influenced by cultural perspectives and other texts (ACELY1739)
- Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse texts, comparing and evaluating representations of an event, issue, situation or character in different texts (ACELY1744)
- Explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (ACELY1745)

BEFORE READING: ORIENTATING STUDENTS TO THE TEXT

Activity One: MAKING PREDICTIONS

Ask students to examine the cover of the novel carefully. They should look at the images and read the information provided. After doing this either individually or in groups, students should be asked to make predictions about what they will be reading, including:

- What sort of text is this? What is its purpose?
- What will the text be about? Students should consider who the person is silhouetted on the front cover and why he would have a dog with him. Why are there people with parachutes? What is the setting?
- Who is the author? What you know about him? Students may want to Google the author for more information.
- Flipping through the book, is the language mainly written? Are there images? If so, how might these help me read the book?
- Based on your answers to the questions above, what sort of language do you expect to come across in this text? Do you expect this to cause any difficulties? If so, what?

As an extension, students might complete a Word Splash activity. Directions can be found at this website: <http://www.teachhub.com/classroom-games-how-use-word-splash>. A possible Word Splash based on Chapter 1 is included as [Blackline Master 1](#).

Activity Two: FRONT LOADING

In general, the use of language in this novel is reasonably simple. However there are terms and concepts with which students may not be familiar. Before reading, students can be split into groups and research some of these:

- Afghanistan
- the Taliban
- Pashto
- the commercial use of poppies
- night vision goggles
- use of dogs for sniffing out landmines
- Black Hawk helicopters.

In addition, familiarise students with Plato and Jules Verne. For Plato, try this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDiyQub6vpw>.

READING THE TEXT

Activity Three: READING THE NOVEL

Although most students will not find this a difficult novel to read independently, it also lends itself to reading aloud. The teacher could do this initially, especially for Chapter 1. Alternatively, various students who are competent readers could be asked to prepare a chapter (or part thereof) to read aloud. Readers Theatre would also be a very appropriate activity with this novel:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre-172.html>.

Activity Four: IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

After reading the novel, students should be asked for their immediate responses. One way of doing this is to write a simile 'poem'. For this, each line of the response is related to a sense. So:

- How does the book look?
- How does it sound?
- How does it smell?
- How does it feel?
- How does it taste?

The students are aiming for metaphorical rather than literal responses. For example, in response to (the much longer) *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, a reader might write:

Lord of the Rings

Looks like rays of the sun breaking through dark clouds.

Sounds like rhythmic footfalls on a cloud-swept mountain path.

Smells like rainfall in an ancient forest.

Feels like a warm rug wrapped around my shoulders.

Tastes like a hearty hot meal after an arduous hike.

This activity was also recommended in the Teachers' Notes for the picture book, *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, about Australian soldiers at Gallipoli (see [Further Reading](#) at the end of these notes). In this way, students will be in a position to compare and discuss their immediate reactions to both these stories of young Australians at war. Particularly, why might their reactions be similar or different?

Activity Five: KEY SCENES

After finishing the novel, identify and review some of the key scenes using the tableaux drama activity that is explained here: <http://dramaresource.com/strategies/tableaux>. Key scenes could include the following:

- the rescue mission in chapter 1
- Mark's car accident when he was younger (page 114)
- the hunting of Prince and Mark in chapters 11 and 12
- Mark's reunion with his father (page 172).

Before creating their tableaux, students should:

- brainstorm further key events
- justify why they believe these are important
- sequence them correctly.

Photos could be taken of the tableaux and collated into an annotated, visual summary of the story.

WORKING WITH THE TEXT

PART A: STRUCTURE

In this section, students will consider the relationship between plot/action, character development and theme.

Activity Six: THE JOURNEY

Consciously or unconsciously, many print and film stories (e.g. most Hollywood movies) follow the Quest or Hero's journey structure. This is described in detail at this website:
http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm.

As a first step in exploring the connection between plot, characters and theme, students should summarise the events of the novel and see how closely they match the typical Hero's Journey structure. [Blackline Master 2](#) has been provided to facilitate this; at this stage students should only complete the left-hand column.

In small groups, students can then discuss the following:

- To what extent does *Prince of Afghanistan* follow the typical hero's journey?
- In what ways is it different?
- In what ways is it the same?
- How has the author ensured that he has an original story? That is, how is this story different from others that might follow the Hero's Journey?
- How might the use of this structure influence readers' interpretations?

Activity Seven: INTERTWINING PLOT AND RELATIONSHIP LINES

Now that students have a sense of the overall plot development, consider the relationship between the plot, the development of relationships between characters, and the inner development of the main character. There is more information about this on the Hero's Journey website mentioned in Activity Six. To facilitate discussion, students now complete the right-hand column of [Blackline Master 2](#).

In small groups, students discuss:

- What do you notice about the left and right-hand columns? Is there any relationship between the way the plot unfolds and the way the characters and their relationships develop?
- Over the course of the novel, how does Mark change and develop as result of the relationship changes?
- As a result, what might be the 'takeaway' message/s for readers of the novel?

While discussing structure, point out to students that the story starts *in medias res* (a Latin phrase meaning 'in the middle of things') and the parts of the story that occurred before Afghanistan are told in flashback.

Activity Eight: SUSTAINING A LONG NARRATIVE

Writing a novel is quite different in many ways from writing a short story. Indeed, *Prince of Afghanistan* is deceptively simple in both structure and execution. As we have already seen, the author creates a more complex story than is immediately evident by weaving together the plot and relationship lines. However, there are at least two other ways by which the author is able to sustain a much longer narrative: the creation of a series of mini narratives; and the use of story phases so that there is more than just action occurring. These are explained in more detail below.

(a) Creation of mini-narratives

Overall, *Prince of Afghanistan* is the story of Mark and Prince's journey back to the American base. However, most chapters contain their own mini-story (although sometimes this occurs across a couple of connected chapters). That is, throughout the journey these two characters confront minor problems that must be solved before they can continue their larger journey. For example, here is the opening paragraph of Chapter 7:

There's nowhere to hide. The air is thin and hot and my lips are cracked. I have to keep careful watch on Prince in this furnace. He keeps pace with me and I take frequent rests. Even so, he's walking more slowly and his tongue hangs out. I get him to sit, and pour water from my canteen down his throat. Then he lies on the dirt and licks his paws. I'm horrified by how blistered they are from the hot stones and earth.

As can be seen, Nowra sets up the problem right at the beginning of the chapter. The rest of the chapter deals with how this problem is to be solved – at least temporarily. The creation of a series of problems helps propel the story forward and allows the author to create a much longer, more complex narrative.

Students could explore and discuss:

- What other problems are established across various chapters?
- How do these minor problems contribute to the progression of the larger problem of returning to the American base?
- Are there some problems that carry across most of the chapters? For example, for most of the book Mark and Prince are being pursued by the Taliban. Why are these longer problems also necessary?
- How does Nowra prevent the novel from becoming repetitive?

(b) Use of phases, namely action, interaction, reaction, and description

Another way that Nowra expands on his simple plot is by ensuring that there is much more than just action included in the novel. Instead, good writers ensure that stories contain a balance of action, interaction, reaction and description. These four elements are also known as *phases* (or sub-stages). [Blackline Master 3](#) provides more explanation of these and an analysis of an extract from pages 6 to 7 of the novel is provided.

Once students have studied this Blackline Master in detail, together with the teacher they analyse another extract from the book, followed by small group and independent work. Then, later on – for example when undertaking Activity 15 - students use some of this new knowledge when creating their own stories, such as plans for their own novel.

PART B: MATTERS OF STYLE

Students will now consider aspects of the novels such as use of descriptions, first person, literary references, analogy and symbolism.

Activity Nine: CREATING DESCRIPTIONS

As we have seen, description is one of the tools that authors use to expand ideas and ensure that stories are more than just action-oriented. In this novel, Nowra uses concise but very effective images, for example in the following example from pages 67 to 68 of *Prince of Afghanistan*:

Nearing the river, we find ourselves in an orchard of trees twisted into weird shapes. I recognise the fruit as pomegranates. I pluck three, the size of apples, while Prince hurries to the river and jumps into it, standing in the water up to his chest; no doubt the water eases the pain of his sore pads. I fill my canteen and almost drink it dry before filling it up again. I sit down on the bank and cut open the pomegranates with my knife, removing the pulp and enjoying the tart juice and sugary seeds. The moon is huge, as if it were close enough to touch. Everything seems peaceful. I eat the pomegranates but know that what we need is meat. Prince can't make it back home without protein, and the fruit won't be enough for me either. If we can't find meat in the next day or so, then we'll have to risk stealing a village sheep or goat.

Prince sits in the water, the reflected moonlight making him look as if his fur is covered in frost.

Despite the advice often given to students, effective description is not created by strings of colourful adjectives. Instead, authors tend to use specific and precise:

- **nouns**, for example *orchard, pomegranates, canteen, pulp, moonlight, frost*
- **quality adjectives** (used judiciously) that evaluate a noun, for example *weird shapes, tart juice, sugary seeds, Everything seems peaceful*
- **verbs**, for example *twisted, pluck, hurries* (not *walks*, for example), *sits, is covered*.

Note: In the example above, there are no examples of adverbs being used to qualify the verbs. As students examine further examples from the novel, they should be attentive to places where these are used, e.g. 'the sounds of heavy boots moving *quickly* across the hard earth and grunts of effort' (page 2).

Initially, students and teacher could work together to analyse another description from the novel, then doing the same in small groups and independently. Eventually, the knowledge they gain can be used in their own writing.

Activity Ten: USE OF FIRST PERSON

Students should re-read the first paragraph of the novel, paying attention to the use of first person. Then, they can compare the original version with the paragraph below that is written using third person:

Corporal Mark Hollis is falling from the sky. The cold air stings his face. After counting 10 seconds he pulls the ripcord, there's a sudden lurch upwards as the parachute opens, and he drops more slowly. The aeroplane noise fades away and the only sound is the 'chute snapping in the wind. A surge of adrenaline runs through Mark, but he forces himself to breathe more calmly. He sees black parachutes against a greenish moon. He recognises Casey because he's got his dog strapped to his chest. In the distance is the dark outline of the forest they will have to make their way through before reaching the target.

Then, read this version written in second person:

You are falling from the sky. The cold air stings your face. After counting 10 seconds you pull the ripcord, there's a sudden lurch upwards as the parachute opens, and you drop more slowly. The aeroplane noise fades away and the only sound is the 'chute snapping in the wind. A surge of adrenaline runs through you, but you force yourself to breathe more calmly. You see black parachutes against a greenish moon. You recognise Casey because he's got his dog strapped to his chest. In the distance is the dark outline of the forest you will have to make your way through before reaching the target.

In small groups or as a whole class, discuss the effect of changing from first to second or third person:

- How is the story different when it is written in first, second or third person?
- As reader, how do each of these choices position you? That is, what difference does it make to how you read, and are involved in, the story?
- When would each of these choices be most suitable?

Before discussing these questions in detail, students could rewrite other short sections of the novel or locate extracts from novels that are written in either third or second person already.

Activity Eleven: LITERARY ALLUSIONS, ANALOGIES AND SYMBOLS

Before going any further, the teacher may need to explain the difference between allusions, analogies and symbols. As might be expected in a novel, Louis Nowra makes use of all three of these (and other) literary devices. While students can be asked to locate other devices (e.g. similes and metaphors) as they read and reflect on the book. This activity will focus be on the significance of just three.

(a) Analogy and Symbol: Scorpions

On page 49, students should re-read the description of the scorpions fighting. Further down the same page, the author draws an **analogy** between the scorpions and the Russians who once invaded Afghanistan. In small groups, students can discuss:

- Why would Nowra choose to use scorpions in his example? What qualities do they have which make them particularly applicable in this situation?
- What is the point of drawing a comparison between the scorpions and earlier Russian invaders?
- What is the significance in this comparison for Mark's current situation?
- What does this example show about the author's attitude towards Western involvement in Afghanistan?
- Which scenes in the novel seem to support Nowra's views? (For example, see pages 86-87 about the American's 'adoption' of Ghulum.)
- Why can the scorpions be regarded as a symbol?

(b) Literary Allusion: Jules Verne and Captain Nemo

Before (re)reading the appropriate scene in the novel, students could view scenes from the movie *20 Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* or even the trailer for the 1954 Disney version (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xhyuey4xU3Q>). Alternatively, read extracts from the original novel (<http://www.online-literature.com/verne/leaguesunder/>).

Now, (re)read page 133 (from 'Over the next two years...') to page 136 ('...Dad was right, it was only us two.'). In groups, create tableaux based on this extract (see Activity Five), focussing on exploring Mark and his father's emotions through gesture and facial expression. Then, in small groups or as a class, discuss:

- What is the connection between the story of Captain Nemo and the Hollis family?
- Why is this scene so significant in the development of the relationship between Mark and his father?
- On page 158, there is an echo of this earlier scene. Students should be encouraged to review all Chapter 12, identifying the connections between the Captain Nemo story earlier and these later events. Why is Nowra making this connection? What is its significance and what is the author trying to suggest?
- What other literary allusions can be found in this novel?

PART C: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NOVEL

Now, students will reflect on the wider significance of the novel, i.e. they will consider possible themes.

As students work through the earlier activities, make explicit how their observations, discussions and connection-making will assist them to interpret the meanings (themes) of the novel. For example, point out that:

- How events work themselves out for the main characters (i.e. their ultimate fortunes) at the end of the novel provide an insight to the (implied) author's values and beliefs, e.g. despite Mark's difficult past, he survives, suggesting the ever-present possibility for redemption.
- They should pay attention to ideas that are repeated, e.g. the references to Jules Verne and 'Thalatta! Thalatta' → connection back to a happy day in Mark and his father's relationship, now reflected in the relationship between Prince and Mark.
- Connections often need to be found between seemingly unrelated and 'random' information, e.g. Mark's father's use of the quotation from Plato on p137 → emblematic of the distance between Mark and his father before Mark leaves for Afghanistan.

Activity Twelve: EXPLORING MEANINGS

Using the Four Corners strategy (see for example <https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/teaching-strategies/four-corners>), students can discuss and debate statements with which the author, Louis Nowra, might agree or disagree:

- 'Wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.' (Martin Luther King)
- 'Chance dictates everything.' (page 45, Prince of Afghanistan)
- 'The best way you can tell if you can trust someone is to trust them.' (Ernest Hemingway)
- 'I guess darkness serves a purpose: to show us that there is redemption through chaos.' (Brendan Fraser)
- 'Since all life is futility, then the decision to exist must be the most irrational of all.' (Emile M. Cioran)

These may require further explanation before students make a decision and students (and teachers) may have further statements that they wish to add to this list. Also, the teacher needs to prompt students to draw on specific references to evidence in the novel (as well as their own beliefs and experience) when justifying their positions. In essence, this activity should synthesise much of what students have undertaken in previous activities.

A Note about Punctuation: Dialogue creates problems for students, especially when it comes to punctuation. Consequently, at some time during this unit, draw students' attention to the way that Nowra punctuates his dialogue using italics only to indicate the words spoken.

REVIEWING, CONSOLIDATING AND CHALLENGING THE TEXT

Activity Thirteen: A LETTER HOME

In Chapter 13 on page 167, Casey's body is flown home in a plane. Re-read this section having particular attention to following lines:

*Casey...I always looked up to you. You were the one I always wanted to be like.
Without your Prince, I wouldn't have made it. I promise you, Casey, from the depths of
my heart, I will always care for your Prince. He's mine now but your spirit is inside him.*

Using this as a starting point, students write a letter to Casey's girlfriend, Penny (referred to on page 48), thinking about what Mark would want to say to her. For example, he might like to tell her:

- something about how Casey died
- what sort of man Mark thought Casey was and what he meant to Mark
- what Mark intends to do now, including with Prince.

Students must refer to the events of, and the revelations made in, the novel to ensure that their letter is consistent with the characters created by the author. They also need to remember that Penny will be quite devastated and, therefore, a sensitive and respectful tone is required.

Alternatively, students could write a letter from Mark to his dead mother outlining what he has learnt as a result of his experiences since she died. Clearly she will never read this letter; however, it might be cathartic for him.

Activity Fourteen: PLANNING A NOVEL

As students work through these activities, they will have become more aware of how authors manage to sustain a story for the length of a novel. Now, students can try their hand at planning a novel-length narrative.

A common piece of advice given to novice writers is to write about what they know. However, what 'you know' can come from research, not just personal experience. As Louis Nowra tells us: 'This story is fiction, though I consulted many books and articles during the writing of it' (page 175). Consequently, students should base their story on research they have conducted. For example, their story could be set in an Antarctic research station, at the Olympic Games or some other large sporting event, or even be about asylum seekers fleeing from danger in their home country.

When planning the story, students should ensure that they build in at least one action and one relationship line, and plan for multiple complications along the way. If they are having trouble coming up with ideas, use one of the master plots identified by Ronald Tobias as a starting point.

See:

- <http://www.amazon.com/20-Master-Plots-Build-Them/dp/1599635372>
- <http://www.writersdigest.com/wp-content/uploads/Master-Plots-Exclusive.pdf>

Activity Fifteen: CHALLENGING THE TEXT

The conclusion of *Prince of Afghanistan* is quite hopeful: Mark and Prince return to Emerald Creek safely; Mark reconciles with his father; and in Mark's words in the final line of the novel, 'For us the war is over'. After the dangers faced by the protagonists and some of the confronting scenes earlier in the novel, this will be a satisfying conclusion for many readers. Unfortunately, the reality for a real soldier such as Mark could be quite different. For example, we know from earlier in the novel that Emerald Creek is nicknamed Burning Mountain and job prospects are likely to be slim when he returns. Moreover, many soldiers returning home suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In other words, in real life Mark probably wouldn't be returning to some rural idyll.

Consequently, students could research the support offered to returning soldiers. If they like, they could also research problems of unemployment in rural Australia. The research could be presented as:

- posters using a program such as the Glogster (<http://edu.glogster.com/?ref=com>)
- a spoken presentation to the class supported by PowerPoint or Prezi
- or a short video for returning soldiers and their families.

Activity Sixteen: CREATING A BOOK TRAILER

In order to concisely synthesise what they know about the novel, students can now create a book trailer for *Prince of Afghanistan*. Instructions and examples can be found here:

<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>. Further examples can be found here:

- <http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=602>
- <http://www.booktrailersforreaders.com>.

Activity Seventeen: BOOK CLUB PANEL

Finally, students should reflect critically on the novel. This can be done in the form of a panel discussion such as the ABCs *First Tuesday Book Club*, now known simply as *The Book Club*. As younger students are unlikely to be familiar with the show, they will need to view one or more

episodes or parts of episodes first. These are available from the website:

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/firsttuesday/>. When preparing what they might say, students should be assigned particular roles, for example:

- a literary critic
- a war correspondent
- a refugee from Afghanistan
- a returned soldier
- the parent of a soldier.

Each student should prepare a 2 to 3 minute speech, as well as a question to ask one of the other panellists. The preparation could occur in groups of three, although only one person actually participates on the panel; the other students take the role of audience members and can also be given the opportunity to ask probing and challenging questions of the various panellists. A student should also be assigned to act as moderator. Usually, once students get started on this activity, they really throw themselves into their various roles. Students need to be reminded, however, that the panel discussion is about the novel and what they thought of it, not the war in Afghanistan.

Alternatively, students could be asked to write a review, for example for a book club newsletter. The following websites might be useful as a starting point:

- <http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/bookrev/index.htm>
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/book-reviews/>
- <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/books/teenagers/writing-tips/tips-for-writing-book-reviews/>.

FURTHER READING

Before recommending any of the following to students, teachers should read the novels carefully and ensure that they are suitable for their specific students and school context. *Due to the content of these novels, each of them contains material that could be considered confronting or inappropriate for some students.*

Louise Nowra has also written *Into That Forest* for Allen and Unwin:

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=94&book=9781743311646>.

In addition, students might like to read the excellent novels in the series *Through My Eyes* edited by Lyn White for Allen and Unwin (<http://throughmyeyesbooks.com.au>). These provide a perspective on war through the eyes of children. Particularly pertinent to *Prince of Afghanistan*, would be the novel *Naveed* by John Heffernan that is also set in Afghanistan. Other novels in the series include:

- *Shahana* (Kashmir)
- *Amina* (Somalia)
- *Emilio* (Mexico)
- *Malini* (Sri Lanka)
- *Zafir* (Syria).

Other stories about children in Afghanistan include:

- *Jameela* by Rukhsana Khan (<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=94&book=9781742372594>)
- And, for mature readers, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini (<http://khaledhosseini.com/books/the-kite-runner/synopsis/The Goodness Site>). *Be aware that a male rape plays a central part in this particular novel. While it is not described graphically, this may make it inappropriate for younger readers.*

For a story exploring the effects of an overseas conflict on a Western child, see *Against the Odds* by Marjolijn Hof about the child of a doctor who disappears while working in a war zone.

Of course, Afghanistan is only the latest war in which Australians have been involved. To continue exploring the way our involvement in wars has been represented in fiction, students could read and reflect on two recent picture books:

- *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, words by Eric Bogle and illustrated by Bruce Whatley (Allen and Unwin).
- *I Was Only Nineteen*, words by John Schumann and pictures by Craig Smith (Allen and Unwin).

Teachers' Notes are available for each of these books on the publisher's website:

<http://www.allenandunwin.com>.

Finally, some students might be interested in finding out more about Jules Verne and some of his novels mentioned in *Prince of Afghanistan*, for example:

- *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*
- *Around the World in 80 Days*.

If students have an interest in reading other, early science-fiction, they could also try:

- *The Lost World* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

LOUIS NOWRA

Louis says:

I was born in Melbourne on a housing commission estate in Fawkner. I had a bad head accident when I was 11 which meant I had to learn to talk and think properly again. At university I was in a theatre group and began to write plays. After failing university I became a playwright and novelist and shifted to Sydney in my late twenties. I became an Associate Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company and the South Australian Theatre company, wrote telemovies for the ABC, created two TV series and wrote screenplays in Hollywood, Australia, England, Hungary and Venice. I have stayed and worked with Eskimos (Inuit), Russian gangsters and even New Zealanders.

I have had about a dozen Chihuahuas over the years and now have Coco whose autobiography (*Coco, the autobiography of a dog*) was published in October 2012. The book was written by my wife, Mandy Sayer, who is a novelist and memoir writer. We live in Kings Cross. Coco was in a TV series I created called *The Straits* – where she proved herself to be 'One take Coco'.

My fiction is written in longhand on large index cards and then transferred to the computer. I work from 7 am to about 4 pm, when I take the dogs for a walk, generally finishing at my local watering hole in Woolloomooloo. I follow the Sydney Swans (and still occasionally watch the 2005 and 2012 Grand Finals, nervously waiting for the final siren, even though I know we won both).

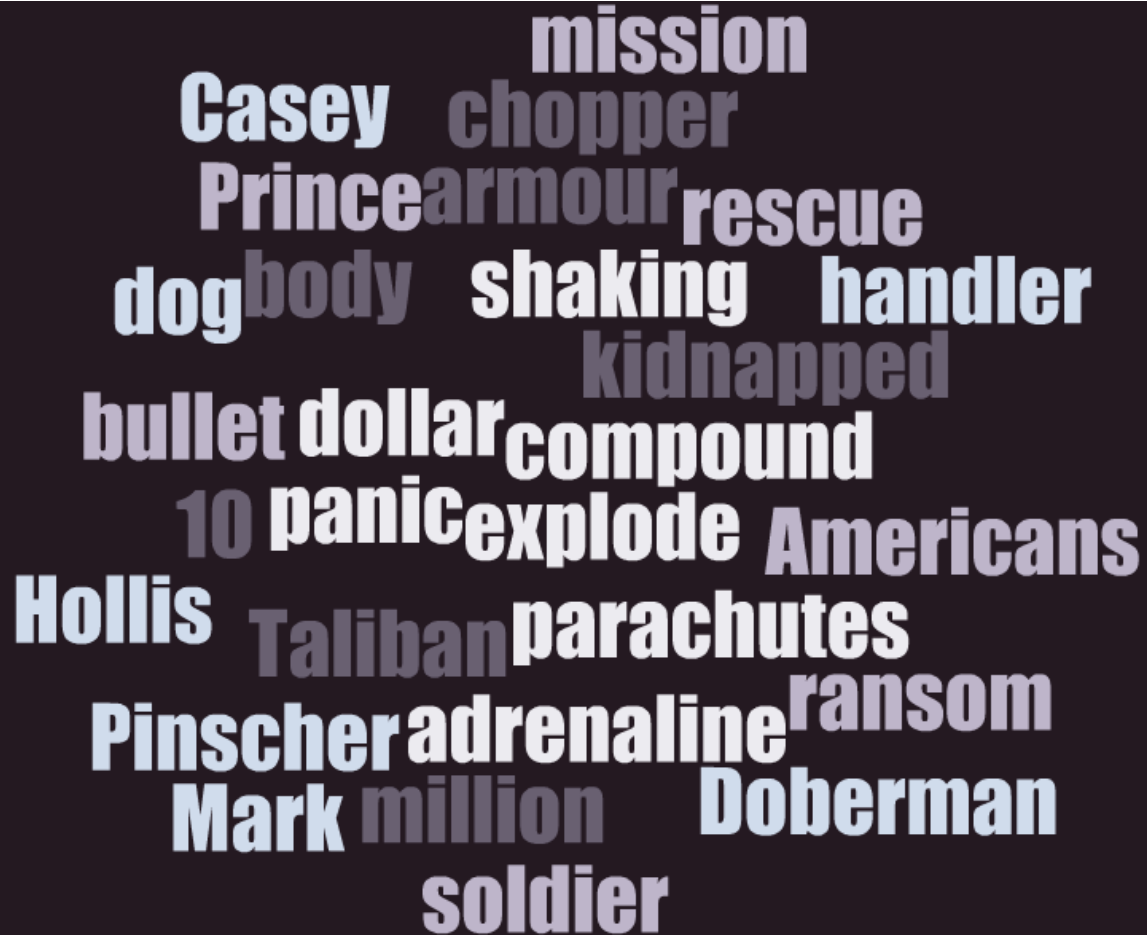
Why don't I have a Facebook or Twitter account? Because they interfere with the intense concentration and thought I need to write. It's crucial for me to have long periods of solitude in order to think and daydream.

My memoirs *The Twelfth of Never* and *Shooting the Moon* explain more.

LINDSAY WILLIAMS

Lindsay has been teaching English for over thirty years and was a classroom teacher and Head of English in both state and private schools for many of those years. In that time, he was also extensively involved in syllabus development at a state and national level. Currently, he is undertaking his PhD through the University of New England, coordinates and teaches English curriculum to pre-service teachers at the University of Queensland, and runs his own consultancy providing professional development in literacy and English. In addition, he works freelance producing curriculum resource materials. For Allen and Unwin, he has produced numerous Teachers' Notes, including for novels and picture books such as *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, *Jameela*, *Worldshaker* and *Liberator*, *Darius Bell* and *the Glitter Bees* and *Louis Beside Himself*. He has recently completed a unit of work on Tim Flannery's *Here on Earth* for the Reading Australia website. Follow him on twitter: @Lindsayguru.

BLM 1: WORD SPLASH FOR CHAPTER 1 OF *PRINCE OF AFGHANISTAN* BY LOUIS NOWRA



mission
Casey chopper
Prince armour rescue
dog body shaking handler
kidnapped
bullet dollar compound
10 panic explode Americans
Hollis Taliban parachutes
Pinscher adrenaline ransom
Mark million Doberman
soldier


BLM 2: TRACING THE HERO'S JOURNEY

In the retrieval chart below is a simplified version of the archetypal **Hero's Journey** that lies at the heart of many extended narratives.

Explore how closely Mark's journey as 'hero' (it is on him that the story focuses) matches the archetypal journey.

In the left hand column, summarise events in the novel that might fit this schema.

In the right hand column, trace the development of Mark's relationships compared with the trajectory of the plot. To help you, some hints have been provided.

Hero's Journey - plot		Progression of Mark's relationships, especially with Prince and his father
Mark in the Ordinary World – living in Emerald Creek, Australia (told in flashback) <i>Events in story:</i>		
Call to Adventure and Refusal of the Call <i>Events in story:</i>		
Meeting with the Mentor <i>Events in story:</i>		
The Extraordinary World – meeting with trials, allies (<i>Are there any?</i>) and enemies (the Shadow) <i>Events in story:</i>		
The Inmost Cave – a great ordeal <i>Events in story</i> (see page 105):		
Escape <i>Events in story:</i>		
Return to the Ordinary World with the Prize <i>Events in story:</i>		

BLM 3: PHASES IN NARRATIVE

Overall, you need to ensure that at each stage of the story, you have a mixture of:

- **action** as signalled by 'doing' verbs
- **interaction** between characters (e.g. internal and external dialogue) as signalled, for example, by 'saying and thinking' verbs; interaction can also be indicated through interpersonal actions such as a touch, a hug, a kiss etc.
- **reaction** from the characters as signalled by 'thinking and sensing' verbs, as well as evaluative language
- **description** as signalled (typically) by 'relating/being' verbs.

The following extract from pages 6 to 7 of *Prince of Afghanistan* illustrates the use of these phases in narratives. You will notice that these are woven together to produce a story that includes much more than just action. These phases also make it more likely that readers will have a stronger emotional reaction to the events and associated characters.

[reaction] From inside come cries of fear and ferocious barking as he terrorises the occupants, exactly as he has been taught. **[action]** I run around to the side with Casey, rip a blanket away from a doorway and rush in. I can hear Prince barking in the next room and when I enter it I see two bare-chested Taliban pinned against the wall, **[reaction]** screeching and shouting at him, holding their hands in front of their groins to protect themselves. **[interaction]** On the floor! On the floor! I yell in Pashto above the noise. They obey me immediately. **[action]** Time is of the essence so I leave Casey and Prince to look after the situation while I clear the next room – but then the dog races past me. **[interaction]** Prince! Back! Prince! I hear Casey crying out. **[action]** I jump to the side of the doorframe, take a deep breath and leap into the room to see a white woman **[reaction]** cringing and screaming in fear, **[action]** while Prince snarls and springs at an armed man wearing a black turban, who has his rifle raised to shoot. I have a split second to aim. There's a loud crack and the slight bump of my rifle against my shoulder. The man slaps his head as if he has forgotten something and slumps to the floor. **[reaction]** I'm stunned and stand rooted to the spot, paralysed by what I have done. I have never shot a man before.

Now, select another extract from the novel and see if you can identify where Louis Nowra uses **action**, **interaction**, **reaction** and **description**.