



I'M NOT REALLY HERE

Written by GARY LONESBOROUGH

RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 14–18 YEARS OLD (YEARS 9 TO 12)

GENRE: Young Adult Fiction

THEMES: romance, First Nations Australians, family, belonging, friendship, queer romance, LGBTQIA+, #LoveOzYA, footy, racism, death and grief, body image, gender roles and misogyny

CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:

- English: Literature, literacy and language
- Health and Physical education: Personal, social and community health
- Cross-curriculum priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (OI6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation)
- General capabilities: Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding

NOTES WRITTEN BY: Cara Shipp

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SENSITIVITY WARNING

This novel deals with the death of the mother character and the ongoing process of grieving and moving forward for the father character, their son and main character Jonah, and his younger siblings. It would be pertinent to be aware of any students in class who may have experienced the loss of a parent and ensure you are aware of how they would prefer to interact with the class content. The novel treats the topic in a sensitive and constructive way that could be helpful for other young people going through the same experience. It does, however, discuss Jonah's memories of finding his mother's body collapsed at the clothesline at the time of her death, and viewing her body at the funeral. You may wish to flag school and community support services available, including:

LIFELINE AUSTRALIA: 13 11 14; <https://www.lifeline.org.au/> (includes online chat facility)

BEYOND BLUE: 1300 22 4636; <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> (includes online chat facility)

KIDS HELPLINE: 1800 55 1800; <https://kidshelpline.com.au/> (includes online chat facility)

BE YOU: Resources for educators – <https://beyou.edu.au/>

REACH OUT: Resources for young people, parents and schools – <https://au.reachout.com/>

In realistically depicting teen culture, the author includes swearing in the dialogue. There are also some scenes depicting school fights, underage drinking and marijuana use, as well as scenes depicting kissing and references to sex. These elements are not gratuitous or overdone and can be understood in terms of authorial choices; however, teachers are encouraged to consider how best to treat this within their school's context.

Depending on your school's context, it may be important to provide an explanation of the novel's content and the above resources to parents and carers before reading the novel in class so that they can support their young person at home.

SAFETY AND INCLUSION

This novel features themes around friendship, family difficulties, isolation and grief. These directly connect with studies of emotional and mental wellbeing in Health & Physical Education. Before you begin, carefully consider the steps you can take to ensure that you are providing a culturally safe and inclusive space for everybody in your classroom and school. This may include undertaking cultural competency training, and reading widely and proactively to self-educate.

A useful resource on how to deal with texts sensitively in a culturally safe manner is available in the blog post, Culturally Sensitive Teaching (<https://missshipp.wordpress.com/culturally-sensitive-teaching/>), adapted from a presentation to the International Federation for the Teaching of English in 2020.

It is important that teachers monitor class conversation and students' comprehension of the novel to ensure that readers are not making generalisations about First Nations people

based on the novel's content. Like in any society, there are some people impacted by poverty, alcohol and drug use, or who are particularly talented in sports, but this is not necessarily representative of all the people in that culture and is not inherent in their genetic make-up. Teachers should listen for and challenge any stereotyping that First Nations people are 'genetically predisposed' to certain behaviour or that 'all' First Nations people act in a certain way.

Teachers should also consider what they can do to make their classrooms queer-inclusive and safe for discussing LGBTQIA+ issues. This article by Antoinette Morris, *Creating Inclusive Classrooms for LGBTQ+ Students*, 13 June 2023, outlines key actions teachers can implement and provides further resources to learn more about this area of education:

<https://blog.teamsatchel.com/inclusive-classrooms-for-lgbtq-students>.

INTRODUCTION

Footsteps approach behind me. I turn and see an Aboriginal boy arriving at the doorway. He's tall, taller than me. He's got curly hair. His body is fit. His chest is chiselled and bare and he's wearing only football shorts.

When 17-year-old Jonah arrives in a new town – Patience – with his dad and younger brothers, it feels like a foreign place. A new town means he needs to make new friends - which isn't always easy. Especially when he's wrestling with his body image, and his memories of his mother.

When he joins the local footy team so he can spend more time with his new crush, Harley, he feels like he's moving closer to something good. But even though he knows what he wants, it doesn't mean he's ready.

Emotionally compelling, honest and featuring warm and authentically vulnerable characters, *I'm Not Really Here* is a beautiful novel from an internationally acclaimed bestselling Indigenous author about navigating family and friendships, and finding a way through grief towards love.

PLOT SUMMARY

'Jonah is a gay aspiring writer who is also dealing with body image issues as well as the death of his mother a few years prior, and the story follows Jonah adjusting to his new environment, trying to make new friends and fit in, while also at the same time falling in love with another Aboriginal boy named Harley. It's a story about falling in love, a story about friendships, about confronting grief, but mostly it's a story about learning to love who you are.' (Lonesborough, 9 May 2024, TikTok post).

Using the sporty sub-plot of footy as the backdrop for two boys navigating their sexual identity, Lonesborough explores friendship and love in the harsh social world of high school. Moving to a new town at 17, Jonah is trying to start again and reinvents himself as a footy player to try to make friends. He has only ever sat around the fringes of friendship groups in his previous school; his friendship with Ben was his only link to a friendship group and that soured once he developed romantic feelings for Ben and declared them. He finds himself again in this position of falling for his new friend Harley, not being sure whether to declare his feelings and worrying that he is too 'fat' and out of shape for sporty Harley. He also makes friends with Tegan, Zoey and Gordon, a group that is the antithesis of the sporty popular boys, and finds these are the most true friendships he has ever experienced. Jonah carefully navigates both friendships, learning to be strong in who he is and respect himself along the way.

IN THE WORDS OF THE AUTHOR

'I hate that I stopped writing. I stopped reading books too, because I could never see myself in them. Aboriginal characters were always secondary, written by non-Indigenous authors and different from my reality ...

'It is important for Aboriginal kids to be able to read and love books written by Aboriginal authors – books where they can see themselves in the pages.'

Gary Lonesborough

Lonesborough, G. 2021. 'I stopped reading because I couldn't see myself in books. So I wrote one instead', *The Guardian*, 1 March 2021, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/mar/01/i-stopped-reading-because-i-couldnt-see-myself-in-books-so-i-wrote-one-instead>>

For a discussion about his journey as a writer, and media interviews, see videos on his website: <https://garylonesborough.com/mediaandinterviews>

To see Lonesborough introducing the novel on TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@garylonesboroughauthor/video/7366912124842528001>

BEFORE READING

Community support services

- Explain to students some of the topics and themes in the novel reflect some serious real-life community issues: teenage drinking, body image issues, racism and homophobia in schools and 'coming out' as a teenager, grief. Have students work in pairs or small groups to research and create a list of support services in their local community for both First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians. Teachers may find it useful to invite the school's counsellor, nurse or other wellbeing staff to talk with students and provide guidance with this task.
- Have students share their findings with the class, and evaluate the effectiveness of the services on offer based on what they have found in their research – are there any gaps? Are there any potential areas for improvement?
- Ensure that students' findings are displayed readily and accessible should anyone find they need support during the reading and discussion of the novel.

First Nations perspectives

- It is difficult to study texts by First Nations authors without an understanding of the geographical, cultural, sociopolitical and historical contexts in which the texts sit, or from which standpoint the text is being written.
- Some key background readings and resources to support teachers engaging with texts by First Nations authors about First Nations perspectives are listed below.
 - Oxford University Press Yarning Strong Professional Support
This material supports teachers to understand the social and historical contexts for the series of books about Identity, Family, Law and Land. It answers questions and misconceptions to support teachers to deal with these sensitively in the classroom, questions such as 'What is Welcome to Country?' and 'How can you be Aboriginal if you don't have dark skin?' The resource dispels negative stereotypes and racial assumptions through videos presented by prominent First Nations people including Larissa Behrendt, Willie Brim, Des Crump and Kym Smith.
 - Aboriginal Languages Map (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>)
Provides a map of all known language groups in Australia and is useful to refer to when discussing the setting of the novel. The setting is fictional, however it is reminiscent of the author's south coast home on Yuin country, with the mix of coastal and rural/farm references.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: ENGLISH

LITERATURE

Year 11-12

Unit 2 and 4

- Investigate the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts
- Create a range of texts

Years 9-10

- Language
- Literature
- Literacy

Activity: Journaling

- As this novel may support students to consider their own sexuality, gender roles, body image issues, experiences of racism/homophobia/social isolation, it could be helpful for them to maintain a private journal. This could be something that they don't submit for marking and is for their eyes only, but they can choose to share it with staff members, family, friends or community services that they trust if they want to.

Students could fill the inside cover with the key community support services they identified in the earlier frontloading activity mentioned above.

While exploring some of the following questions, teachers may decide some of the questions are best dealt with by students privately in their journals, or they may invite students to write a personal reflection/response after a class discussion. Teachers can also encourage students to read back over their journals for ideas to approach their class work and assessment tasks. Examine an 'unlikeable' character such as Rodney or Jack. Find quotes to illustrate how the author uses language to position the reader to dislike these characters.

As a class, discuss and record novels that students have recently read. Can they think of any books that share similarities in terms of themes, characters or storylines with *I'm Not Really Here*? Which aspects of character, theme or storyline often occur in other novels aimed at this age group?

Questions – Language features and style

- The author uses repetition of some key phrases throughout the novel. Discuss the meaning and significance of these repeated phrases:
 - 'I'm not really here' (signifying his mind is elsewhere)
 - 'The start is the only scary part. We just have to be brave for a few minutes and then it'll be okay' (what his mum taught him about how to tackle challenging events)
 - 'Don't say anything weird or stupid' (when Jonah is about to interact with others, he tells himself this)
 - 'A story. A good opening line. Something to write about' (as Jonah thinks about writing)
- Discuss the descriptions of the landscape around the town of Patience on page 19 and page 84. There are rolling hills, ponds, mountains, and also wire fences and an industrial area. A highway takes travellers from Patience to the more illustriously named 'Sambrick by the Sea'. These descriptions are juxtaposed against the repeated description of Patience by Jonah's mother as 'where all dreams go to die' (p. 12). Students can consider whether they would like to live in a town like this (perhaps they have previously); or, students can compare the town to their own and outline similarities and differences, the positives and the negatives.
- Discuss the descriptions of romance and romantic desire between Harley and Jonah. Teachers may prefer to invite a school youth worker/counsellor or local community service who can support with managing the conversation respectfully. Are they realistic? Are they sensitively done or gratuitous? Do they make the reader respect their relationship more? What would the novel be like if these descriptions were removed? Did the descriptions make readers feel uncomfortable? And if so, is this okay – should there be more books depicting romantic love outside of heterosexual relationships? Is it important that the author challenges young adult literature and its readership to accept broader views of relationships? Page references include:
 - p. 104-107 - Harley and Jonah's first 'moment' when they are by the river before dinner at Cherry's house
 - p. 209 - description of Jonah masturbating and thinking of Harley, 'explosion', 'volcanic eruption', 'destroyed my underwear'
 - p. 246-249 - Harley and Jonah in the fireworks and rain scene
- There is a style of humour throughout the novel which uses vulgarity and sarcasm. For example:
 - p. 5 'There's a small concrete platform before the door - a perfect spot for a *welcome mat* or a *fuck off and leave us alone mat*.'

- p. 23 After being poor and homeless, living in a caravan and with relatives, Jonah's father is proud to be back on his feet financially with a job and a rental property in Patience. As a nod to their past, with a touch of sarcasm or dark humour, he jokes that 'We've made it now' when they see a bread bin in the kitchen.
- p. 26 'We follow Aunty Tracy through the house, past a big crucifix with a very dusty Jesus. The bathroom door is wide open and there's an intense smell of shit coming out. Her house is bigger than ours, and it's newer too. We reach her kitchen at the end of the hallway and it's massive. There's a big coffee machine as well, like a professional one.' The humorous side of this description is that the mention of the toilet pokes fun at Aunty Tracy and her big, fancy house. She also mentioned in this scene that she sent her children to the Anglican school. But although Tracy and her family seem to have more than Jonah and his family, we are reminded through this description that they are all still just human beings. It may also play on the familiar colloquial saying 'they think their shit doesn't stink', meaning that they are arrogant or think they are better than others.
- Discuss the symbolism in the story, or motifs (recurring symbols) such as:
 - The references to Kylie Minogue's songs, as symbolic of the gay community or a stereotype that gay men love Kylie's music.
 - The references to phones, text messages, Instagram and the Patience High Goss Page on Facebook. More than the mode of communication used by the teens in the story, these are symbols of both isolation and belonging, and the tension between the two. While teens use social media to connect and be part of groups, they are also used for private relationships – such as Tegan with Jack and Harley with Jonah before they come out. These private relationships can isolate them from others and impact their sense of belonging as they maintain secret connections they can't be open about in public. Then when secrets are exposed – through means like the Patience Goss page – there are catastrophic social consequences that further isolate the victims.
 - The car – a symbol of freedom, independence and privacy for the teens. Travelling in each other's cars, they can explore their identities and pursue relationships away from their parents and community.
 - Football and school – symbols of the societal structures the teens are operating within. The football world has certain expectations of boys and men and the male identity. The school community represents the challenges of fitting in and pressure to conform. The students are sorted into a class system of who is popular/cool and who is not, and there are expectations of gender roles. Jonah often refers to the school as a 'prison'.

- Discuss the use of internal monologue in the story, as Jonah processes his thoughts, feelings, emotional state and internal conflicts, fears and desires. Examples include:
 - 'Okay, I need to make friends. She seems cool, dark, edgy. I'm kind of weird, so maybe we'll connect on some weird level. It feels like weights around my ankles, pulling me into the floor, because I'm so nervous to speak.' (p. 52).
 - 'Stop feeling shame, you idiot. Just dance with Tegan. Dance. Forget what everyone else thinks. You're buzzing. Just dance.' (p. 71)
 - 'Don't say anything weird. Don't say anything stupid.' (p. 101)
 - 'Why would he even want me? I'm not sexy like he is. I don't have abs. I don't have muscles. I don't have a chiselled chest. I don't have toned legs. I don't have a flat stomach. I'm fat. I close my eyes, remembering holding Harley's hand. I think about his warm palm against mine, his fingers between mine, his gentle squeeze. It was real – it happened. It was better than a dream.' (p. 206)
 - 'I'm not anything but a gay fat boy listing to Kylie Minogue under a tree.' (p. 270)

Encourage students to consider, what is their internal monologue? What goes through their minds when they are entering social situations?

- Discuss the use of flashbacks in the novel. Lonesborough uses flashbacks to provide background information and context for Jonah's current experiences. The flashbacks reveal more to us about his mother's death and the family's grieving process, and the depression and poverty his father fell into that impacted him and his brothers and led to this relocation to Patience.

Discussion Questions – Themes

Depending on the dynamics of your class, these could be discussion questions, private journal response questions, or private responses that you then invite volunteers to share in a class discussion – consider how best to ensure your students will feel comfortable and safe.

- **Setting:** Jonah's mother said that Patience was 'where all dreams go to die' (p. 12), but Harley and Jonah both transform themselves and achieve their dreams. Harley embraces his love of acting and secures a role in the local theatre production, while also remaining respected as a footballer. Jonah gets healthier, goes to the gym and plays football, feels better about his body, and overcomes writer's block to start writing again. He accesses counselling that works for him and deals with the death of his mother. Harley and Jonah both find love, in each other, and they are able to 'come out' as gay and be in a relationship with the support of their community.
- **Characterisation:** complete a character study on one of the other characters aside from Jonah. Discuss their personality, habits, appearance, and key quotes. For example,

Tegan's character is explored on pages 52, 64 and 78. Some key quotes for Harley's character are when he was checking in on Jonah (p. 77), when he defended Jonah against Rodney who called him a 'faggot' (p. 153), and when he wakes Jonah up before leaving his house for footy so they can say goodbye properly (p. 207).

- Use the descriptions Jonah makes of his own body as a platform for discussing body image and societal expectations/social media influences on what is considered attractive. See p. 46, pp. 268-9 - descriptions of Jonah's body, weight, 'fat' and 'man boobs'; also see p. 206, p. 335 – Jonah thinks Harley won't be interested in him, but when he is, he overcomes his body image issues and accepts himself. The Health and PE Section of these teachers notes outlines more about this topic and the resources available from the Butterfly Foundation that can support these discussions (www.butterfly.org.au).
- Discuss how the novel explores the theme of love and being true to one's feelings. Jonah is a champion for love, encouraging Zoey and Gordon to explore their feelings for one another despite Tegan's misgivings that a romantic relationship could ruin their friendship (pp. 157-8). Jonah is honest with people he loves – he told Ben his feelings and that challenged their friendship, but he overcame his fear and told Harley his feelings, and found them reciprocated.
- Discuss the confusion around sexuality that Harley works through with Jonah, and the decision Jonah makes to end their relationship until Harley is clearer about his identity. Here, we see Jonah's growth – from the awkward boy who was afraid of saying something weird and found it hard to make friends, to a person who will put his feelings and his needs first even if it hurts. See pp. 115-117; p. 217, p. 312, chapter 32
- Discuss the way in which the novel explores death and grief. Read the flashback to the funeral on pp. 218-221. Discuss the confusion about his mother's death and the different ways in which people responded or dealt with their feelings, including Jonah's guilt that he didn't cry. Read Jonah's letter to his mum on pp. 367-9. What is interesting about what he chooses to tell her? How does writing the letter help him?
- Jonah often dreams of a gay relationship being 'normal' and everyday, mundane: 'We'd be two boys holding hands, walking down the street, and I imagine that no one would care, no one would look twice, no one would stare, because it would be as normal as if we were that boy and girl that just passed by me.' (p. 21) Discuss your response to this as a reader – does it challenge you? Do you empathise with Jonah's struggle (representative perhaps of the queer struggle in general)? Does it help you to change your opinions, or affirm your opinions, or see things in a different light?
- Recognising discrimination and its impact: Jonah confronts racism when his little brother is sad about an incident at sport where he was teased and pushed because of his brown skin, 'I feel heat rising from the pit of my stomach. It moves into my chest, into my throat, along my arms and down to my hands.' (p. 93) Jonah later faces homophobia on the football field: 'No one's ever called me that before. *Faggot*. And the game continues like nothing happened. I feel like a baby lamb taking his first steps as I struggle to my feet...All I can think about is that I've just been called a faggot for the first time and it

feels worse than I thought it would. It feels like a knife in my gut, like someone has spat right in my face and it's in my eyes and up my nose...I just want to leave. I want to get away from the boy who called me a faggot and my teammates who seemingly didn't hear a thing.' (pp. 151-153) Consider both the physical *and* emotional impact of being discriminated against for who you are. How the body can have a visceral reaction to having one's core identity attacked, how it can make someone feel they want to leave, and that -they are completely rejected by that social group. Ask students if they have had similar situations and feelings, and what we can learn from these experiences and descriptions.

- What difference does having a sense of family and belonging make? Jonah's father is supportive of his sexuality and is very open with him about their feelings of grief for his mum. He may have struggled with alcoholism and poverty for some time after Jonah's mum's death, but his dad has always been loving and understanding of Jonah (pp. 181-2, p. 257). Consider how this relationship helps Jonah to accept his identity and take strength from this.

Assessment ideas:

- Consider the double standards in how Tegan is treated when her secret affair with Jack is made public (pp. 179-180) and Tegan's earlier reference to former prime minister Tony Abbott (p. 52). Read about and view Julia Gillard's famous 'misogyny speech', which outlines examples of his sexism. The article, '[The reckoning of Gillard's misogyny speech](#)' by Dr Julia Bowes, 2022, offers an interesting perspective that in delivering the speech, Gillard was actually rejecting a motion by Abbott to remove Peter Slipper from the speaker position in Parliament for alleged sexual harassment, the allegations of which ended up being true and leading to Slipper resigning. Write an opinion piece or feature article in the style of **The Guardian** on the statement: *Although women's rights have improved in society, there are still many layers of discrimination and double standards impacting women every day.* Agree or disagree with this statement, using evidence from the novel as well as any non-fiction sources of your choice.
- Devise a storyboard and concept for how to adapt this novel into film. See the Victorian Department of Education Literacy Resources, '[Transforming existing texts](#)' for ideas on how to analyse and annotate a text ready to transform into a storyboard for film.
- Write a set of poems or rap/song lyrics to represent the journey of Jonah, Harley, Tegan, or Francis. You may wish to use ideas from the novel, such as dealing with homophobia, wrestling with one's identity and sexuality, struggling for acceptance among one's peer group, or engaging in 'secret' relationships out of fear of peers' reactions and judgements. Write a 200-word rationale to explain your language choices in the poems/lyrics.
- Character Arc: Jonah grows in confidence, self-acceptance and self-respect throughout the novel. He does not shy away from expressing his feelings even if the

consequences are negative. He learns to put his needs first and put boundaries around his relationships so that he does not feel mistreated or disrespected. Students can map Jonah's development by drawing and annotating a 'character arc' outlining the key events in the novel where he grows in confidence and self-acceptance. Teachers can use the **key quotes below** to support students with this task.

Other useful teacher resources for this task:

- [How to create character arcs](#) by Abbie Emmons
- [Character arcs in storytelling](#) unit on Khan Academy

Key quotes: Jonah's development

- He gets more confident socially, deciding not to text Ben first – p. 59
- He gets more confident and patient – waiting for Tegan to see the value in him as a friend, and waiting for the right time to talk with her and patch up their disagreement – p. 258, p. 287
- He chastises himself for being honest about his feelings and flirting with Harley ('Jonah the mistake-maker', p. 164 - and 'I've misread everything' on p. 212). But he continues to be honest and in the end, that leads to Harley declaring his feelings too ('You didn't misread anything', p. 230 and pp. 251-3).
- Jonah's growth in putting boundaries around his friendships and relationships: See pp. 115-117; p. 217, p. 312, chapter 32.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

Year 10

Gender stereotypes and LGBTQIA+ rights

- Discuss the positive and negative representations of gender and sexuality in the novel, reflecting on the extent to which these reflect students' real-life experiences. The resources from Stonewall.com (<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/best-practice-toolkits-and-resources>) are useful here.

Consider:

- Tegan and Jack's secret relationship, and the double standards in how they are treated after the secret is exposed – Tegan is called a 'slut' and gets into fights with the girls, while Jack is congratulated for being a 'stud' – pp. 180-186

- When Harley defends Jonah at footy, against the use of the word 'faggot' and then asks Jonah how he feels, and if it's hard being gay – pp. 151-158
- When Jack is derogatory about Tegan, Harley tells him he's 'a dickhead' (p. 87) and later in the novel Harley tells Jonah he and Jack are not close friends anymore due to his behaviour (p. 193)

Explore *The Trevor Project* and how it supports queer young people: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>. Discuss the importance of this project and why it is a useful resource in the community.

Assessment: research task

- In pairs or small groups, students can research the topic of body image and statistics around body-image-related illness, injury and death in Australia, then present their findings in an oral presentation to the class, utilising multimodal methods of conveying information (e.g. Prezi, PowerPoint, Infographic poster).

Teachers may find it useful to provide a note-taking scaffold for students when they are audience members, taking notes about each presentation in a way that will support a culminating class discussion on key information, risk factors, resources and actions the community can take to address the problem.

The Butterfly Foundation is a key resource in this area. Also see the article '[Our boys and men are not all right: addressing poor male body image](#)' (Bromberg and Fitzgerald, 2024) published on The Butterfly Foundation website.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GARY LONESBOROUGH is a Yuin man, who grew up on the Far South Coast of NSW as part of a large and proud Aboriginal family. Gary was always writing as a child, and continued his creative journey when he moved to Sydney to study at film school. Gary has experience in youth work, Aboriginal health, child protection, the disability sector (including experience working in the youth justice system) and the film industry, including working on the feature film adaptation of *Jasper Jones*. His debut YA novel, *The Boy from the Mish*, won the Booktopia FAB Debut Book Awards and the Ena Noel Award and was shortlisted for the CBCA Awards, the QLD Literary Awards, the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, the Indie Book Awards, the Adelaide Festival Awards, the NSW Premier's Awards and was selected as a White Raven. It was published in the US in 2022 under the title *Ready When You Are*. His second novel, *We Didn't Think It Through*, was published in 2023 and won the Marion ACT Book of the Year, was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and the Readings Young Adult Prize, and was a CBCA Notable Book.

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ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

Cara Shipp is a Wiradjuri/Welsh woman (descending from the Lamb and Shipp families in Central Western NSW, around Dubbo, Parkes and Trangie) and currently Head of Senior School at Silkwood School, Gold Coast, QLD.

She has previously run alternative educational programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; held Head Teacher English/HASS/Languages positions; and served as President, Vice President and Editor with the ACT Association for the Teaching of English (ACTATE). Cara has completed a Master of Education focusing on Aboriginal literacy and regularly presents cultural competence training at local and national conferences, particularly within the context of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the English curriculum. She has a blog on the topic, <https://missshipp.wordpress.com/>

CORRESPONDING LITERATURE

(In alphabetical order of authors)

Similar coming-of-age, identity exploration novels dealing with racism, poverty, crime and justice, by First Nations authors:

Gary Lonesborough, *The Boy from the Mish*, with [unit of work](#) by Reading Australia
<https://readingaustralia.com.au/books/the-boy-from-the-mish/>

Gary Lonesborough, *We Didn't Think It Through*, with [teachers' notes](#) by Allen and Unwin
<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/book/Gary-Lonesborough-We-Didn't-Think-It-Through-9781760526931>

Sue McPherson, *Brontide*, with [unit of work](#) by Reading Australia and teachers' notes by [Magabala Books](#)
<https://readingaustralia.com.au/books/brontide/>

Short story and poetry collections by First Nations authors about important socio-historical themes:

Fire Front, edited by Alison Whittaker, with [teachers' notes](#) by UQP

Flock, curated by Ellen van Neerven, with [teachers' notes](#) by UQP

Born into this, Adam Thompson, with [teachers' notes](#) by UQP

State Library of Queensland, '[Big Yarns](#)' blog series.

OTHER RESOURCES

State Library of Queensland, Sovereign Stories online resource: Teacher resource for key books by First Nations authors published under the black & write! initiative.

<https://curriculumconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/sovereign-stories>

Common Ground, First Nations published website with resources and explainers on key topics such as land rights and Connection to Country.

<https://www.commonground.org.au/>

National Museum of Australia: rights and freedoms digital resource and civil rights timeline.

<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/learning-modules/rights-and-freedoms-defining-moments-1945-present>

<https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/indigenous-rights/timeline>

ONLINE LINKS IN FULL

Welcome to Country: Youth Edition teachers' notes

Accompaniment to Marcia Langton's non-fiction guide to First Nations Australian culture, prepared by educator Melinda Sawers and published by Hardie Grant.

https://www.hardiegrant.com/au/publishing/bookfinder/book/marcia-langton_-_welcome-to-country-schools-edition-by-marcia-langton/9781741176667

Black Words Historical Events Calendar

Outline of key events in colonial history from a First Nations standpoint, published by AustLit.

<https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/5962401>

Working with Indigenous Australians website by the Muswellbrook Shire Council – historical and cultural information '*Working with Indigenous Australians, First Nations people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities*', prepared by the Aboriginal Policy Reference Group and the Muswellbrook Shire Council, 2007.

http://www.workingwithindigenoustralian.info/content/History_I_AUSTRALIA.html

Human Rights Commission 'It stops with me' campaign.

<https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/take-action/bystander-action>